Integrated First-Year Advising Syllabus 2015-16

The goal of this calendar is to highlight important advising moments, to provide prompts for advising conversations throughout the year, and to consolidate in one document the roles different members of the first-year advising network (Freshman Advisors, Proctor, and Peer Advising Fellow) are likely to play.

*Please note:* once monthly throughout the year the APO will host a lunchtime conversation for BFA focusing on issues of concern to first-year students keyed to the academic calendar. (The APO will provide lunch.) Information about this lunch series will be posted to the APO website; in the electronic version of this syllabus; and will go out to BFA by email.

FALL TERM

August 12 – 24

The Advising Connection

BFA:

1) BFA Orientation on Wednesday, August 12 and Monday, August 17 (the same session repeats); 10 am – 4 pm for new BFA, 1 pm – 4 pm for returning BFA, with a reception 4 – 5 pm.

2) Please read your advisees’ questionnaires in the my.harvard Advising Center.

3) Please read your advisees’ admissions folders at the FDO (6 Prescott Street). The FDO is open for folder-reading on the following days and times.

   Monday, 8/17 (9 am – 5 pm)
   Tuesday, 8/18 (9 am - 8 pm)
   Wednesday, 8/19 (11 am – 5 pm)
   Thursday, 8/21 – Friday, 8/22 (9 am – 5 pm)
   Saturday, 8/22 (12 noon – 5 pm)
   Monday, 8/24 – Friday, 8/28 (9:30 am – 4:30 pm)

4) Please send an e-mail greeting to your advisees, including a note that the application deadline for Freshman Seminars is **9 am on Wednesday, August 26.**

August 25

First-Year Move-In Day

PAFs: Assist freshmen in unloading their cars to expedite the move-in process. PAFs will attend the introductory entryway meeting with entryway proctor. PAFs and Proctors should talk ahead of time to coordinate logistics and location for the meeting, and to plan icebreakers and introductory activities.

August 25 – Sept. 1

Calendar of Opening Days

August 26

Freshman Seminar Application Deadline (9 am)

Students will find out whether they were accepted to seminars on **Friday, August 28**, and students accepted into a seminar must accept or decline their spot by **9 am on Monday, August 31**. Beginning at **noon on Monday, August 31** seminars with
Lunch with Advisors and Advisees, Annenberg Hall, 12:15noon - 2:15pm

BFA: Invite your advisees to have lunch with you in Annenberg. This is a chance to introduce yourself to your advisees and get to know them, and set the preliminary expectations for the advising relationship. Consider inviting the Peer Advising Fellow (PAF) along for this group lunch. A knowledgeable undergraduate may help answer questions and may keep the conversation flowing in a large group. The contact information for the PAF(s) is available on the my.harvard Advising Center.

Proctors: You may choose to have your first group advising meeting at this time. Check with any students in the entryway who may not be meeting their advisor for lunch (due to scheduling conflicts or otherwise) and consider inviting them to join your group meeting.

First Individual Advising Conversations
(8/28: 11 am – 4 pm, 8/31 11 am – 2 pm, or another time by appointment)

Goals for BFA: To help your advisees think about how to best integrate the academic advising information they have encountered/will encounter during Opening Days programming into their planning for course selection. To help them prepare a preliminary list of courses to check out during course selection period.

PAFs: Start scheduling individual meetings with your advisees. Think about this as a great chance to build on your entryway meetings to get to know your students personally, and what their expectations of, hopes for, and anxieties about starting at Harvard may be. By the weekend, your conversations with your advisees will likely take a turn to class selection and shopping period. Use these meetings as a time to find out what interests your students want to pursue in the first terms, and discuss opportunities for exploration in the first year. Make sure your advisees grasp shopping etiquette! Think back to your first year and things you had questions about in the first few weeks. Remember that your advisees aren’t used to Harvard jargon, so be sure to explain lexicon, abbreviations, and acronyms we might take for granted.

Remind advisees of the important of balance in course choice and in academic + extracurricular life. Set goals with advisees that they will get to know faculty this semester.

Consider sending a reminder (email or text, for instance) the evening before your meetings. Review the Advising Questionnaire on the my.harvard Advising Center ahead of time.

General tips for first PAF meetings with advisees

Explain your role - you are not meant to be a friend, but rather, a peer advisor. Your paraprofessional role means your relationship will be different than the one your advisees have with schoolmates back home or roommates at Harvard.

Second, start getting to know your advisees. Ask questions about their interests and passions. What drew them to Harvard? How are they settling in? Have they talked with their family?

Third, provide a space for your advisees to ask questions. Think back to your own first year and try to recall what you didn’t yet know. Prompt questions and share your experiences if it
seems appropriate.

Fourth, express your own vulnerability. Every person has a story of a time they felt inadequate or anxious. Tell your story! Remember that advisees are likely to view you as a role model, so make clear that even wise PAFs experience ups and downs. Be a real person.

Fifth, take notes. If it feels uncomfortable writing things down while you talk, space your meetings at least five minutes apart so you can jot down notes. Your advisees will notice if you remember the name of their dog back home or the class they said they were excited about taking. These notes can be the basis of your Advising Journal entry as well.

August 31
Freshman Seminars with Openings Posted
Beginning at noon, those seminars with open spots will be posted on the Freshman Seminar Program website. Many seminars operate on a first-come, first-served basis, so encourage advisees to look at the list.

September 2
First Day of Classes
The first day of classes will follow a Monday schedule, even though it falls on a Wednesday, because of the Labor Day holiday during Course Selection Week.

September 2 – 9
Planning for Study Card Day: Fall Term Course Selection
Goals for BFA: To help advisees finalize their course selection for fall term and to lift their course registration via your electronically signing the online study card.
How has shopping gone so far? How did their initial ideas for courses match the reality of the first course meetings? How are they prioritizing balance as they consider a set of four courses?

PAFs: Begin discussion of course choices and remember not to be prescriptive. Help your advisees identify new areas to explore and passions to pursue. Identify resources that might help them; for instance, make sure they are connecting with their freshman advisor. Point them to concentrations if they are wondering how to try out a new field. Ask questions about their experiences so far. How has shopping been? How is their tentative schedule balancing out? Have they connected with departmental advisors as necessary?

BFA: Make sure you have communicated with all of your advisees. If you are having trouble reaching any of your advisees, contact their proctor, Resident Dean, and/or PAF.

September 3
Course Selection Study Break in Annenberg Hall, 9 – 11 pm
PAFs: PAF attendance is required at this annual ice cream study break in Annenberg. Tables will be arranged by concentration, with a lot of space for “Undecided.” This is an opportunity for students to talk with PAFs after two days of shopping classes. Let your advisees know where you are sitting in case they are nervous about finding a friendly face.

Proctors: Consider making a meeting time for your entryway before the study break, so you
can all walk over to Annenberg together.

September 5

Student Activities Fair (Radcliffe Quad and the Student Organization Center at Hilles)

PAFs: Be sure to suggest ways to make the most of the fair. Talk with your advisees ahead of time about good strategies to make the most of the fair without being overwhelmed. Suggest that they consider keeping their own list of organizations rather than signing up for dozens of email lists. Students can email the organizations later when they want to join the email list. Encourage them to be realistic about how many activities they can ordinarily handle. Most students are better off starting with one or two extracurricular activities.

September 7-9

PAFs: Be sure advisees feel comfortable with course selection, and understand the course selection interface online.

BFA: If you haven’t already, be prepared to lift the hold on course registration for your advisees via your electronic signature on the study card (in the my.harvard Advising Center). Set aside office hours for your advisees to stop by, or set up individual meetings to discuss course selection.

September 10

Online Study Card Deadline (11:59 pm)

Sept. 28 - Oct. 2

Meeting with Advisees

BFA: Check on your advisees’ academic progress, and on how well they are transitioning to Harvard. Topics to consider discussing include:

- Are they keeping up with their coursework? Excited about their classes?
- Managing their time well? (If you think they may need to make changes to their study list, be aware of the Oct. 5 Add/Drop deadline)
- If they’re having difficulties, are they taking advantage of in-class assistance (office hours, tutoring)?
- Are they getting involved in extracurriculars? Too involved?
- Are they participating in dorm life?
- As their first assessments are being returned, how are they handling that feedback? For some advisees it may be a real blow not to be acing quizzes or getting A’s on every paper.

If you have any concerns at all, communicate with the Resident Dean of Freshmen and/or proctor, whose contact information you can find on the my.harvard Advising Center. Remember that as a member of the BFA, you are welcome to join your advisees in dining at Annenberg Hall at no charge. Simply inform the checker at the front desk that you are an advisor, and you will be asked to sign a logbook.

PAFs: Check on your advisees’ progress and on how well they are transitioning to Harvard. Important date coming up: 10/5 is add/drop deadline, so if they are considering a schedule change, make sure they are in contact with their advisor.

October 5

Add/Drop Deadline and deadline to change course from letter-graded to Pass/Fail or Pass/Fail to letter-graded.

October 19

Course Withdrawal Deadline

PAFs: Check in with your advisees, and remind them of various resources at the BSC (e.g., peer tutoring, The Reading Course, Study @ 5 Linden). Make sure they are balancing their
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academics and extracurriculars. Ask how it’s going getting to know faculty. Have they gone to office hours yet? Encourage them to set a goal of going to office hours for each of their faculty between now and the next time you meet. Office hours are a good way to get to know faculty, and this is a good time to start thinking about faculty members to invite to Fall Faculty Dinner.

October 23 - 24  

**Freshman Parents’ Weekend**

Proctors: Consider holding a community entryway event for the students whose parents are not coming for Freshman Parents’ Weekend. This could be something like a dinner/brunch in Annenberg, a game night, or a movie night.

PAFs: Be aware that not all of your advisees will have family visiting this weekend. If an advisee is already feeling homesick this can be especially hard for them. If you know that an advisee’s parents are not coming, suggest that you get a meal or invite them to study with you.

November 2 - 11  

**Meeting with Advisees**

**Goals for BFA:** Check in on your advisees’ academic progress:

- How are their midterms going?
- How are their plans for final papers/projects going?

To help them look ahead for second semester courses:

- Are their interests moving in new directions?
- Do they have prerequisites they need to fulfill?
- How does the coursework they took this term bear on their planning for next term?
- How have their classes compared to their expectations?

To help them consider possible Wintersession opportunities (students are not required to return to campus during Wintersession):

- Are there programs that would give them opportunities to explore a new interest?
- What would they give up by returning for Wintersession?
- Do any of the programs they are considering have an application or registration deadline?

PAFs: Discuss what your advisees enjoyed or found challenging about this semester, and how that might influence their course planning for next term. Are they getting to know faculty and what can they do to better those relationships?

November 25 - 29  

**Thanksgiving Recess**

Nov. 30 – Dec. 9  

**Meeting with Advisees**

**BFA:** Use this period to provide support and guidance to your advisees as they prepare to take their first set of final exams. Give them tips on how to manage time and study.

- Are they aware of course resources to prepare for final exams and projects, such as review sessions, practice tests, and extra office hours?
- How will they structure reading period? How will they work best with a large block of unscheduled time?
Encourage advisees to lay out a schedule for reading/exam period with review sessions, exams, paper deadlines and extra office hours.

To begin planning for the summer:

- What would they like to be doing over the summer?
- Do they imagine they would like to take the summer to recharge? To travel?
- Are they aware that many Harvard deadlines arrive quickly after winter break? Are they aware of the numerous resources on campus, including the Office of Career Services? OCS hosts several events around this time to help first-year students plan for the summer. Now is not too early to begin planning for summer opportunities, especially those which require letters of recommendation to apply.

December 3  Last Day of Classes
December 4 - 10  Reading Period

PAFs: Check in with your advisees and consider sending out a guide to “smart studying.” If you plan to drop-off notes or snacks during reading or exam period, coordinate with your co-PAFs so everyone is on the same page. Remind your advisees of resources at the BSC (Using Reading Period Wisely, Preparing for Final Exams, Study @ 5 Linden, etc.). Encourage them to reach out to their faculty and TFs, and remind them to take advantage of review sessions, practice exams, and extra office hours. Send your advisees an email about wintersession dates and options. Remember to model the same good habits you are advising!

Proctors: Make sure your advisees are practicing healthy study habits, and check-in with those you aren’t seeing around the dorm, or seem particularly stressed. Take the reins on organizing a study break so your PAFs can spend some extra time studying.

December 11 - 21  Final Exam Period

SPRING TERM
January 15 - 24  Wintersession (Optional)

PAFs: Remind advisees that they can use winter break to consider summer plans, and winter and summer breaks should be a time to re-energize before the next term. This is a good time to check-in with your advisees, and to get them thinking about courses again after the break.

January 25 - 29  Planning for Study Card Day: Spring Term Course Selection

BFA: Use this first week to discuss your advisees’ spring term course plans, and prepare a preliminary list of courses to check out and clubs to try. You can use this time to reflect on fall term – what went well, what didn’t, what they learned, what they wish they had learned, etc. In preparing for this meeting, please review your journal notes from the meetings you held in the fall.

Final grades from the fall term will be available in early January, and grades are
likely to come up during conversations looking back on the first term and ahead to the spring. By now your advisees should, with your assistance, be at least beginning to hone their thinking about potential concentrations, and making purposeful decisions about their course selection. What fields did they explore in the fall? Which concentrations do they want to test out this term?

PAFs: Check-in with your advisees after the break. Be aware that it can be hard to adjust back to college life after being home for so long, especially for first-years. This change, and the seemingly never-ending winter, can highlight homesickness. Discuss what courses they are considering, and what goals they have for the second semester. What went well last semester, and how can they build upon that this semester? What do they hope to improve or change?

January 25

**Classes Begin**

**BFA:** Make sure you have discussed course selection with your advisees. Sign their study card electronically.

January 29

**Online Study Card Deadline**

February 8 - 12

**Meeting with Advisees**

PAFs: Check in on your advisees’ progress. Discuss their summer plans, pointing them to campus resources (OCS, Research, Office of International Education, etc.) as appropriate, while also emphasizing that going home and relaxing is good, too. Ask them if they know about summer abroad opportunities, summer funding, on-campus summer housing, etc. Now is a good moment for advisees to reconnect with instructors from the fall term.

February 22

**Add/Drop Deadline and deadline to change course from letter-graded to Pass/Fail or Pass/Fail to letter-graded**

PAFs: Check-in with your advisees on how their courses are going. Remind them of the resources available at the BSC (including peer tutoring). Remind them to take advantage of office hours. Make sure as the Add/Drop deadline approaches that advisees are in close communication with their advisor.

**BFA:** Some advisees may be considering dropping a fifth class. Midterms will be nearing full swing.

March 7

**Course Withdrawal Deadline**

March 10

**Housing Day (Tentative)**

March 12 - 20

**Spring Recess**

March 21 - 25

**Meeting with Advisees**

**BFA:** Help your advisees take best advantage of Advising Fortnight programming and advising opportunities. Have a focused discussion with them about their concentration selection plans. Discuss concentration selection plans.

PAFs: Make sure your advisees know about the Advising Fortnight events, how to approach department representatives at the events, and what questions they could ask...
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March 28 - April 8  
**Advising Fortnight (Tentative)**

**Proctors/PAFs:** In the Advising Center on my.harvard, check that an ‘Advising Conversation’ has been filled out. Send reminder to advisees who have not documented a conversation yet. Consider holding a concentration themed study break, in which sophomores (perhaps last year’s entryway) are invited to discuss their concentration / concentration selection process with this year’s entryway.

Remind advisees of Spring Faculty Dinner, and encourage them to start thinking about who they would like to invite.

Late April  
**Deadline for First-Year Students to Report Official ‘Advising Conversations’ on my.harvard.**

April 18 - May 13  
**Meeting with Advisees**

**BFA:** Assist your advisees in preparing for their final exams and final papers/projects. Discuss their tentative plans for fall term course selection, especially in light of new information from Advising Fortnight. Discuss their plans for the summer. Reflect on the year to date. For example, what went well and what was challenging; what are they looking forward to about sophomore year.

Now that advisees have been through one reading and exam period, they may feel more prepared. Encourage them to input review sessions, exam dates, paper deadlines and extra office hours into their personal calendar.

**PAFs:** Reflect on this past year with your advisees. Did they achieve goals that they had set at the beginning of the year? What went well and what didn’t? Discuss the transition to sophomore year, and how their advising network will change.

April 27  
**Last Day of Classes**

April 28 – May 4  
**Reading Period**

**PAFs:** Make sure your advisees are staying organized and maintaining healthy lifestyle habits. Remind them of resources on campus at the BSC, and send out an email with reading period study tips. Encourage advisees to make a calendar with their exams, paper dates, review sessions, and office hours on it.

**Proctors:** PAFs might be busier than normal with reading period, so try and schedule it so that you are organizing the study break this week. Consider having a final good-bye party as the study break, and a chance to spend some time outside.

May 5 - 14  
**Final Exam Period**

**PAFs:** If you plan to drop-off treats to your advisees outside of study break, be sure to communicate with your co-PAFs so you are all on the same page. Remind your advisees that packing and moving-out always takes longer than expected, so they shouldn’t leave it
until the last minute! Seniors, considering giving your advisees your non-Harvard email address to continue to stay in touch.

May 15  First-Year Move-Out Day
May 31  Advisor End of Year Reports Due on Advising Journal

Be sure to finish filling out any last advising journal entries before this time.