

Job Description

Job Title:	Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator
Department:	Electrical and Computer Engineering
Reports To:	Manager, Undergraduate Studies
Jobs Reporting:	None
Salary Grade:	USG 6
Effective Date:	March 2016

Primary Purpose

The Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator (Advisor) enhances the quality of the undergraduate student experience in Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE), and is a key contributor to student success. To this end, the Advisor directly participates in ECE's initiatives to improve retention rates and fourth year graduation rates. The Advisor is responsible for the administration of either the Electrical or Computer Engineering undergraduate programs, and coordinates with four interdisciplinary undergraduate programs in Software Engineering, Nanotechnology Engineering, Mechatronics Engineering and Biomedical Engineering. The Advisor must be able to work professionally and effectively with students, faculty, and staff to ensure a welcoming environment for a diverse community.

The Advisor plays a critical role in student retention, persistence, and success. The Advisor supports students in meeting the heavy demands related to the professional academic programs and curricular requirements. The type of advising required for upper year students is more consultative and interactive than directive. This position provides ongoing advice; guidance and problem solving to address any obstacles to academic success and help students meet their learning needs. The Advisor also engages with students having difficulty with non-academic issues such as personal, medical, financial, or relationship issues. S/he reaches out to students who are at risk of attrition in a timely manner and provides guidance to those who are experiencing difficulties within the academic environment.

Key Accountabilities

List the major responsibilities of the job, divided into 3 to 5 broad categories. These should reflect 80 - 90% of "what" the job does not the "how". Insert a category heading and in bullet form below, state specific responsibilities.

Academic Advising and Student Support

- Assists students in comprehending department, Faculty and University policies and procedures, and applying rules to their specific cases;
- Interprets and applies university regulations, and Faculty/department policies and procedures as they apply to the department's Undergraduate programs to help resolve student issues;
- Facilitates resolution of academic problems, conflicts, concerns, etc. with the Associate Chair, Undergraduate Studies (Associate Chair), faculty Program Advisor, Manager Undergraduate Studies (Manager);
- Investigates problematic inquiries and advocates on behalf of students having difficulties who require accommodations/ concessions or non-standard arrangements;
- Monitors progress of academically "at risk" students and works proactively with them to encourage their success and continued enrollment;
- Advises students about alternatives, limitations, and possible consequences of academic decisions pertaining to course selection or program decisions;
- Provides advice or direction on academic issues to help students cope with stressful circumstances or negative academic decisions such as continuation in a program or withdrawal from the University;
- Provides information to students about appropriate resources to improve their academic performance and standing;

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- Assists students in exploring services, resources and programs to improve skills, build student resiliency, and increase academic success and independence;
- Liaises between and students and faculty/departments to facilitate appropriate resolution of disputes and advocate appropriately in order to directly and positively impact student degree progress;
- Manages sensitive situations and resolves complaints at an early stage to minimize conflict and prevent escalation;
- Assesses student needs during periods of personal and academic crisis and provides procedural guidance on petitions, withdrawal from the University, and other academic issues as well as making recommendations regarding plans of actions;
- Advising students on other matters including personal stress management or accommodations for disabilities;
- Provides assistance on non-academic matters as needed, refers students to appropriate campus services for assistance e.g. Health Services, Counselling Services during periods of personal or academic crises;
- Acts as key resource person for Undergraduate faculty advisors and faculty to ensure consistent application of regulations and procedures;
- Work effectively with students with diverse needs and backgrounds and respect their cultural contexts;
- Assists students in investigating alternate educational options;
- Maintains a broad knowledge of initiatives for enhancing student success and remains current on the needs of undergraduate students, best practices in student development and engagement.

Undergraduate Program Administration

- Serves as the students' liaison to aid in their success in the programs;
- Ensures students meet minimum enrollment requirements and assist students with course registration and resolution of problems as required;
- Coordinates submission and tracks 200+ Work Term Reports each term in database;
- Coordinates TPM results;
- Monitors completion of milestones such as work terms, Technical Presentation, etc.;
- Reviews students' progression reports to ensure continued progress towards promotion and continuation requirements;
- Identifies academic progress issues, notifies students who are at risk and utilizes pro-active intervention strategies for students who otherwise might not need advising;
- Works with the Examinations and Promotions Officer on petition and motion cases, and creates petition summaries for the committee;
- Coordinates and proctors deferred examinations and supplemental exams;
- Monitors students repeating courses and those who are out of sync with their cohort;
- Interprets applicable regulations, determines appropriate action, recommends academic decision and prepares summaries for review by Associate Chair;
- Supports the Associate Chair in overall management of the undergraduate programs by providing background information, research, advice, and administrative support in the academic decision-making process;
- Works with students to prepare documentation regarding student appeals/petitions, etc. and advises students regarding documentation required to properly assess each case;
- Investigates and evaluates discrepancies in student records;
- Liaise with Co-operative Education and Career Action office;
- Advises students regarding academic sequence changes and other co-op issues;
- Audits student records to determine graduation eligibility and degree standing;
- Liaise with the Registrar's Office to confirm completion of degree requirements for convocation;
- Maintains administrative documents and confidential student records for integrity, accuracy, consistency, decision making, and future reference;
- Manages textbooks for all undergraduate and graduate courses to ensure textbooks are available for students, instructors, and teaching assistants, and liaises with the University Bookstore and publishers as required;
- Maintains library of ECE textbooks and laboratory manuals for teaching assistants;

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintains Undergraduate student database (FileMaker), with all relevant information needed for daily use;• Maintains a comprehensive understanding of and keeps current on University, Faculty and Department academic policies, procedures and requirements.
<p>Communications and Relationship Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liaise with class representatives to keep students informed of undergraduate matters including the preparation and distribution of class professor schedules;• Implements communication and outreach strategies to influence student retention through relationship development and establishment of trust through numerous and varying contact strategies across the academic lifespan;• Schedule targeted communications around specific supports needed at certain times in the term;• Updates and posts online content in a content management system, various social media outlets, etc.• Monitors departmental undergraduate program website and ensures that web pages are working effectively;• Ensure faculty and students are notified of relevant program information, events, requirements, changes, etc.
<p>Special Events and Projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plans and executes events designed to improve the undergraduate experience and support ECE's priorities regarding the retention and engagement of undergraduate students e.g. Orientation BBQ for incoming students, 2A welcome lunch, 3B spirit night, 4A BBQ, class prof meetings, Dean's Honour List and awards lunch, etc.;• Assists with coordinating logistics of the Fourth Year Design Symposium;• Participates in or attends recruitment events e.g. Ontario Universities Fair in Toronto ON, March Break Open House, Shadow Day and You @ Waterloo Day;• Provides support to periodic internal and external Undergraduate program reviews, including program accreditation.
<p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides back up coverage for the other program Advisor and Assistant to Director during absences;• Provides back up coverage for the Manager during absences, including minutes as necessary;• Organizes meetings as required;• Continued professional development through participation in academic advising workshops;• Recommends enhancements of department data management software (FileMaker) for ongoing process improvements or maximize the use of technology where appropriate;• Maintains procedures and documentation pertaining to the responsibilities of the position;• Other duties or projects as assigned by the Manager or Administrative Officer.

Required Qualifications

If hiring today, what would be the required education, experience, knowledge, skills and abilities?

<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bachelor's degree or equivalent education and/or experience.
<p>Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimum 2 years academic advising and/or related experience in higher education providing academic guidance and counselling.• Several years administrative experience in an academic environment working with students, including knowledge of undergraduate policies and procedures.• Experience interpreting complex policies and information.
<p>Knowledge/Skills/Abilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intermediate proficiency in MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook• Experience with Quest, Infosilem, WCMS, and SharePoint preferred• Demonstrated advising skills with the ability to support students through difficult situations.• Proven ability to articulate and communicate guidelines or policies to others clearly and without error.• Excellent communication skills including the ability to handle a wide range of queries and problems with tact, compassion and firmness required.

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- Demonstrated sensitivity, confidentiality and discretion in interacting with various stakeholders in regards to petitions, probation, academic misconduct and other academic matters.
- Must have conflict resolution skills and the ability to deal with people who are irate, frustrated or upset.
- Proven ability to exercise mature judgment and make thoughtful, informed and thorough decisions.
- Proven ability to identify problems or issues, and deal with difficult or complex situations by probing for information, analyze key information, determine implications, and provide solutions.
- Proven ability to respond quickly and decisively in a crisis situation in a calm and rational manner.
- Strong diplomatic, negotiation, conflict resolution skills in order to handle situations involving relationship management.
- Ability to objectively evaluate situations and identify when to refer to appropriate other resources.
- Ability to retain, understand and apply a large amount of information and complex set up regulations and guidelines with minimal supervision.
- Ability to work effectively independently and collaboratively in a team environment.
- Aptitude for attention to detail and accuracy are essential
- Proven ability to manage multiple priorities and handle high volume with a high level of initiative and flexibility.
- Ability to learn new applications, systems and software programs is a requirement.
- Must be adaptable and able to manage change well in an evolving environment.
- Demonstrated ability to take initiative with a commitment to process improvement.
- Comprehensive knowledge of academic programs, university policies and procedures as they relate to undergraduate studies an asset.
- Experience working with international students or people from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures an asset.
- Experience in event planning an asset.

Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:**

Internally, Associate Chair, Associate Dean of Engineering Office, Engineering First Year Office, Registrar's Office, Co-operative Education and Career Action, UW Bookstore, etc. Externally, publishers, parents/guardians, etc.

The incumbent must act with sensitivity and discretion when interacting with students, parents/guardians, and faculty members regarding petitions, probation, academic misconduct and other academic matters. This position must maintain a high level of professionalism and knowledge to handle the volume and complexity of inquiries and to provide effective liaison between ECE and other academic departments.

- **Level of Responsibility:**

The position has defined duties and responsibilities and is expected to work with minimal supervision and provide guidance to others, including academic advice to students. Academic Advising is a major component of the academic, social, and personal support programs necessary to help students meet their learning needs. The Advisor has a powerful influence on student success and is critical to institutional effectiveness and student persistence. The growing number of students at risk or with mental health problems requires specialized developmental or intrusive advising competencies. They need to have a holistic understanding of students and how their various issues may intersect, particularly related to progress in their academic program. The incumbent is expected to perform the duties of the position within established policies and procedures and according to an established calendar of events, under minimal supervision. The job requires the regular exercise of independent action within defined policy parameters. Misinterpretation of University and faculty policies could cause student serious difficulty in obtaining their educational objectives. Advising decisions directly affect the quality of the student undergraduate experience and may have adverse academic consequences, which may damage the career of students. Errors could adversely affect the reputation and credibility of the department, Faculty or University. This in turn affects recruitment and retention of students.

- **Decision-Making Authority:**

Makes independent decisions regarding student advice, academic progression, admissions. Has signing authority for approval of academic program changes, course changes, petitions, and recommendations to graduate. The Advisor must have a sound understanding of the policies and regulations pertaining to the University Calendar. S/he is expected to use judgment to make decisions based on existing policies and

procedures. Consults with the faculty academic advisors or Manager to resolve cases that are more complex. Extraordinary issues are referred to the Associate Chair with recommendations for solution or action. Errors in decision or information could impede the academic progress of a student and cause adverse relations with students, faculty and staff.

- **Physical and Sensory Demands:**

Demands are typical of an administrative position that functions within office and meeting environments. Exposure to a fast-paced service oriented environment with deadlines, changing priorities, and large volumes at various times throughout the year. Must possess mental fortitude and patience in cross-cultural and inter-personal relations with a large international clientele.

- **Working Environment:**

This role involves minimal psychological risk resulting from exposure to some disagreeable situations or conversations, or the requirement to enforce policy. There are deadline pressures and work priorities may change regularly as the volume of work varies with frequent interruptions and multiple demands from multiple clients. Critical periods are mid-term, final drop date, pre- and post-examination periods, and other times as required.