



ACADEMIC ADVISING **HANDBOOK**

ACADEMIC ADVISING & SUPPORT



REVISED FALL 2022

MCLA

INTRODUCTION

Dear Advisor:

This edition of MCLA’s Academic Advising Handbook was developed as a guide for new advisors, and to serve as a resource for any faculty or staff who do advising work at MCLA.

The handbook is divided into two sections. The first section contains information specific to advising at MCLA. You will find information about graduation requirements, the core curriculum, how to use software and programs for advising, and information about academic policies.

The second section serves as a practical guide with open-ended questions you can use to build meaningful relationships with your students.

Please read this handbook carefully, and keep it on hand as a reference for your advising work. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, please feel free to share them with me.

Sincerely,

Kayla Hollins
Executive Director of Student Persistence
Academic Advising & Support



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SECTION I

Graduation Requirements

1. Students must earn a minimum of 120 credits. 45 credits must be earned at MCLA, and students must take the last 15 credits at MCLA.
2. Students must fulfill all core curriculum requirements. MCLA's integrative core curriculum consists of three tiers (detailed below)
3. Students must complete all major requirements.
4. Students must complete at least 39 upper level (UL) credits. UL courses are listed at a 300 level or higher.

Integrative Core Curriculum Requirements

Tier I: Integrative Foundational Level

- **Critical reading, thinking, and writing (CWR):** students must successfully complete ENGL 150 College Writing II
- **Quantitative reasoning (CMA):** students must successfully complete a lower-level math class. (Some majors require students to take a specific math class. The advisor and the student should work together to ensure that the student takes the appropriate CMA course.)
MATH 102 Mathematics for Liberal Arts
MATH 232 Intro to Statistics
MATH 150 Pre-Calculus
MATH 220 Calculus I
- **Health & Wellness (CHW):** students must successfully complete 1 class. Course options vary each semester.

FSEM: First-Year Seminar

- First year students must complete 1 class, which is an integrative content course

Tier II: Integrative Content Level

- **Creative Arts (CCA):** Students must complete 2 classes. Course options vary each semester.
- **Human Heritage (CHH):** Students must complete 2 classes. Course options vary each semester.
- **Self and Society (CSS):** Students must complete 2 classes. Course options vary each semester.
- **Science and Technology (CST/CSTL):** Students must complete 2 classes; at least one class must have a lab component. Course options vary each semester.
- **Language, Culture & Communication (CLA):** students must successfully complete 1 class.

Tier III: Integrative Capstone Seminar

- **Capstone (CAP):** Students must complete 1 core capstone class (topics and offerings vary each semester) after they have completed all other core curriculum requirements and are at least in junior standing. If a student wishes to take a CCAP before they finish all other core requirements, they must get approval from the professor teaching the CCAP and their advisor.

Using Degree Works and Advising

Degree Works is the software that MCLA uses to provide students with their degree audit. Advisors should work with their advisees to ensure that they understand how to use Degree Works for a variety of things:

- **Course selection and semester planning:** Students can look at their progress with all graduation requirements on their Degree Works degree audit. Course requirements that are not yet met will have a hyperlink by them that shows a student what course(s) fulfill the requirement, if it's being offered next semester, and the seat availability, times the course is offered, and what prerequisites the student must fulfill before taking a given course (if applicable).
- **"What If" tool:** When students want to explore different majors, minors, and concentrations, this tool is very helpful. Students can see what their degree audit would look like if they changed, added, or dropped majors, concentrations, or minors.
- **GPA Calculator:** Students and advisors can also use the GPA calculator provided with the degree audit. There are three different GPA calculators available:
- **Graduation calculator:** Students can input number of credits left to graduate and desired GPA to show what GPA goals they need to achieve each semester
- **Term calculator:** Students can predict what their cumulative GPA will be at the end of the semester
- **Advice calculator:** Students can input a desired GPA and see what grades they would need to get to achieve that GPA
- **Waiver Requests:** When an advisor is working with a student and feels that the student has fulfilled a core or major requirement with another course they took here or at a previous institution,

Registration Process

Students are notified by the Registrar's Office via email of their registration date and time frame for registering for next semester's classes.

Step 1: Students and advisors receive an email from the Registrar's Office that includes their registration date and time. Advisors receive an email and a packet of envelopes from the Registrar's Office that includes PIN envelopes for each of their advisees. They also receive a list of advisees, their registration times, and if their advisees have any holds on their account. Students cannot register for classes until all holds are cleared.

Step 2: Advisors should meet with all advisees before their registration time. A student cannot register without their PIN, and they can only get their PIN envelope from their advisor. During this meeting, advisors should look at the student's Degree Works degree audit with them, review the student's course selections for the following semester, and discuss goals and graduation plan if necessary.

Step 3: Students can register for classes online using Banner starting at their registration date and time, and through to the last day of online registration. If a student wishes to make any changes to their schedule after their online window has closed, they must fill out a matriculated registration form and get their advisor's signature or email approval.

Registration times for students vary depending on several factors:

- Amount of credits earned
- If a student is an athlete in season the following semester
- If a student is in the Honor's program
- If a student has priority access to registration via Disability Resources

Making Schedule Changes

Add/Drop period: Students can make changes to their semester courses at any point before the semester begins, with the approval of their academic advisor. They can continue to make schedule changes during the add/drop period, which is the first seven weekdays of the semester. To make schedule changes during the add/drop period, students must fill out an [add/drop form](#), which requires a signature or email approval from their advisor, and a signature or email approval from the professor if the student is trying to add a course. If a student wishes to drop a class, they need approval from their advisor, but no signature is required from the professor of the class they are dropping. If a student wishes to maintain full-time status, they should stay enrolled in at least 12 credits.

Withdrawal period: After the add/drop period ends, students can still withdraw from any course(s) until the end of the withdrawal period, or halfway through the semester (the deadline for each semester can be found on the [academic calendar](#)). In order for a student to withdraw from a course, they need to fill out a [withdrawal form](#) and get a signature or email approval from both the professor teaching the course and their advisor. Withdrawing from a course results in a "W" for a grade on the student's transcript.*

*Withdrawing from a course(s) could affect a student's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), which impacts their financial aid package. SAP is mandated through Student Financial Services. More information about SAP can be found [here](#).

Academic Standing Policy

MCLA's academic standing policy can be found [here](#).

If a student's GPA falls in the academic suspension range (see academic standing policy, ranges vary depending on how many credits a student has earned), the following occurs:

Step 1: A student is notified via email and letter by the Registrar's Office of their academic suspension and is offered the chance to appeal.

Step 2: A student has to fill out the appeal form (attached to the email notifying them of suspension) and submit it to the Registrar's Office if they wish to return to MCLA the following semester.

Step 3: An Academic Appeals Committee then meets to review suspension appeals and decides whether or not to allow a student to return. If a student's appeal is granted, the committee creates conditions for the student's return, which could range from changes to a student's schedule, a GPA requirement for the semester, etc. The advisor is notified of these conditions.

If a student's appeal is not approved, or they choose not to appeal their suspension, information about requirements to return to MCLA are found [here](#).

Leave of Absence and Withdrawal from College*

A student may need to step away from MCLA for a variety of reasons. If this is the case, a student may take a Leave of Absence (LoA) or totally Withdraw (WX) from the college. If your advisee is considering one of these options, you should meet with them to assess what the student's options are, and what the best plan is for them.

Leave of Absence (LoA): A student can take an LoA from the college if their cumulative GPA is in good academic standing (at least a 2.0), and if they have no holds on their account (which can be seen in Banner and on Degree Works). The LoA is best for a student who is considering returning to MCLA in the future. An LoA can be taken for a maximum of two (2) consecutive semesters, and when a student wishes to return, they must contact the Registrar's Office. If a student chooses to take an LoA prior to the last day of classes, they will receive a WX for all grades. A student cannot extend an LoA beyond two semesters. After the second semester on leave, if they do not wish to return, they will be withdrawn from the college.

Withdrawal (WX): Prior to the first day of final exams, a student can withdraw from the college without receiving grades for their courses (their transcript will show WX for all grades). A student who wishes to take their grades for the semester, but does not plan to return in the future, can process a withdrawal form with the Registrar's Office that is dated the day after grades are due.

*Withdrawing or taking a leave of absence prior to the semester's end could affect a student's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), which impacts their financial aid package. SAP is mandated through Student Financial Services. More information about SAP can be found [here](#). Please advise any students considering these options to talk with Student Financial Services prior to making a decision.

Grading Policies and Advising

Midterm Warnings: A student will be issued a midterm warning(s) if at the midway point in the semester, their grade(s) in a course(s) is a D+ or lower. Students and their advisors are notified of any midterm warnings from the Registrar's Office. If you have an advisee who received midterm warnings, it's important to connect with that student and make sure they are accessing resources and receiving the support they need to improve their grade(s). Students with multiple midterm warnings may consider withdrawing from one or two courses to focus on the others.* This is just one option and should not be forced on a student if they believe they can be successful in the course.

Incomplete Grade Contract: A student may inquire about taking an Incomplete in a class(es) if they feel that given circumstances during the semester, they have not been able to adequately keep up with that coursework. A student can only take an Incomplete in a class if the faculty member approves and fills out an [Incomplete Grade Contract](#) with the student. Once the contract is filled out and submitted to the Registrar's Office, a student will receive a temporary grade of "I" until remaining work is submitted, and the faculty member alerts the Registrar's Office to change the "I" to the appropriate letter grade.

All information on grading policies, including Incomplete Grade Contracts and Midterm Warnings, can be found [here](#).

*Withdrawing from a course(s) could affect a student's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), which impacts their financial aid package. SAP is mandated through Student Financial Services. More information about SAP can be found [here](#).

Course Repeat: Students can repeat courses if they wish to earn a better grade. If a course is required for their major and they receive an F, they must repeat the course. The grade earned in a repeated course replaces the grade they received the first time (regardless of whether it is higher or lower). The initial grade no longer gets calculated in the student's GPA. If a student is repeating a course, they must fill out the [repeat course form](#) with their advisor.

Course Overload: A student who enrolls in more than 18 credits must fill out a [course overload form](#) with their advisor. For students who started in the Fall 2019 semester or later, an additional fee is applied per credit over 18 credits. More information about this policy can be found [here](#).

Additional forms and policy information helpful for advising can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

SECTION II

Open-Ended Questions for Meaningful Relationship Building with your Students

Questions regarding courses and academic life at MCLA

- How are you doing in your major? Does it feel like a good fit?
- How is your semester going?
- Which classes did you like the most last semester? The least?
- What kind of careers can you see yourself doing with your degree?
- Have there been any particular difficulties you have encountered?
- What courses have you been thinking about for next semester?
- Are there any special situations that we need to consider in planning your educational program? For example, do you have a job? Are you responsible for your family? Do you have a disability? Do you have military obligations?
- Have you thought about ways to add value to your degree through a minor, study abroad, internships, or national student exchange?
- Are you aware of the resources available to you? (tutoring, counseling, career services, study abroad, honors)

Questions to draw out what students enjoy doing, their strengths, and passions

- What would your friends say they like most about you?
- Tell me about a time when you lost track of time. What were you doing?
- Tell me about a time when you accomplished something that made you feel proud.
- Tell me about a time when you overcame a significant struggle in your life.
- What are your strengths? What makes you feel strong?
- Tell me about a time you felt motivated. What were you doing?
- Tell me about a time when you felt discouraged or unmotivated. What happened?
- Who is your biggest role model? Why do you consider that person your role model, and what about them do you hope to emulate?
- Tell me a story about a time you positively impacted another person's life.
- If you could do anything, what would it be?
- What is your wildest dream for your future?
- When you were young, and someone asked you, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" What was your answer? What is your answer to that question now?
- Imagine you are walking across the stage at graduation. What do you hope your fondest memories of MCLA will be? What skills will you have then that will serve you well in your career and in your life?