



MIT Undergraduate Advising Center

Departmental Advisor Resource Guide

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Welcome

Welcome to the MIT Departmental Advisor Resource Guide! This guide provides resources and training materials to help onboard new advisors to advising at the institute. It also offers current advisors general advising resources and high-impact practices.

As an academic advisor, you are a key link between undergraduate students and the rest of the MIT community. Take a moment to review the mission statements below and think about how they might apply to your work as an advisor.

MIT's Mission Statement

The mission of MIT is to advance knowledge and educate students in science, technology, and other areas of scholarship that will best serve the nation and the world in the 21st century.

The Institute is committed to generating, disseminating, and preserving knowledge, and to working with others to bring this knowledge to bear on the world's great challenges. MIT is dedicated to providing its students with an education that combines rigorous academic study and the excitement of discovery with the support and intellectual stimulation of a diverse campus community. We seek to develop in each member of the MIT community the ability and passion to work wisely, creatively, and effectively for the betterment of humankind.

Advising at MIT

MIT is devoted to enhancing the undergraduate advising experience. Through the recent development of the Undergraduate Advising Center (UAC), the institute has created a holistic advising culture that builds on the excellent advising already recognized at MIT.

Departmental advisors primarily support sophomores, juniors, and seniors while UAC advisors provide advising for first-year students and holistic general advising for upper-level students. Below is a table to help further delineate the differences:

Departmental (Primary) Advisor

- Curriculum expert on specific classes, course substitutions, graduation requirements in the major, etc.

UAC Advisor

- Generalists who will help students navigate MIT and connect students with the right campus resources and opportunities

- Can advise students on graduate school, research, and field-specific networking options.
- Approves student registration.
- Advising and communication are major/department specific.
- Programs and engagement opportunities are major/department specific.
- Focus is holistic advising (academic, personal, and professional)
- Help with interpreting academic policies and general graduation requirements, including the GIRs.
- Engagement opportunities are designed for and open to all upper-level students.
- When in doubt, come to us for help!

Degree Requirements

Undergraduate students must complete the below requirements in order to complete their degree. Each degree program is designed to be completed with a normal academic load- the equivalent of 8-8.5 subjects each year, for a total of 32-34 subjects. More details can be found [here](#).

- General Institute Requirements (GIRs- more details on the next page): 17 subjects
- 180-198 units beyond the GIRs:
 - Major: 114-186 units (Between 12-72 units in a major also satisfy GIR requirements)
 - Unrestricted Electives: 48-138 units

Credits/Units: Most classes are worth 12 units. The [Subject Listing](#) displays units for each subject as a series of three numbers (e.g., 3-2-7). The numbers added together (3+2+7) equal the total credit for the subject (12). In order, the three numbers represent:

- Units assigned for lectures and recitations
- Units assigned to laboratory, design, or field work
- Units for outside preparation

It's important to note that first year students are subject to a [credit limit](#). First year students cannot earn more than 54 credits in the fall term, 12 credits during Independent Activities Period (IAP), and 60 credits in the spring term.

Major Requirements

At MIT, majors are referred to as courses. Each course has a corresponding number, and students and staff frequently refer to these numbers. View the links below to see a full list of majors offered at MIT and to find the subject requirements for each major.

- [MIT Subject Listing and Class Schedule](#)
- [Undergraduate Degree Charts](#)

All students enter MIT undeclared. Throughout a student's first year, MIT provides academic fairs, lectures, seminars, and other programs to help students determine which major will suit them best. Students can choose from any of MIT's courses of study, without any additional requirements or admission procedures. The majority of students declare their major at the end of their first year, although some students choose to continue on as undesignated sophomores. In this case, they must declare a major by the end of their sophomore year.

General Institute Requirements (GIRs)

Overview

Students must complete the General Institute Requirements (GIRs) in order to graduate. The GIRs are comprised of 17 subjects:

- 6 Science Requirements
- 8 Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) Requirements
 - At least 2 HASS subjects must be designated as communication-intensive to fulfill the Communication Requirement
- 2 Restricted Electives in Science and Technology (REST) Requirements
- 1 Laboratory Requirement

Science GIRs

All MIT undergraduates are expected to gain a basic understanding of concepts and methods of the physical and biological sciences by the time they graduate. There are 6 Science GIRs:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Calculus I
- Calculus II
- Physics I
- Physics II

More information about the Science GIRs can be found at the links below:

[Science Requirement](#)

[Science GIR videos](#)

Humanities, Arts, and Social Science (HASS) GIRs and the Communication Requirement

HASS Requirement:

Students are required to take 8 HASS subjects before they graduate. To stay on pace, we recommend that students take one HASS subject each semester during their four years at MIT. There are three components to the HASS requirement:

- Distribution: Students must take at least one subject from each category within HASS (at least one Humanities subject, at least one Arts subject, and at least one Social Science subject)
- Concentration: Students must designate a [field of concentration](#), consisting of either three or four subjects. One of the subjects that counts towards the distribution requirement may also be designated as a concentration subject.
- Electives: The remainder of the 8-subject requirement may be fulfilled by subjects from any distribution category or by subjects that are designated as HASS electives.

More information about the HASS requirement can be found [here](#).

Communication Requirement:

The Communication Requirement consists of four communication-intensive (CI) subjects taken throughout a student's undergraduate career.

- 2 CI subjects in the humanities, arts, and social sciences (CI-H)
- 2 CI subjects in their major program (CI-M)

Additional notes about the Communication Requirement:

- With the exception of those students who received a score of 5 on AP Language and/or AP Literature exams, all first-year students are required to take the [First-Year Essay Evaluation](#) (FEE) before starting at MIT. The results of the FEE determine whether or not students are required to take a writing-focused (CI-HW) subject as their first CI subject.
- Students must complete one of their CI subjects by the end of their first year, two by the end of their second year, three by the end of their third year, and four by the time they graduate.

- Only one CI-H subject per term may be counted towards the Communication Requirement. However, students may receive credit for more than one CI-M subject in the same term or a CI-H and CI-M completed concurrently.

Restricted Electives in Science and Technology (REST) Requirement

REST subjects are meant to broaden and deepen a student's educational foundation in basic science and further the understanding of scientific inquiry. These subjects are designed to give students the opportunity to proceed further in areas already studied, or to explore other areas of potential interest. Students typically take REST subjects in the second year, although with the proper prerequisites they may begin taking them in the first year.

Students meet the REST Requirement by taking two subjects from this [list](#). Of the subjects used to fulfill the requirement, students can take no more than one in their department.

Laboratory Requirement

The Institute Laboratory Requirement consists of subjects that require student's attention in comprehensive projects rather than stand-alone experiments or exercises. Each Laboratory subject fulfills a designated number of units toward the Laboratory Requirement. Laboratory subjects may be taken in any combination to fulfill the Requirement so long as the student completes at least 12 laboratory units in total. Any laboratory units taken beyond the 12 needed for the Laboratory Requirement will be counted towards units beyond the GIRs. Learn more [here](#).

Physical Education (PE) Requirement

In addition to the 17 GIR subjects, students are required to earn a total of 8 Physical Education (PE) Points in order to graduate. To fulfill the PE Requirement, students must take four physical education and wellness courses (worth 2 PE points each for a total of 8 PE points) and complete the [swimming requirement](#). Students are responsible for completing the PE requirement by the end of their second year. More information about the PE requirement can be found [here](#).

Alternative ways to receive PE points are:

- Varsity sports: Four points awarded to players for each year of competition.
- ROTC Programs: Two points are awarded per year of ROTC participation up to a maximum of four points.
- Approved personal training, private swim lessons, and group exercise classes offered through the Department of Athletics, Physical Education, and Recreation.

Transfer Credit

Students may request transfer credit for subjects taken before they arrive at MIT or while they are currently enrolled as an MIT student. Credit for previous study is awarded as either the equivalent MIT subject or unrestricted elective credit, at the discretion of the department granting credit.

Transfer Credit for First Year Students

Many MIT students have done college-level study while in high school. MIT grants placement and credit for:

- [Advanced Standing Exams](#) (tests taken at MIT during May, August, and January/February)
- [Advanced Placement](#) (College Board Advanced Placement) Exam scores
- [International Examinations](#) (including A-Levels, Cambridge Pre-U, International Baccalaureate, French Baccalauréat, Abitur), and
- [Transfer Credit](#) for study at another college or university.

It's important to note that these guidelines are subject to change for each entering class.

Transfer Credit for Upper-Level Students

If students wish to receive transfer credit after starting at MIT, they should refer to the policies outlined on the [Registrar's website](#). Some important things to note:

- Transfer credit will appear on students' academic records with a grade of S.
- Although the grade is not used in calculating term or cumulative GPA, the credit counts towards Institute requirements.
- If there is no equivalent subject at MIT, the department transfer credit examiner may award elective credit.
- Transfer credit requests must include an official transcript showing work and final grade.

Advanced Standing Exams (ASEs)

MIT offers Advanced Standing Exams (ASEs) as an alternate way for students to earn credit for specific courses. ASEs are typically offered at four times throughout the year: Late August/Early September, December, Late January/Early February, and May. ASEs are typically offered in math, physics, chemistry, biology, and electrical engineering and computer science. Students may only take an Advanced Standing Exam in a class for which they have never registered nor attended at MIT.

Advanced Standing Exam information & grading policies for first year students is available [here](#). Upper level students (including transfer students) must [petition](#) to take

ASEs. More information about ASE petition deadlines, procedural information, and grading policies are available [here](#).

Getting to Know Your Students

Students are more likely to open up to you if you treat them with respect and show an honest interest in getting to know them. Below are a few strategies you can use to help get to know your students:

Use Your Resources

As MIT advisors, we have access to certain information about each of our students. Take some time to learn more about your advisees before you connect with them in person.

- Review your advisees' First-Year Folders, which house their application essays, information about transfer credit and Advanced Standing Examinations, and their first year advising assignments.
- Review MITSIS to see what subjects your students are taking currently and what subjects they have taken in the past.

Use Inclusive Communication Strategies

Using inclusive communication can help us create an environment where our students feel welcome, respected, and appreciated.

- Ensure you are using the pronouns with which your students identify. Sharing your pronouns when you introduce yourself opens the door for students to share their own. You can also help normalize this practice by adding your pronouns to your email signature.
- Use inclusive language, avoiding phrases or terms that could reinforce stereotypes
- Ask open ended questions, allowing your student to lead the conversation
- Practice active listening- listen to learn and understand rather than to respond
- Address your biases- the National Education Association shares [helpful strategies](#) to recognize and combat our implicit biases

Create a Welcoming Physical Space

Take a moment to think about the physical space in which you meet with students (including virtual spaces, such as your Zoom background). What does the environment feel like? What might students notice? What types of students might feel more or less welcome in your space?

- A FLI Tim the Beaver or "You are welcome here" (LGBTQ+) sticker can be a small gesture to welcome traditionally marginalized students.
- Be aware of your body language. Certain behaviors, like crossing your arms, may come across as dismissive. Try to be open and friendly while maintaining personal space, and keep in mind that different cultures [define personal space](#) differently.

Notice Your Cultural Norms

Differences in beliefs or communication styles between cultural groups can lead to misunderstandings if left unnoticed. Take the time to assess your communication norms and to learn about the norms in different communities that your students may be part of.

- Tools like [Globesmart](#) can provide a quick and easy way to assess your own beliefs and compare them to other countries. Note, however, that these norms are just generalizations, and your advisees may not reflect the listed norms of their country of origin.
- Take the time to learn about your students' cultural, linguistic, social, and personal backgrounds, interests, and goals.

Note Taking

Recording Student Interactions

In the future, advisors at MIT will have a Student Success Platform to record and keep notes on each of their advisees. Although the search for this system is currently in progress, keeping a record of interactions with your advisees is still a valuable practice. Keeping notes creates a comprehensive picture of each student's experience and the support they've received during their time at MIT, which can help jog your memory during meetings. Detailed notes on your interactions also serve multiple additional purposes: they provide accountability, aid in resolving disputes, strengthen relationships by showing your investment in their academic journey, and offer an effective way to track and follow up with your students.

Dos and Don'ts of Notetaking

As advisors, we aim to record detailed and accurate notes after each student interaction. Refer to the [MIT Departmental Advising: Note-Taking Guide](#) for a full list of Dos and Don'ts. In general, here are a few things to keep in mind when recording advising notes:

- Eliminate judgment and maintain objectivity
- Only include information you are comfortable with the student seeing
- Notes are considered to be an academic record and can be requested under [The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)

Referrals

Advisors are not expected to have all the answers to our students' questions. However, we hope to act as a bridge between our students and the various resources they may want to connect with throughout their MIT experience. It's important to not only share what resources exist, but also to help students understand how to connect with those resources, and when possible, assist them in connecting with those resources. Refer to the [Accessing Resources](#) module to see a list of resources MIT students may benefit from.

How to Refer Students:

In the future, we will be able to use our Student Success Platform to create and track student referrals. In the meantime, our process to make referrals is:

1. Determine which resource you want to refer a student to
2. Discuss the resource with your student
3. Help the student connect with the resource
 - With their permission, send a connecting email to the resource and your student, or
 - Show the student how to make an appointment with the resource online
4. Follow up with the student and/or resource to see if they were able to connect

Many campus resources have information for students on their websites. It will be helpful to become familiar with the resources available online- this way, you can easily show your student during your advising meeting.

Questions to ask your advisees

Questions to build rapport

The advising relationship is enhanced by advisors showing genuine interest in their advisees. Although many of these conversations come naturally, if you get stuck, the questions below can help you get started or inspire other questions you may have:

Commitment to Learning:

- Describe what your ideal time at MIT looks like. Why?
- What class are you most excited to take?
- What impact do you hope your degree will have on your life?

Positive Values:

- What obstacles have you overcome in order to be a successful student?
- When was the last time you handled a difficult situation well?

Social Competencies:

- Tell me about a positive relationship you have or have had with a professor here at MIT.
- Can you think of a person at MIT to whom you could go to and talk about life decisions?

Positive Identity:

- What's the best part about being a college student here?
- Describe your biggest success to date.
- Tell me about a current goal. What is one thing you have done in the past week/month to move toward reaching that goal?

Support/Connectedness:

- What kind of community activities do you participate in?
- If you were going to go to someone for advice, who would that be?

Empowerment:

- What is the best activity that you have participated in on campus? Why?
- Tell me about a project or activity that made you lose track of time.

Adapted from the *Appreciative Advising Revolution*, 2008 by Bloom, J.L., Hutson, B.L., & He, Y.

Additional Advising Resources

MIT Resources:

- [MIT's Baker Foundation Guidelines for Upperclass Advising](#)
- [Advising Resources from MIT's Registrar](#)

NACADA Resources:

NACADA, the National Academic Advising Association, is the Global Community for Academic Advising and is the leading association globally for the advancement of student success through excellence in academic advising in higher education. Please check out their [Faculty Advising](#) web page for an index of resources meant to aid advisors seeking to hone their advising skills. **While some of the titles may only reference faculty, these resources can support ALL departmental advisors at MIT.** Some articles featured are below:

- [Why Faculty Advising Matters](#)
- [How to Make the Most of Your Office Hours](#)
- [Doing It All: Adding Advising Into Faculty Workloads](#)
- [Building Student-Faculty Relationships](#)
- [Implications for Faculty Advising](#)
- [Faculty Advisor Assessment and Reward](#)
- [Professional Advisors and Faculty Advisors: A Shared Goal of Student Success](#)
- [The Importance of Face-to-Face Contact Between Faculty and Students](#)
- [Email advising: Doing it wrong, doing it right](#)
- [Improving Faculty Advising](#)

First-Year Advising Calendar

- The Office of the First Year (OFY) has compiled calendars of important dates for first-year advisors to be aware of. We recommend making note of these dates in your calendar so you can plan ahead for your advising meetings.
- [Fall 2024](#)
- [IAP & Spring 2025](#)
- The Registrar's [Academic Calendar](#) shows a full listing of all holidays and important dates and deadlines for undergraduate students.

First-Year Advising Flow

Preparing for Fall

1. Review advisees' information in their [First Year Folders](#). The first-year folder will contain your advisees' incoming credit, FEE results, and information about ASEs.
2. Connect with your associate advisor (AA) (learn more about the [Advising Network](#)).
3. Send [welcome emails](#) to advisees, scheduling both group and individual meetings.
4. Review important academic dates and deadlines from [Advising Calendars and Meetings](#) and the [Academic Calendar](#).

Fall

You will conduct your first advising meetings during Orientation at the end of August. After you've registered your students and the semester begins, you are asked to meet with your advisees at least twice more in the fall term. Your meetings should center around your advisees' transition to MIT, their academic and co-curricular exploration, and their plans for IAP and Spring. You can find a suggested meeting schedule as well as topics of discussion for each meeting on the OFY [Fall Advising Calendar](#) and [Advising Meetings](#) page.

IAP & Spring

Some of your students may enroll in Independent Activities Period (IAP), which takes place in January. Whether or not your students are on campus during IAP, it's good to stay connected to your students during this time to ensure that they are prepared for the Spring term.

Once classes begin in early February, you should plan to meet with your advisees at least twice more in the spring term. Your meetings should focus on major exploration, major selection, and plans for summer. Refer back to the OFY [Spring Advising Calendar](#) and [Advising Meetings](#) for more detail.

Resources for Students

Connecting to resources is a crucial part of building a foundation during a student's first year. Introducing your advisees to these resources will help them to transition to MIT and build a strong network early on.

Academic Support

- [Student Support Services \(S^3\)](#): Private resource for students who are struggling personally or academically
- [Disability Access Services](#): Provides support and accommodations for students with disabilities
- [Talented Scholars Resource Room TSR^2](#): Free tutoring support for a variety of subjects, including P-set nights, exam reviews, 1:1 appointments, and more
- [MIT's Writing and Communication Center](#): Writing support for undergrad and grad students

Personal Support

- [Office of Wellbeing](#): Coordinates programs and resources to help students prioritize wellbeing by practicing healthy habits
- [Mental Health & Counseling](#): Offers confidential counseling (individual and group) for all students
- [MIT Medical](#): Provides a wide array of medical services including urgent care, primary care, and more

Research & Career

- [Undergrad Research Opportunities \(UROP\)](#): Provides students the opportunity to collaborate on and contribute to real research across MIT
- [Career Advising and Professional Development \(CAPD\)](#): MIT's hub for career advising, distinguished fellowship advising, pre-health advising, and professional development support

Community

- [Student Organizations, Leadership, and Engagement Office](#): Hub for student engagement and leadership development
- [Fraternities, Sororities & Independent Living Groups](#): Oversees Greek life and Independent Living Groups on campus
- [International Students Office](#): Aids international students in their transition to life in the US

- [FLI@MIT](#): The First Generation and/or Low-income (FLI) program supports the ~30% of undergraduate students who identify with the first generation and/or low-income student experience
- [LGBTQ+ Services](#): Resource for diverse gender, romantic, and sexual identities
- [Student Veterans Association](#): Student-led organization dedicated to veterans and those affiliated with the military

For a more comprehensive list of MIT resources please see the [Accessing Resources](#) module.

Hacking MIT: By Year

Below are checklists for each class year created by the UAC. Each link provides recommended activities tailored to the specific class year.

[Hacking MIT: Recommendations for Making the Most of Your First Year](#)

[Hacking MIT: Recommendations for Making the Most of Your Second Year](#)

[Hacking MIT: Recommendations for Making the Most of Your Third Year](#)

[Hacking MIT: Recommendations for Making the Most of Your Senior Year](#)

Questions for Departmental Advisors vs. UAC Advisors

The Undergraduate Advising Center at MIT was developed in response to a growing need to support and develop students beyond the first year. As a reminder, once students have declared a major and transitioned to their sophomore year, they will be assigned to a departmental advisor in their new department who serves as their primary advisor. UAC advisors serve as secondary advisors, supporting them holistically until they graduate. See examples of questions students might ask their departmental advisor vs. their UAC advisor.

Example Questions for Departmental Advisor/Department

- What can I do with my major?
- What are the differences between major options within the department?
- How do I decide between two upper-level elective courses?
- What research opportunities exist in this field?
- Should I go to graduate school?
- Can I substitute CLASS X for CLASS Y and fulfill my degree requirements?

Example Questions for UAC Advisors

- My departmental advisor is unavailable or not sure about X, Y, or Z, can you help me with...?
- Can you explain the nuances of Flexible P/NR grading?
- What tutoring resources are available to me?
- How can I get involved with an extra/co-curricular?
- Can I transfer credit from another institution?
- I'm a FLI student, how can I get involved?
- I haven't made authentic connections with my departmental advisor or peers - what can I do?

What Can I Do with a Major In...?

Discover what your advisee can do in their major regarding courses, UROP opportunities, career opportunities, and skills they will develop.

<https://firstyear.mit.edu/academics-exploration/major-exploration/major-information-sheets/>

Academic Administrators and Officers

Undergraduate academic administrators and officers serve as key contacts for individual departments and programs at MIT. Their responsibilities typically include advising and mentoring, degree lists and graduation preparation, departmental advisor assignments, grade reporting, orientation, policy implementation, registration, and UROP and thesis processing, among others.

Undergraduate officers are faculty members and senior lecturers involved with undergraduate advising and curriculum; responsibilities vary by department.

<https://registrar.mit.edu/registration-academics/advising-resources-students/academic-administrators-officers>

Subject Listings and Degree Charts

Degree Charts: <https://catalog.mit.edu/degree-charts/>

MIT Subject Listing & Schedule: <https://student.mit.edu/catalog/index.cgi>

Concerned about a student?

Are you concerned about a student?

Whether it's an immediate concern during the weekday or after hours, the [DoingWell](#) site can help direct you to next steps whether your concern is urgent or non-urgent.

MIT Guide: Recognizing and Responding to Students in Distress

"As MIT faculty, instructors, and staff you are essential members of our student support network. This guide was created to make it easier for you to help our students connect to resources.

We invite you to peruse the navigation menu on the left (or at the top of your screen if you are on a mobile device) to find information about common distress indicators, advice on how to talk to students and refer them to the right support, and referral instructions.

Faculty and instructors naturally want to create an environment where students flourish intellectually and personally. By reviewing this guide's practical advice and keeping the link bookmarked, you can ensure we take another important step toward building a healthier, stronger, and more caring MIT."

Please note this resource can support ALL departmental advisors, regardless of title.

<https://facultyguide.mit.edu/>

Privacy & Reporting

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

"The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) is a federal law that pertains to the release of and access to student education records. FERPA affords students the right to have access to their education records, the right to seek to have their records amended, and the right to have some control over the disclosure of personally identifiable information from their education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under applicable programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education."

[Click here](#) for a summary on MIT's policy.

Institute Discrimination & Harassment Response Office (IDHR)

"MIT is committed to providing a working, living, and learning environment free from discrimination and discriminatory harassment for all community members including students, faculty, and staff. While preventing such incidents is a community-wide responsibility, the Institute Discrimination and Harassment Response Office supports community members who have experienced harm to access available resources and reporting options."

[Click here](#) for more information support and reporting through IDHR.

Clery Report

The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, more commonly known as the Clery Act, requires colleges and universities to publish an annual report every year by October 1 that contains three years of campus crime and fire safety statistics and certain campus security policy statements.

[Click here](#) to learn more.

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

"To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the health care system, the [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 \(HIPAA\)](#), Public Law 104-191, included Administrative Simplification provisions that required HHS to adopt national standards for electronic health care transactions and code sets, unique health identifiers, and security. At the same time, Congress recognized that advances in electronic technology could erode the privacy of health information. Consequently, Congress incorporated into HIPAA provisions that mandated the adoption of Federal privacy protections for individually identifiable health information."

[Click here](#) for more information on HIPAA.

Grades & Academic Resources

Academic Policies:

- Registration and Credit Limit
 - [Add/Drop/Change](#)
 - [First Year Credit Limit](#)
- Grading Options
 - [Flex P/NR](#)
 - [Incomplete](#)
 - [Changing A Grade](#)
 - [Listener](#)
 - [IAP Grading](#)

Committee on Academic Performance (CAP)

CAP oversees academic record petitions, enforcement of credit limits, end of term academic reviews, degree candidate reviews, and recommendations to the faculty on matters relating to academic standards, exams, degree requirements, and grading.

- [CAP Overview](#)
- [Leaves of Absence](#)
- [Returning from Leave](#)

Academic Support Resources

- [Writing & Communications Center](#): Writing support for undergrad and grad students
- [Tutoring](#): Tutoring services are offered by a variety of departments, schools and offices
- [Talented Scholars Resource Room \(TSR^2\)](#): Free tutoring support for a variety of subjects, including P-set nights, exam reviews, 1:1 appointments, and more
- [Flipping Failure](#): Short videos of MIT students sharing strategies they have used to cope with difficult situations

Student Support Offices:

- [Office of the First Year](#): Promotes the academic success and personal development of first-year students.
- [Student Support Services \(S3\)](#): Private resource for students who are struggling personally or academically
- [Disability Access Services \(DAS\)](#): Provides support and accommodations for students with disabilities
- [Office of Minority Education](#): Promotes academic excellence, builds strong communities, and develops professional mindsets among students of underrepresented minority groups.

Student Wellbeing

Check out the [MIT Guide, Recognizing and Responding to Students in Distress](#)

MIT shows its commitment to student wellness through various resources across the Institute. We work to coordinate services that will help students prioritize their wellbeing by practicing healthy habits and getting support when needed. Part of your role as their advisor is to notice when a referral to one of the resources listed below might be necessary. The services provided are guided by MIT's wellbeing pillars:

- **Mind:** Taking care of your mind is critical to managing your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, and also allows you to reason, innovate, practice self-compassion, empathize, and develop insight.
- **Body:** Caring for your body is foundational to wellbeing and includes getting good sleep, physical exercise, and eating well. Wellbeing for your body is not tied to physical ability or size.
- **Relationships:** Healthy relationships and meaningful connections help create thriving communities where everyone feels valued and respected.
- **Purpose:** A sense of purpose helps you make sense of your experience in the world, discover what is meaningful to you, and figure out who you want to become.

Wellness Resources

- [Office of Student Wellbeing](#): Coordinates programs and resources to help students prioritize wellbeing by practicing healthy habits
- [Disability Access Services \(DAS\)](#): Provides support and accommodations for students with disabilities
- [CARE Team](#): Support students with significant personal, medical, and mental-health related challenges during their time at MIT
- [Violence Prevention & Response \(VPR\)](#): Primary resource for preventing and responding to interpersonal violence including sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, stalking, and sexual harassment
- [MIT Medical](#): Provides a wide array of medical services including urgent care, primary care, and more
- [Mental Health and Counseling](#): Offers confidential counseling (individual and group) for all students

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

MIT values and supports its diverse population of students, staff, and faculty. Please see below for the many resources and initiatives that the institute has developed to support its mission.

Resources For Advisors

- [Defining Diversity, Equity, and Incision](#): Learn more about what DEI looks like at MIT
- [Institute Community, and Equity Office \(ICEO\)](#): Amplifies MIT's sense of community, inspires meaningful conversations, builds skills, and supports new inclusion initiatives
- [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Data](#): MIT's Office of Institutional Research generates and maintains a vast repository of data and interactive tools regarding multiple aspects of diversity at the Institute
- [Talking About Race](#): Learn more about how to talk about race from the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture.
- [Gender Identity Initiatives](#): Changes to MIT systems that will improve inclusive representation of gender identities while protecting individual privacy, enabling greater autonomy, and meeting legal requirements
- [Accessibility](#): Disability and Access Services ensures that students have access to all of MIT's programs, activities, and services.
- [Religious Holidays](#): Learn more about how MIT and Massachusetts State Law regard student absence due to religious beliefs

Programs & Services For Students

- [Office of Minority Education \(OME\)](#): Promotes academic excellence, builds strong communities, and develops professional mindsets among students of underrepresented minority groups
- [Intercultural Engagement](#): Provides tools, skills and knowledge for students to be champions of diversity and social justice
- [International Students Office](#): Aids international students in their transition to life in the US
- [FLI @MIT](#): The First Generation and/or Low-income (FLI) program supports the ~30% of undergraduate students who identify with the first generation and/or low-income student experience
- [LBGTQ+ Services](#): Resource for diverse gender, romantic, and sexual identities
- [Disability Access Service](#): Provides support and accommodations for students with disabilities

Learning & Growth

MIT offers a wide range of helpful resources to support students in their creative and professional journeys:

- [Career Advising and Professional Development \(CAPD\)](#): MIT's hub for career advising, distinguished fellowship advising, pre-health advising, and professional development support
- [Experiential Learning](#): Provides opportunities for students to earn money or academic credit while they work on challenging and meaningful hands-on projects
- [Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program \(UROP\)](#): Provides students the opportunity to collaborate on and contribute to research across MIT
- [Undergraduate Practice Opportunities Program \(UPOP\)](#): Yearlong program exclusively for sophomores that helps them develop critical professional skills to thrive in their chosen career path.
- [Project Manus](#): Enhancing campus making and fostering student maker communities
- [Maker Spaces](#): There are several locations on the MIT campus where students can find space and tools to work on creative projects

Additional Resources

- **Faculty Leadership Training Programs**
- [Faculty Leadership Training Programs](#)
- **Programming for New Faculty and Instructors**
- *The MIT Teaching and Learning Lab offers support to new faculty in the form of 1-1 consultations, teaching workshops, and coffee + community.*
- [Programming for New Faculty and Instructors](#)

May 2024, Undergraduate Advising Center's First Year Advising Assessment Analysis: Future Expectations for Departmental Advising

In May 2024, the Undergraduate Advising Center (UAC) surveyed the class of 2027 to evaluate first-year students' advising experiences, understanding of the UAC, and expectations for advising beyond their first year.

Below is a list of answers to the question, "what are you most hoping to get out of your relationship with your departmental advisor?"

1. Academic Guidance:

- Many students are looking for advice on course selection, major-specific class scheduling, and planning their academic experience.
- Specific guidance on navigating major requirements, minors, double majors, and educational pathways such as MEng.
- 95% of students believe it is important that they can ask their departmental advisor about academic problems.

2. Career Advice:

- Students are interested in receiving advice on career planning, including guidance on internships, UROP opportunities, and future career paths.
- Some are specifically looking for advice on graduate school applications and career opportunities in their field of study.

3. Mentorship:

- There is a desire for a mentor-mentee relationship, where the advisor can provide personal and professional growth opportunities.
- Students hope for a reliable mentor who understands their abilities and interests, and who can support them throughout their college journey and beyond.

4. Personal and Professional Development:

- Students want to develop a positive and supportive relationship with their advisor, someone they can connect with on both academic and personal levels.

- They are looking for advisors who can provide insight into life at MIT, extracurricular activities, and navigating the academic and cultural environment.
- 5. Resource Access and Networking:**
- There is a hope that advisors will help students access resources such as research opportunities, internships, and professional connections.
 - Guidance on leveraging MIT's resources and networks to optimize their academic and professional experiences.
 - 83% of students feel that it is important to them that they can ask their departmental advisor about MIT resources.
- 6. Individualized Advice:**
- Students want personalized advice that considers their unique academic situations, goals, and interests.
 - Specific guidance tailored to their major and career aspirations, including help with balancing course loads and avoiding burnout.
- 7. General Support:**
- Students seek overall guidance to navigate their college experience effectively, including understanding MIT policies and making informed decisions.
 - Emotional and motivational support to ensure they feel cared for and understood by their advisor.
- 8. Long-term Relationship:**
- Some students hope to maintain a relationship with their advisor that extends beyond their time at MIT, providing continued support and mentorship in their professional lives.

In summary, students are looking for a multifaceted relationship with their departmental advisor that encompasses academic and career guidance, personal mentorship, access to resources, and long-term support.

MIT Student Perspectives on Advising: Lessons from Interviews with Students from the Classes of 2022 & 2023 compiled by Anne E. Marshall, Ph. D. Associate Director for Research and Evaluation

According to Insights from MIT Student Perspectives on Advising: Lessons from Interviews with Students from the Classes of 2022 & 2023 compiled by Anne E. Marshall, Ph. D. Associate Director for Research and Evaluation, MIT students have opinions about what they seek in an advising relationship.

Students appreciate an advisor who:

- Timely and responsive.
- Cares about their well-being.
- Approachable and helps make them feel comfortable.
- Helps them navigate major and minor requirements. Students have expressed that course selection can feel overwhelming.
- Helps them find opportunities outside of their classes.
- Connects them with people who can help enrich their academic experience.
- Offers guidance but ultimately gives them the space to make the decision and validate their perspectives and decisions.
- Helps them identify their limits.
- Encourages them to explore outside of their comfort zones.
- Shows an interest in them beyond their class selections.

Keep in mind that:

- Students receive valuable advice and perspectives about MIT from peers, upperclassmen, and alumni.
- Students may not know what questions to ask. Feel free to guide them towards topics you might think would be beneficial.
- Students need guidance for course selection and other logistics, but they also want to understand the big picture and meaning behind their degree.

Case Studies: UAC and Departmental Advising

Results from the UAC survey:

Case Study 1: Navigating Course Load and Credit Limits

Scenario:

A first-year student expresses a strong desire to take more than the credit limit allowed for their first semester at MIT. They are confident in their ability to handle the workload and believe they need to accelerate their progress in order to keep up with peers or advance more quickly toward their goals.

Advising Context:

In this case, the advisor engages the student in a developmental conversation about balancing academic ambition with the realities of transitioning to a new, more rigorous educational environment. The advisor emphasizes that the student has plenty of time to achieve their goals and reassures them that they are not behind.

Guiding Questions:

- How would you approach this conversation to ensure the student feels supported while understanding the importance of balance in their first year?
- How might you address the student's perception of being "behind" compared to their peers?
- What campus resources could be useful in helping the student build a successful academic plan within the credit limits?

Case Study 2: Skipping Pre-requisites for Upper-Level Classes

Scenario:

A first-year student is eager to skip introductory courses and enroll in upper-level classes without completing the prerequisites. The student believes they already possess the necessary knowledge from high school and does not see the value in taking pre-requisite courses. They are determined to challenge themselves and are seeking advice on how to bypass these requirements.

Advising Context:

The advisor explains the purpose of pre-requisite courses, which build foundational knowledge necessary for success in upper-level classes. They also clarify that faculty have the discretion to deny a student's enrollment in a course if they are inadequately

prepared. Ultimately, the advisor encourages the student to take ownership of their decision while providing guidance on the risks involved.

Guiding Questions:

- How do you navigate a situation where a student insists on skipping prerequisites despite your advice?
- How do you encourage students to take ownership of their academic decisions while also ensuring they understand the potential challenges?
- What role can faculty play in these discussions, and how would you facilitate that communication?

Case Study 3: Mental Health and Reluctance to Seek Support

Scenario:

A sophomore student is struggling with mental health challenges but is reluctant to seek support from MIT's health services or Student Support Services (S³). They express anxiety and discomfort about engaging with these resources but confide in their advisor during a meeting.

Advising Context:

The advisor reassures the student and encourages them to connect with MIT Medical and S³. They also offer to check in regularly and provide reassurance that seeking help is a normal part of the student experience.

Guiding Questions:

- What are the key considerations when advising a student reluctant to seek mental health support?
- How can you balance providing reassurance with encouraging the student to take proactive steps toward getting help?
- What steps can you take to create a supportive environment that fosters trust and openness in these situations?

Case Study 4: Family Issues and Crisis Intervention

Scenario:

A student dealing with significant family issues, including suicidal ideation, reaches out to their advisor for support. The student has built a trusting relationship with the advisor over time, meeting regularly to check in on both academic and personal matters. The advisor takes immediate action to connect the student with MIT Health and walks the student to S³ for further support.

Advising Context:

This situation highlights the importance of the advisor-student relationship in crisis situations. The advisor's proactive approach in referring the student to the appropriate resources demonstrates how critical it is for students to know where to go for help.

Guiding Questions:

- How can you build a trusting relationship with students so that they feel comfortable coming to you in times of crisis?
- What is your role in crisis intervention, and when should you refer students to other services?
- How can you ensure that students are aware of the mental health and support services available to them?

Case Study 5: Reassuring Students About "Being Behind"

Scenario:

Many students, particularly sophomores, express anxiety about feeling "behind" in their academic and career journeys. They worry about not having found internships, not being certain about their major, or not having a clear career direction. In advising sessions, students often seek reassurance and validation that they are on the right track.

Advising Context:

The advisor helps students reframe their concerns by reassuring them that many other students are facing similar challenges. They also guide students toward available resources, such as the Career Advising & Professional Development (CAPD) office, and encourage them to explore opportunities like UROP and MISTI.

Guiding Questions:

- What strategies do you use to reassure students who feel anxious about their academic or career progress?
- How can you normalize feelings of uncertainty and help students feel confident in their unique path?
- What resources can you direct students to that will help them feel more prepared and less anxious?

Results from the Departmental Advising Survey:

Case Study 1: FLI Students and Culture Shock

Scenario:

A first-generation, low-income (FLI) student contacted their advisor after failing two

midterms. The student, coming from a rural area, was used to working alone and found it intimidating to approach faculty or use academic resources like tutoring and office hours. They also struggled to fit in socially at MIT.

Advisor Actions:

The advisor asked questions to understand the student's academic and social challenges, such as:

- What are your study strategies?
- Are you working on problem sets alone or with others?
- What academic resources are you using at MIT?
- Do you feel comfortable asking for help?
- Are external factors impacting your academic performance?

The advisor then connected the student to resources like TSR², tutoring, flipping failure study strategies, and Student Support Services (S3). They encouraged the student to work in groups, use active recall, and attend office hours to get extra practice and deeper understanding.

Outcome:

Through these strategies, the student realized that culture shock and isolation were contributing to their academic struggles. Engaging in group work and building faculty relationships improved their confidence and academic performance.

Interactive Questions:

1. What additional questions might you ask this student to better understand their struggles?
2. What strategies would you suggest for encouraging a student to reach out to faculty if they find it intimidating?
3. How might you help a student from a rural or isolated background adjust to MIT's collaborative environment?
4. What other resources could be recommended to a student experiencing culture shock?

Case Study 2: Mental Health and Academic Performance

Scenario:

A student with a history of anxiety had experienced repeated academic failures despite being in therapy. The advisor initiated bi-weekly check-ins to provide additional support, having learned that less frequent meetings were ineffective in the previous term.

Advisor Actions:

The advisor coordinated with S3 to ensure the student had access to mental health resources and monitored the student's academic progress closely. In an earlier case, the

advisor even physically accompanied a student to mental health services to ensure they were connected with the necessary support.

Outcome:

The student appreciated the increased support and regular check-ins, which helped them stay on top of their academics. The advisor's proactive involvement ensured that the student had both academic and mental health support.

Interactive Questions:

1. How would you approach a student who is reluctant to discuss their mental health struggles?
2. What signs might indicate that a student's academic difficulties are linked to mental health concerns?
3. How can advisors maintain professional boundaries while still providing emotional support to students?
4. What role do regular check-ins play in supporting students with ongoing mental health issues?

Case Study 3: Course Load Management and Overcommitment

Scenario:

A senior math student, after previously overloading on courses and dropping to three classes in earlier semesters, insisted on taking six courses again. The student felt that improvements in their living situation would enable them to handle a heavier load.

Advisor Actions:

The advisor recommended starting with four courses, with the option to add a fifth if the student performed well. This compromise allowed the student to manage a more realistic workload while testing their ability to handle additional courses.

Outcome:

The student agreed to the advisor's suggestion, adding a fifth course later in the term when their performance remained strong. The structured approach helped the student balance their ambitions with academic success.

Interactive Questions:

1. How would you handle a student who insists on taking an overly ambitious course load?
2. What factors would you consider in advising a student about their course selection?
3. How can you support students in setting realistic academic goals while still allowing them to challenge themselves?

4. What follow-up strategies would you use to ensure the student is managing their course load effectively?

Case Study 4: Building Relationships with Students

Scenario:

An advisor found it challenging to engage a student who seemed disinterested and disengaged. The advisor tried to establish a rapport by having informal "walk-and-talk" meetings and discussing anything that seemed to be on the student's mind.

Advisor Actions:

The advisor shifted the focus of their meetings to casual conversations, modeling curiosity and a love for learning in hopes of inspiring the student. The goal was to help the student see that academic exploration could be enjoyable rather than just about accumulating credits.

Outcome:

The informal approach helped the student open up over time, and they became more engaged in their academic journey, realizing that learning could be both fun and fulfilling.

Interactive Questions:

1. How would you engage a student who appears bored or disengaged during advising meetings?
2. What creative strategies might help build rapport with a student who is reluctant to engage academically?
3. How can you encourage students to slow down and enjoy their learning experience rather than focusing solely on credentials?
4. What methods can you use to build a relationship with a student before academic issues arise?

Case Study 5: Trust and Communication Issues

Scenario:

A student altered their course registration without informing the advisor, breaking the advisor's trust. This led the advisor to transfer the student to another advisor, as the relationship had been damaged beyond repair.

Advisor Actions:

The advisor confronted the student about the registration changes with the help of the associate head of the department. After realizing the extent of the issue, the advisor decided that a different advisor would be a better fit for the student.

Outcome:

The student was reassigned to another advisor, but the situation highlighted the

importance of maintaining clear communication and trust between students and their advisors.

Interactive Questions:

1. How would you handle a situation where a student breaks your trust by going behind your back with course registration?
2. What steps can you take to ensure open communication with your advisees?
3. How would you rebuild trust with a student after a significant breach of communication?
4. What boundaries should advisors establish to prevent misunderstandings with students?