

Overview

In December 2018, VP Academic Akanksha Bhatnagar spearheaded a survey on undergraduate attitudes toward academic advisors and advising. The short survey reached 363 self-selected points of contact. The sample disproportionately represented upper-year students; roughly three quarters had met with an academic advisor at least once, and roughly one in seven had met with an advisor five times or more. Note also that some associations proved more effective than others at distributing the survey: 44% of respondents came from the Faculty of Education. A survey report is available at <https://www.su.ualberta.ca/governance/advocacy/research/>

Key Findings

Q: "What sources of academic advice have you consulted, other than an advisor?"

- Respondents far preferred to consult their peers or older students rather than instructors or online UAlberta resources. Respondents were almost twice as likely to go to a peer (83%) as an instructor (45%).
- 56% of respondents preferred to access academic advising through a blended online/in person option. 33% preferred in-person only; 9% preferred online-only.

Q (for 96 students): "Can you tell us why you haven't met an academic advisor yet?"

- The most popular responses were 'Did not know how to get in touch with one' (40 students), 'Have not had the need' (39 students), and 'Do not know what they do' (34 students). 17 students in our sample did not know advisors exist. Most other responses indicated a focus on peers and online resources.

Q (for 267 students): "Why did you access an academic advisor?"

- By far the most popular responses were course scheduling, including overload requests and requirement waiving (205 students), and degree requirements (193 students).
- Students tend to 'muddle through alone' in concerning areas. Only 21 students flagged 'Other support (e.g. financial, mental health),' and only 37 had consulted an advisor over scholarships, bursaries and grants.

Q (for 267 students): "How much value did you find in speaking with your advisor?"

- On a 5-point scale with 5 as the highest value, 149 respondents fell in the two highest-value segments, and 64 fell in the two lowest-value segments. The mean response was 3.47 out of 5.

Q (for 267 students): "How welcome did you feel in the office?"

- On a 5-point scale with 5 as the highest sense of welcome, 166 respondents fell in the two highest segments, and 56 fell in the two lowest segments. The mean response was 3.64 out of 5.