



REPORT OF THE PROVOST'S
WORKING GROUP ON
ACADEMIC ADVISING

April 2022

Western University



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Land Acknowledgement 3

Executive Summary..... 4

Recommendations 6

Key Themes in Academic Advising 9

 1. *Role Clarity and Scope*..... 9

 2. *Orientation, Professional Development, and Professionalization* 10

 3. *Technology and Systems* 11

 4. *Communication and Wayfinding*..... 13

 5. *Resources and Capacity* 13

 6. *Policy and Organizational Values and Principles*..... 15

Sources..... 17

APPENDICES 18

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms 19

Appendix 2: Methodology..... 20

Appendix 3: Provost’s Working Group on Academic Advising 22

Land Acknowledgement

Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton (Neutral) Peoples. The London area Treaties include Treaty 6 London Township, Treaty 7 Sombra Township, and Treaty 21 Longwoods. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors to our society. By recognizing Indigenous Peoples' relationships to the land, we make explicit Indigenous Peoples' presence and rights to self-determination.

Executive Summary

Academic advising is a core support for students at Western University as they navigate their academic program and pursue degree completion. Based on the results from recent surveys of graduating students and MacLean’s national survey of universities, Western seeks to not only improve academic advising services, but its ranking to comparable Canadian universities.

In June 2021, the Provost initiated a working group to examine the current environment at Western and comparator institutions with the goal of improving student experiences with academic advising services. Drawing on their expertise and experience, 20 members, including students, academic advisors, Faculties, and administrative staff across campus, participated in the working group with the mandate to:

- review current policies and practices at Western and specific comparator institutions to be identified from the environmental scan;
- consult broadly with the campus community to inform the work of the task force;
- develop a clear definition of academic advising at Western;
- provide recommendations to the Provost; and
- identify and outline programming and other organizational changes needed to improve academic advising outcomes.

In response to the mandate, the working group conducted an extensive review of the current academic advising supports and practices at Western with specific questions to understand the context:

1. *What is the level of student satisfaction with academic advising at Western?*
2. *What factors contribute to negative or positive student experiences with academic advising?*
3. *What does the existing data tell us?*

Drawing on the data from the university-wide consultation, the main body in this report is structured to provide detailed recommendations that will enable Western to fulfill its commitment to academic advising. Although Western’s ranking brought students’ concerns to the forefront, it has not been an important driver for our recommendations.

To achieve a vibrant academic advising community, specific recommendations include:

- **Meeting with comparative universities for relevant benchmarks (i.e., advisor to student ratio) and best practices in organizational structure**
- **Reviewing role descriptions for all academic advisors, embedding consistency in role outcomes and accountabilities relative to the academic programs they serve**
- **Expanding diversity in hiring for academic advising teams**
- **Centralizing and developing a robust onboarding and professional development plan for academic advisors**
- **Leveraging technology to share resources and alleviate workloads**
- **Utilizing consistent language on websites and in policy and documents to reflect the terminology of academic advising**

Additionally, the context at Western and among comparator institutions is presented in several themes: (i) role clarity and scope (ii) orientation, professional development, and professionalization (iii) technology and systems (iv) communications and wayfinding (v) resources and capacity (vi) policy, organizational values and principles. The Glossary of Terms, Methodology, and the Working Group Members are included in the Appendices.

**For the purposes of this report, the terms “academic advisor” and “academic advising” replace “academic counsellor” and “academic counselling” as recommended by the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association in 2020. This modification is explained in the section on role clarity and scope and noted in the recommendations.*

Recommendations

These recommendations to improve students' experiences with academic advising services are derived from the working group's assessment of the data in the consultation process at Western and from comparator institutions.

1. Role Clarity and Scope

- a. Review role descriptions for all academic advisors, embedding consistency in role outcomes and accountabilities relative to the academic programs they serve:
 - i. Standardize role titles in all Faculties to reference "advisor" as opposed to "counsellor"
 - ii. Include description/ranking of tasks and time spent on the tasks with consideration to workload variations during the annual cycle
 - iii. Clarify primary part of the role for students, Faculties, and colleagues through communications, social media, and outreach materials
- b. Provide a framework for a career in academic advising, including a clear progression through increasingly complex roles (e.g., Junior, Senior, Manager) using templates developed by Human Resources to ensure consistency across campus
- c. Develop a training program to clarify role responsibilities and best practices among the various levels/types of support units:
 - i. Provide a workflow chart to clarify accountabilities
- d. Establish an Academic Advising Coordinator role (1) to set up a forum for leaders in academic advising across Faculties in policy development and implementation, training, and professionalization, and (2) to represent the employee group at senior level forums (e.g., Associate Academic Deans, Senate Committee for Academic Programs and Awards)

2. Orientation, Professional Development, and Professionalization

- a. Develop a robust onboarding and professional development plan for academic advisors, common to all Faculties, that explains the boundaries of the role, including the limits of their responsibilities and when (and to whom) to make referrals (e.g., for mental health support, career coaching, or back to departments/schools for more specific academic advising)
- b. Provide opportunities for professional development (e.g., forums, conferences, workshops, speaker series) with clear professionalization outcomes/objectives:
 - i. Survey academic advisors to compile professional development needs and interests
 - ii. Provide financial support, in addition to the [Professional Expense Reimbursement](#) program, for membership and participation in professional academic advising associations, certification, and conferences:
 1. [National Academic Advising Association \(NACADA\)](#), an association of professional advisors, counsellors, faculty, administrators, and students, working to enhance the educational development of students hosts annual conferences
 2. Ontario Academic Advising Professionals (OAAP) striving to positively influence the educational experience of post-secondary students in Ontario through the research, development, and promotion of quality professional

development and networking opportunities for academic advising professionals hosts annual conferences

3. [Certifications at University of Manitoba](#) providing professional development in higher education administration and academic advising
- e. Increase the collaboration between decentralized academic advising teams and with other student support services across campus to improve support for students:
 - i. Host monthly meetings for the academic advising leaders
 - ii. Host bi-monthly forums that involve representatives from all relevant support units (e.g., Vice-Provost (Academic), Associate Deans)

3. Technology and Systems

- a. Continue to offer a variety of ways for students to connect with academic advisors
- b. Leverage the Jira Service Management System and deploy functionality to support workflow and messaging for academic advisory teams, department student services, Student Experience, and Office of the Registrar
- c. Provide an online portal or directory for students, Faculties, and administration that is maintained regularly with role and incumbent information, including a brief description of the position accountabilities and email/message functionality to manage these referrals
- d. Expand use of live chat feature through centralized services to address quick questions effectively and, thereby, alleviate workload for academic advisors
- e. Assign an IT support role to implement the service desk and related tools consistently across campus, provide parameters to customize approach depending on Faculty needs, and designed to get the desired outcomes with the end user requirements in mind
- f. Reassess the existing degree audit tool and develop it to support undergraduate students and to ensure they are on the path to degree completion
- g. Evaluate how technology will impact the ratios of academic advisors to students

While virtual connecting is an efficient way to support students seeking advice in academic matters, the human touch is critical in building a trusted relationship.

4. Communications and Wayfinding

- a. Implement a digital navigation platform for students to access academic advising and resources:
 - i. An accessible and responsive resource to engage all students with a road map to navigate resources (similar to the [COVID assessment tool](#)) and to ensure clarity on academic consideration (i.e., academic advising) versus accommodation (i.e., Accessible Education):
 1. when students should contact a program coordinator versus an academic advisor at the Faculty level
 2. after-hours support connection
 3. crisis resources
 4. includes an alert system to identify students who are struggling for early interventions and supports

- b. Utilize consistent language on websites and in policy and documents to reflect the terminology of academic advising:
 - i. Adapt for specializations within Faculties, but standardize the types of information that needs to be communicated to students (e.g., response time, hours of operation, method for acquiring an appointment, drop-in policy)
 - ii. Include academic advising and resources as mandatory requirement on all course outlines and in an accessible location within the course (e.g., posted slide, home page link) for all Faculties
- c. Develop proactive outreach through social media prompts to attract students who normally would not ask for help and remove the stigma that students must be in crisis to contact academic advising
- d. Educate incoming students about core functions of academic advising offices:
 - i. Orientation and transition programming (e.g., Summer Academic Orientation, Community Connections, O-Week)
 - ii. Short video tutorial to help students navigate through the academic advising process

5. Resources and Capacity

- a. Invest in resources at an institutional level, including the use of common technology to expedite service delivery and proactive measures to enable collaboration
- b. Plan for diversity in hiring employees in academic advising roles
- c. Engage in detailed discussions with comparable institutions to identify the appropriate academic advisor student ratio and other necessary support staff, and best practices to secure the resources for additional staff
- d. Utilize technology to track activity, including trends in the ratios of academic advisors to students, and evaluate if there is additional capacity to provide more decentralized supports

6. Policy and Organizational Values and Principals

- a. Develop policy with language that gives academic advisors clarity and confidence to establish the students' decisions and documentation to communicate to the other stakeholders
- b. Define values and principles to foster trust amongst academic advising offices and Faculties and allow the academic advisor in the home faculty/program to make the final decision
- c. Clarify the distinction between the responsibilities of Accessible Education in Student Experience and academic advising within the Faculties, and ensure that all parties, including students, are informed
- d. Write policy and documentation to clarify the distinctions between accommodations, which is advocacy based on documentation, versus advising, which is advocacy in advising for students' requests

Key Themes in Academic Advising

To identify current issues and best practices in academic advising, the working group carried out an extensive consultation with students, academic advisors, faculty, and administrative staff at Western. Additionally, Western worked with Academics Group to conduct an online scan of websites and institutional documents, and a benchmarking survey at six comparator universities. Three of the institutions and Western completed the survey and were interviewed as part of this study. From the data, several themes emerge as critical to understanding the current context.

1. Role Clarity and Scope

Role clarity and scope are major issues in the data. Specific concerns include the title for the role in academic advising and the range of expectations. Also of critical importance are the way academic advising offices vary within Faculties at Western to collaborate and communicate with other units who support students' academic learning (e.g., Accessible Education).

At Western a variety of titles exist across the Faculties, from “academic counsellor” to “academic advisor”. Additionally, because “counselling” is increasingly associated with mental health counselling, the use of the term “counsellor” creates confusion for students in need of support. Efforts at Western are in progress to reserve the title of “counsellor” for roles relevant to mental health work (e.g., Mental Health Counsellors in Student Experience).

In the Benchmarking Report none of the comparator institutions use the terminology “academic counselling” or “academic counsellor.” In compliance with the recommendation from the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, removal of the word counsellor is the best practice in post-secondary education for positions that are not employed as mental health or counselling supports.

“The reason for this change to titles such as academic advisor, academic coach, career advisor or career coach was to limit the confusion experienced by students who would come to these services (noting the word counsellor), with notable mental health issues as the presenting issue or, mental health was the primary barrier to achievement, or successful outcomes. It also was changed to reduce the risk of the employee who was not hired to provide psychotherapeutic services, from practising psychotherapy in their role where there was no institutional infrastructure in place (in that area) to manage emergent risks that come up in psychotherapeutic situations.” (McQuaid, 2020)

In addition to confusion about the role title, the expectations and scope of services in academic advising vary among the stakeholders. Primarily, academic advisors are experts in helping students navigate their academic journeys, set and achieve goals, and consider options based on interests and areas of strength. Students visit academic advising offices for course selection, adding/dropping courses, fulfillment of modular requirements, progression and graduation requirement checks, intent to register, academic relief (e.g., compassionate consideration, illness), support for navigating Western’s academic policies, career and/or graduate school advice, and assistance with academic appeals. They provide support for students who are required to withdraw, placed on academic probation, or who are displaced from their limited enrollment programs. Additionally, the staff in these units take part in recruitment and outreach events, providing information to prospective students. These accountabilities not only vary in allocation

of time, but also diverge among the Faculties at Western. Consequently, there are no standardized role descriptions that describe the full range of responsibilities for academic advisors across all Faculties.

These variations extend to operational levels. All students want easily accessible and timely support. Yet, academic advising offices vary in hours of operation, staffing levels per student population, methods for requesting appointments, ability to offer drop-in support, and response times.

The range of expectations in academic advising requires collaboration with multiple support units, including Accessible Education, Careers and Experience, Wellness and Wellbeing, Office of the Registrar, and Office of the Ombudsperson. If a student faces adversity, academic advisors lend their expertise to the next steps a student can take academically. They work with other supports on campus who can provide their expertise (e.g., Mental Health Counsellors), so students are getting the best service possible from each member of their care group across campus. However, communication between these units is often based on pre-existing relationships versus clear policy and consistent mechanisms to relay information; these gaps in clear direction create confusion among students, staff, and faculty about who is responsible for specific outcomes.

Moreover, self-care is a challenge. For staff, finding time to take allotted vacation can be difficult. Preparing for and returning from vacation can be more trouble than it is worth and can often be burdensome to colleagues who are trying to manage their own heavy workload.

2. Orientation, Professional Development, and Professionalization

Key themes, which are closely related to role clarity and scope, include orientation, professional development, and professionalization.

For new employees in academic advising, onboarding is handled by each Faculty; however, not all Faculties use a common approach, including training manuals. To meet HR requirements and problem-solving skills in the role, credentials like [Safe Talk, Mental Health First Aid, Supporting Disclosures of Gender Based Sexual Violence at Western](#) are mandatory. Additionally, new employees need to develop communication skills and strategies in academic advising, which enable the principles of equity and inclusivity in their interactions with students.

A significant objective for new employees pertains to the delicate balance between being a student advocate and an agent of policy. Academic advisors have a responsibility to support students; however, they may not always be able to comply with requests and must relay disappointing news. Academic advisors also support faculty members and must consider many factors when making important decisions that impact students and/or faculty members alike.

Employees in academic advising roles have a strong interest in professional development. However, meeting students' needs often takes precedence over availability and desire to participate. Specific programs in professional development include understanding all facets of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (EDID), cultural responsiveness, relationship building, and connecting with students, especially at a large university. With the demand for personalized services from academic advisors for students, programs that foster increased empathy, concern, compassion, and active listening are beneficial.

According to the Benchmarking Report, none of the comparator universities use a specific model for academic advising. All academic advising units are interested in increasing their level of professional development and express a desire to move in a direction that is more proactive than reactive and to foster professionalization of the advising field.

Most of the comparator institutions utilize Faculty-based advising enriched by regular pan-university interactions “that ensure consistency in advising, professionalization, cross-campus collaboration and sharing of best practices” (Academica, 2022). Moreover, they identify categories for increased responsibility, such as Advising Assistants, Advisors, Advising Manager (Academica, 2022), noting that opportunities vary depending on whether the faculty offers a professional program.

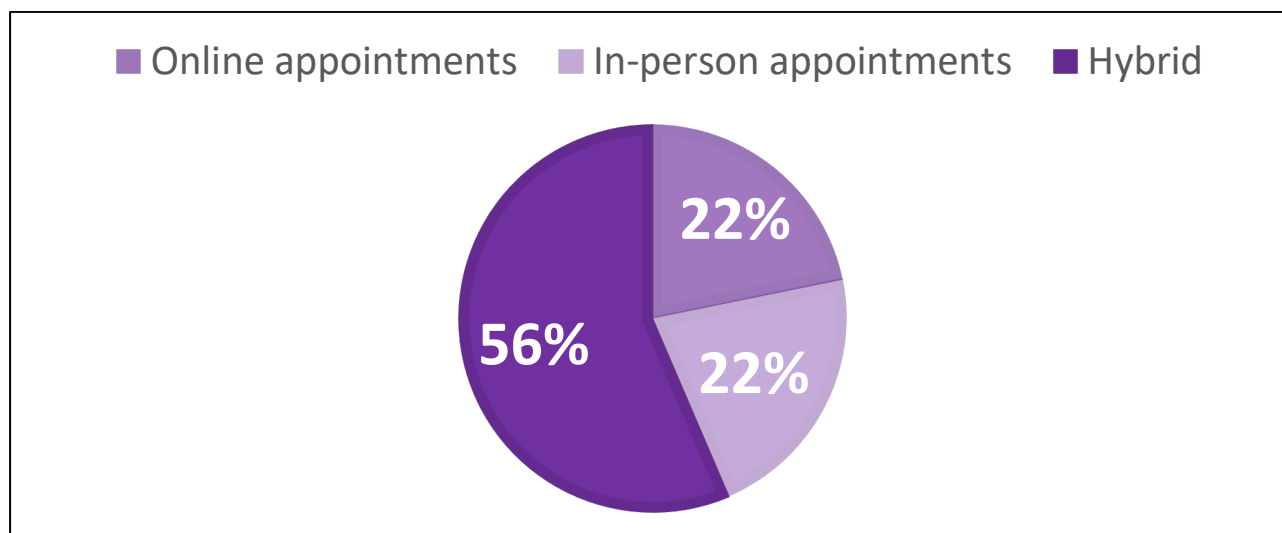
3. Technology and Systems

The consultation process generated valuable insights about the current use of technology to support the academic advising services and processes.

Prior to the pandemic, the walk-in support and requests for in-person meetings were unpredictable and, in some Faculties, unsustainable. However, since the delivery of remote academic advising in March 2020, Faculties are less reliant on drop-in queues and requests for appointments made in person. While phone and email correspondence continue, several Faculties have deployed a ticketing system to help the students request appointments online and to support the advisors in triaging and to keep track of the appointments and resolution of the question or concern. In addition, live chat options are available and monitored regularly. Virtual appointments are the norm for interacting with the student and their Faculty for most academic advisory teams using Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Graph 1

Preference for online appointments/in-person appointments/both



(USC Academic Support Survey, 2021)

Even so, feedback gathered from undergraduate students indicates the importance of a variety of points of contact and modes of communication to build a trusted relationship with the advisor. When students

are distressed, they want their questions addressed promptly. Reported absences and requests for academic relief/consideration are often urgent and require quick coordination between the department, faculty member, and the student. Consequently, mail inboxes fill up quickly for the academic advisors. While technology enables workflow notifications, some notifications from the ticketing systems with “no reply” email addresses are perceived as impersonal, and students would prefer to know who the person is that is helping them.

Online ticketing, live chat features and virtual appointments make academic advising more accessible for students, particularly those who are anxious and worried about the stigma of asking for help. Online access points are perceived as helping to remove the stigma associated with sitting in a physical waiting room to access drop-in services. Being able to access advising online for multiple durations (e.g., 15, 30, 60 minutes) also improves efficiency, accessibility, and are appreciated by students. Students that are enrolled in multiple discipline degrees, which require them to interact with more than one Faculty in their academic matters, would appreciate a consistent way to navigate for help, including several services delivered by Student Experience and the Office of the Registrar.

Western has site licenses for the Jira Service Management (Jira) with service desks that facilitate display options so that students get help quickly, and to streamline incoming work. Via simple, intuitive portals, Jira compiles requests from email, chat tools, service desks, and other channels. Each team configures its own portal and queues to track, triage, and assign incoming requests. Similar tickets can be grouped to make it easy to categorize service requests, incidents, problems, and changes. The service management tool helps students find answers to common questions. Using [Confluence](#) as a knowledge base can surface relevant articles and forms from existing web content or template responses to deflect requests. Jira can also support consistent measurement and reporting of metrics (i.e., access points, category of inquiry, length of time) to help each team understand how their services are being used and where they may need to put more resources. Not all these features are currently deployed among the Faculties at Western.

According to stakeholders, online forms and electronic signatures are effective and reduce the need for paper files. Some transactions, for example dropping or switching a course, are appropriately done through an online portal. However, to address more complex issues students and other stakeholders believe it is important to maintain face-to-face advising. The drop-in option without an appointment is valued and will continue to be important.

Some program staff note that it is often challenging to know who is doing what across campus due to turnover in roles. Without this information, the process makes it difficult to refer students to additional resources. If the program staff could see that the student has also accessed resources in other areas, it helps mitigate the risk that the student is going in circles to get resolution or answers. With this knowledge, the program staff are also aware if someone has an open case on the same issue.

One stakeholder shared that a degree audit function offered through the Office of the Registrar systems is helpful for third- and fourth-year students to navigate the modules and reduce the number of inquiries in the academic advising offices.

4. Communication and Wayfinding

Stakeholders identified communication and wayfinding among the challenges in academic advising due to the variations in providing information among the Faculties at Western. While the current options for services are in-person or virtual, the tools vary among the Faculties for students to make academic advising appointments from an online booking system or help portal to email or phone. Moreover, the decentralized model means that each faculty has a different approach to information about academic advising (website, portals, etc.). There is no common path, which causes confusion, especially for students in dual programs.

The inconsistencies for students moving between Faculties are identified by several sources. In response to the question “Have you ever had to correspond with multiple academic advising units (courses from other faculties, programs in other faculties”, 37% of the students answered yes (USC Survey, 2021). In some Faculties, the academic advisors walk students through the processes, such as appeals, whereas other Faculties direct students to the Office of the Ombudsperson for advice. What is provided in one Faculty may not be provided in another, resulting in confusion for the student. Academic advisors at Western identified the difficulty students have navigating between different advising systems/policies that exist in a decentralized advising model.

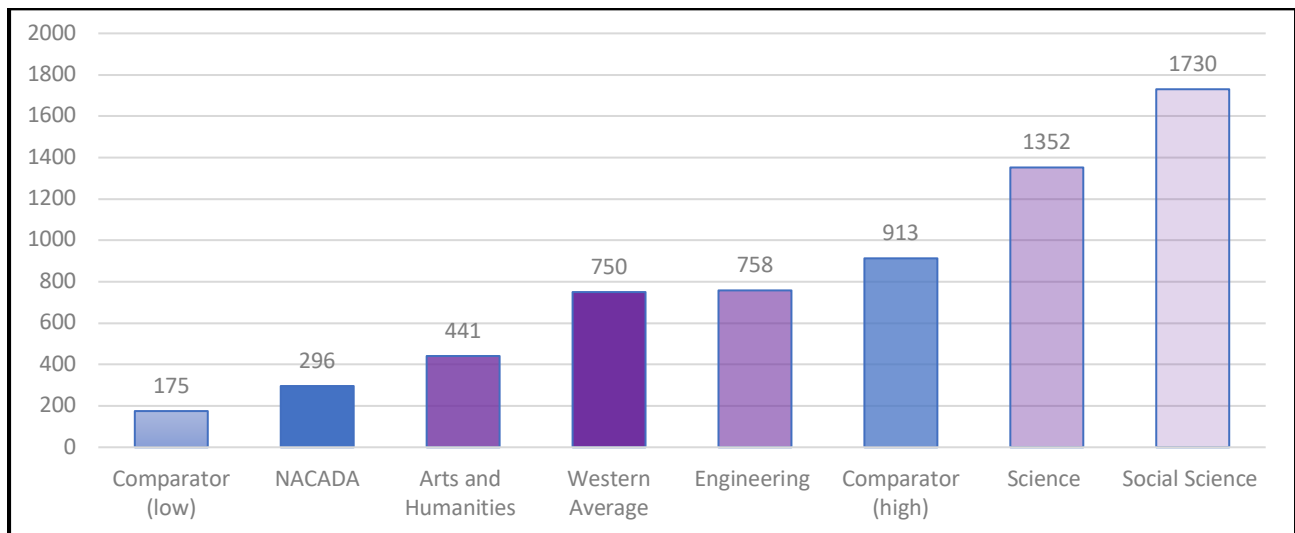
In the online scan of comparator institutions, it was not possible to identify the organizational structure of academic advising services (Academica, 2022).

5. Resources and Capacity

Academic advising is complex and serves multiple constituencies, from current students and faculty members to prospective students, parents, and other institutions. Given the large and diverse range of demands for service, this review of the resources and capacity at Western and other universities examines the ratio of advisor to students, stakeholders’ feedback, and models for academic advising.

At Western the ratio of academic advisor to students is an important metric. While the established benchmark of 1:296 (NACADA, 2011) is not current, Western’s most recent average in 2019 is 1 advisor to 750 students. Based on NACADA’s benchmark, the allocation of academic support roles across individual Faculties ranges from 49% (Arts and Humanities) to 484% (Social Science) above the recommended standard (Ombudspersons Report, 2021). Depending on the range of Faculty needs and accountabilities, departmental advisors and program coordinators are a mitigating factor in workloads for academic advisors across the Faculties. Nevertheless, additional resources are needed to bring Faculties, such as Social Science and Sciences, closer to Western’s average.

Graph 2

Academic Advisor (1) to Students Ratio

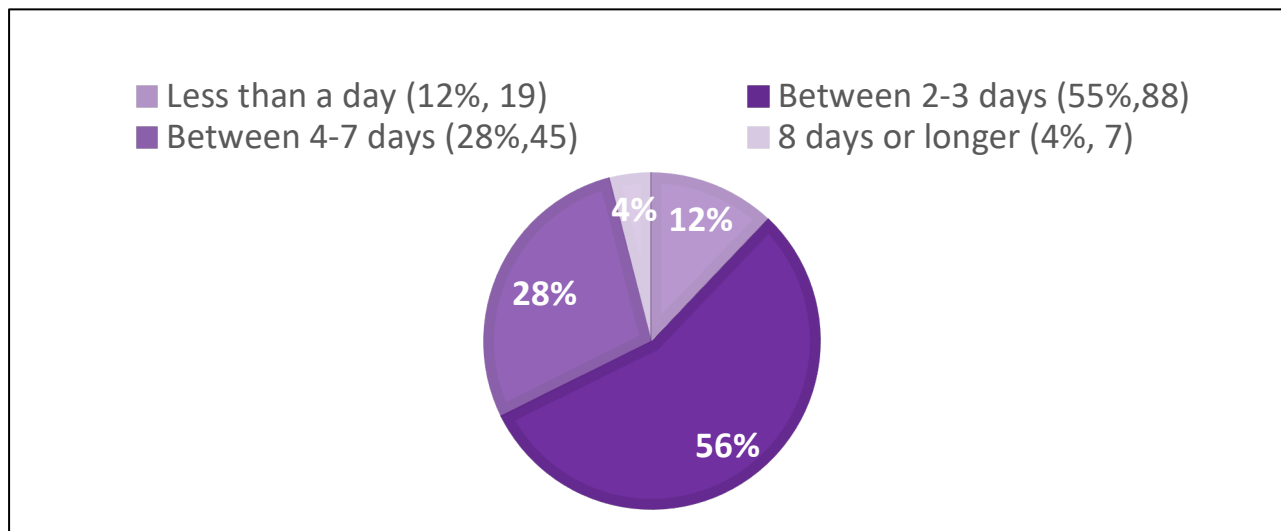
(National Academic Advising Association (NACADA, 2011))

"There are high demands placed on academic advisors – too many students, too many needs to be met... make their work prohibitive."

This overwhelming demand is reflected in the focus group analysis. Disparities in stakeholders' understanding about the definition of "academic advising", expectations, and outcomes demonstrate some of the confusion about the scope of academic advisors' work at Western. At an operational level, several students describe how from email auto responses, they can expect to wait anywhere between several days up to two weeks for a one-on-one appointment with an academic advisor.

Graph 3

Response time from an academic advisor



(USC Academic Support Survey, 2021)

Moreover, citing lack of visible diversity, the growing need for mental health resources and Indigenous services, language barriers, and insufficient access to advising, students express concerns about the range and availability of support in academic advising, especially the need for diversity in the academic advising teams. Although stakeholders convey their respect for academic advisors' work and the value of specialized services in Western's decentralized model, several mention that service levels vary across Faculties. For students, the experience is chaotic and impacts their wayfinding and ability to self-serve.

In the research on resources and capacity at the comparator universities, similarities to Western's approach and issues emerge, including the disproportionate ratio of advisor to students (see Graph 3). Students not only find it hard to access advising during peak periods, but lack of time also impacts collaboration between academic advising teams and other student services on campuses.

For the most part, the comparator institutions utilize a model of decentralized academic advising with some centralized services citing that the specialized nature of advising makes it necessary for academic advising to be connected to each faculty/program. Although their responses indicate general support for a decentralized model, there are concerns about how the lack of resources affects students and the need for a better model for service and professionalization across academic advising.

6. Policy and Organizational Values and Principles

Policy and organizational values and principals define academic advising at Western. Limits on advocacy, lack of clarity on jurisdiction, various interpretations of policies, multiple stakeholders, faculty control, and inflexible attitudes not only affect timely decision-making, but also consistent student experiences.

Academic advisors' advocacy for students and guidance to instructors on best practices is limited by a concern that their advocacy should not impose on instructors or ignore departmental Faculty or Senate policies. However, many stakeholders believe that advocacy is an important aspect of the academic

advising role. This is closely related to focus group discussions, which suggest that individual academic advisors interpret policies differently. When academic advisors feel compelled to consult with multiple stakeholders, delays incur and contribute to the lack of timeliness of academic relief, in extreme cases rendering the relief ineffective. Moreover, in situations when students take courses from multiple Faculties, they need to consult various academic advisors over the same problem. This also reduces the ability of academic advisors to offer a timely resolution to a problem.

On occasion academic advisors and faculty members make value judgements regarding the validity of student choices, and this affects the options for which they provide help. For example, there is some risk in the Self-Reporting Absence policy, which offers relief when students are faced with disrupting life events, but is restrictive in the type of event which is considered valid.

Another challenge exists in rigidity of approaches to concerns. If students are very sick when they write exams and ask for retroactive relief, they are told that there is nothing the academic advisors can do. In the focus groups, several comments suggest that “fairness” and “consistency for all” should be prioritized over individual needs; however, this does not address the reality that all students are individuals with their own specific circumstances.

Across many of the universities surveyed, academic advising services are decentralized; however, most universities have a range of centralized services in place (i.e., Accessible Education) “that ensure consistency in advising, professionalization, cross-campus collaboration and sharing of best practices” (Academica Report, 2022). For a more detailed approach, visits to learn from comparable institutions will enable Western to apply strategies to benefit the university.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

Academic Accommodation: A means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of study to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program. Academic accommodations take into account the individual's limitations and what is reasonable in the context of the particular course or program and the essential requirements of the course or program. ([Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#))

Academic Consideration Procedures: The process by which students may request reasonable academic consideration for extenuating circumstances resulting in missed academic requirements and to establish the responsibilities of all participants in the consideration process. ([Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences: Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#))

Student Medical Certificate: A document signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner to be eligible for Academic Consideration. ([Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences: Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#))

Self-Reported Absence Form: Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing, and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less. ([Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences: Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#))

Appendix 2: Methodology

Starting in July 2021 the working group met on several occasions to plan their approach to consultation at Western and with comparator institutions. To gather data, the working group conducted multiple strategies on campus in consultation with key stakeholders, including:

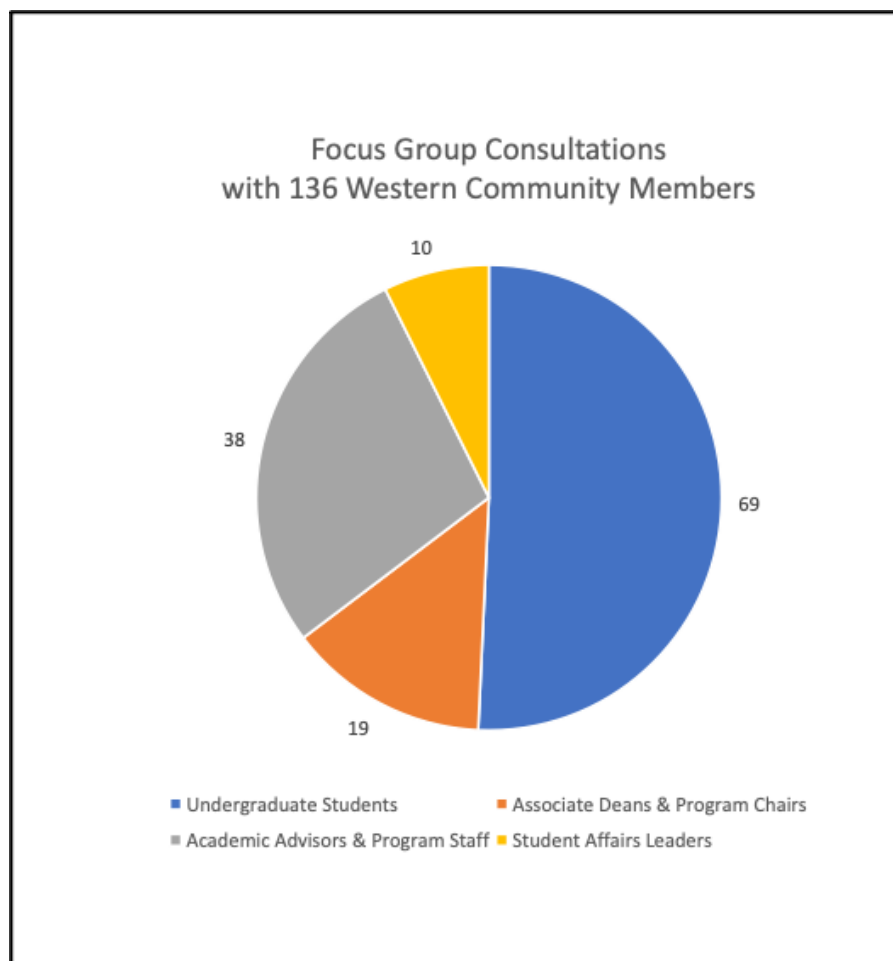
- Undergraduate students
- Academic Advisors
- Faculty (at large)
- Associate Deans (Academic)
- Undergraduate Chairs
- Student Affairs Managers (Student Experience and Faculty-based)
- Faculty and Departmental Administrative Staff (serving Undergraduate Students+ Programs)
- Ombudsperson

In addition to the internal consultation, Western worked with Academica Group (Academica) to conduct an online scan of publicly available sources (websites and institutional documents) at comparator universities. To supplement the online scan, Academica benchmarked Western's current academic advising departmental structure and services to those found at the comparator institutions. The six comparator institutions were invited to complete the benchmarking survey (in addition to Western). Three of the invited institutions and Western completed the survey and were interviewed as part of this study. Follow-up phone discussions were conducted to clarify any outstanding information from the questionnaire and gain deeper insights and knowledge about academic advising structures and services.

Stakeholder Group		Method
Internal	Undergraduate Students at large	USC survey data
		Anonymous survey of all undergraduate students via Qualtrics
		Focus groups with faculty student councils and USC leadership
		Focus Group
	USC Vice-Presidents Academic Roundtable	Focus Group
	USC Elected Leaders	Focus Group
	Student Accessibility Advisory Undergraduate Committee	Focus Group
	Faculty	Focus Group
	Western	Online scan of institutional website, benchmarking survey
		Exit survey
Ombudsperson's Report		
External	Dalhousie University	Online scan of institutional website
	Laval Université	Online scan of institutional website
	McMaster University	Online scan of institutional website
	Queen's University	Online scan of institutional website
	Université de Sherbrooke	Online scan of institutional website

	University of Calgary	Online scan of institutional website
	3 of the above	Benchmarking surveys, interviews

During the consultation period, more than 50% of the focus group participants were undergraduate students. Academic advisors, program staff, associate deans, program chairs, and student affairs leaders made up the balance of participants in focus groups.



In August 2021, the University Student Council (USC) conducted a survey, which was open to all current undergraduates. The USC collected 326 complete responses, resulting in a +/-10% margin of error, 19 times out of 20.

Appendix 3: Provost's Working Group on Academic Advising

Stephanie Hayne Beatty, Student Experience

Reese Berlin Bromstein, Undergraduate Student

Shona Casserly, Office of the Provost

Kenneth Coley, Faculty of Engineering (Chair)

John Doerksen, Office of the Provost (Vice-Chair)

Jayne Garland, Faculty of Health Sciences

Marija Ginic, Faculty of Science

Rachel Halaney, Office of the Provost

Tracy Isaacs, Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Louise Koza, Human Resources

Terry McQuaid, Student Experience

Linda T. Miller, School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

Diane P. Mills, Faculty of Music

Trish Regier, Faculty of Social Sciences

Sylvie Salewski, Ivey Business School

Mahima Siali, Undergraduate Student

Gayle Stuebing, Office of the Provost

Carolyn Young, Office of the Provost