

2023/24

Handbook for Pre-Major Advisors

Vassar College
Office of the Dean of First-Year Students

Academic Orientation Calendar

- Monday, August 21, 2023
 - 8:00 am – 1:00 pm New Students move in; **Residential Houses**
- Tuesday, August 22
 - 9:00 – 10:00 am Meeting for first time advisors; **CC 204**
 - 10:00 am – 11:00 am Meeting for all pre-major advisors; **Rocky 300**
 - 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm Group meetings with advisees; **Advisor's office**
- Wednesday, August 23
 - 9:00 – 12:00 pm Faculty Research Presentations and Community Collaborations; **Various locations***
- Thursday, August 24
 - 9:00 am – 12:00 pm Departmental/Program, advanced course placement, and pre-professional advising; **Various locations***
 - 9:00 am – 12:00 pm Foreign language placement advising; **Chicago Hall**
 - Exceptions: Chinese, **SC 008**; Japanese, **SC 324**; Korean, **SC 304**; Greek and Latin, **SC 123**; Arabic, **CH 103**; Hebrew (August 28, 5:30 pm), **BH 105**
 - 9:00 am – 12:00 pm Music theory placement advising; **Skinner 205**
 - 9:00 am – 9:30 am Pre-law advising; **SC Auditorium**
 - 9:00 am – 9:45 am Study away and foreign language competency; **Rockefeller Hall 200**
 - 9:00 am – 9:30 am Pre-engineering advising; **SC 013**
 - 9:35 am – 10:30 am Pre-health advising; **SC Auditorium**
 - 10:00 am – 10:30 am Education certificate advising; **Bridge Building Atrium**
 - 10:00 am – 10:45 am Natural Science & Math advising; **Bridge Building Atrium**
 - 10:00 am – 11:00 am and 11:00 am – 12:00 pm Choral/Voice Lesson Info Sessions; **Martel Recital Hall, Skinner**
 - 10:00 am – 10:45 am Dance and Vassar Repertory Dance Theatre Information Session; **SC 013**
 - 10:45 am – 12:30 pm English Department AP and general information; **Sanders Auditorium**
 - 11:00 – 11:30 am Art History 105-106 Information; **Taylor 203**
 - 12:30 pm – 3:00 pm Individual meetings with pre-major advisees; **Advisor's office**
- Friday, August 25
 - 8:00 am – 4:00 pm Registration; **CC MPR**
 - Matriculation Book Signing; **President's house**
- Monday, August 28 – Classes Begin
- Week of August 28
 - Various times, Foreign language proficiency exams; **Various locations***
- Monday – Friday, October 2-6
 - Various times, Individual Follow-up meetings with Advisees; **Advisor's office**

*Specific locations appear in the Orientation Schedule online

Table of Contents

Academic orientation calendar	2
Developmental advising	5
General Education Student Learning Goals	7
Orientation and registration	8
Orientation overview	8
<i>General advising meeting, group meetings with advisees, individual appointments to approve registration, registration and matriculation book signing, follow-up meeting</i>	
Group meeting with advisees—essential information and a suggested agenda	9
<i>Registration procedures</i>	9
A note on advanced course placement and AP credit	10
A note on pre-matriculation credit	10
Add/drop procedures	10
Advice for the disappointed, consolation for the distressed	11
<i>Graduation requirements</i>	11
The First-Year Writing Seminar requirement	11
The Quantitative Analysis requirement	12
The Foreign Language Proficiency requirement	12
<i>Academic expectations for Vassar students</i>	13
Advising guidelines	13
A balanced academic program	13
<i>Number of courses</i>	13
<i>Intensives</i>	14
<i>Work across the division</i>	14
Year-long courses	15
Provisional grading	16
<i>Ungraded work</i>	16
<i>The Non-Recorded Option</i>	16
<i>Transfer credit</i>	16
Advising students with disabilities	16
<i>Group advisee meeting</i>	16
<i>Early registration for students with disabilities</i>	17
<i>Reduced course loads</i>	17
<i>Foreign Language Proficiency and disability accommodations</i>	17
Advising for pre-health, pre-law, and teaching certification	18
Preparation for study abroad	18
Beyond orientation	18
<i>To NRO or not to NRO?</i>	19
<i>Dropping a course</i>	19
<i>Withdrawing from a course</i>	20
<i>Emergencies</i>	20
<i>Student Support Network</i>	20

<i>Leaves of absence</i>	21
<i>Incompletes, missed finals, and other end-of-term crises</i>	21
<i>Transfer</i>	21
The pre-registration meeting for spring term classes	22
Academic standards (and the consequences of failing to meet them)	22
Academic probation and the Committee on Student Records	22
A note from the dean of first-year students	22
Resource directory	24
Pre-major advisor directory 2023/24	25
The fall 2023 semester as viewed by the dean of first-year students	30
Advising calendar, fall 2023	31

Developmental advising¹

Developmental advising focuses on helping students identify life goals, acquiring skills and attitudes that promote intellectual and personal growth, and helping them become successful students in a way that is uniquely theirs. Ender, Winston and Miller (1982) have proposed seven conditions that are essential to developmental advising:

1. Academic advising is a continuous process with an accumulation of personal contacts between advisor and student – these contacts have both direction and purpose.
2. Advising must concern itself with quality-of-life issues, and the advisor has a responsibility to attend to the quality of the student's experience in college.
3. Advising is goal related; the goals should be established and owned by the student and should encompass academic, career, and personal development areas.
4. Advising requires the establishment of a caring human relationship - one in which the advisor must take primary responsibility for its initial development.
5. Advisors should be models for students to emulate, specifically demonstrating behaviors that lead to self-responsibility and self-directedness.
6. Advisors should seek to integrate the services and expertise of both academic and student affairs professionals.
7. Advisors should seek to utilize as many campus and community resources as possible.

Prescriptive vs developmental advising

PRESCRIPTIVE	DEVELOPMENTAL
Advisor tells student what he/she needs to know about programs and courses	Advisor helps student learn about courses and programs for self
Advisor knows college policies and tells student what to do	Advisor tells student where to learn about policies and helps in understanding how they apply to the student
Advisor tells student what schedule is best	Advisor teaches student how to register self
Advisor informs about deadlines and follows up behind student	Advisor informs about deadlines then lets student follow up
Advisor tells student which classes to take	Advisor presents class options; student makes own selections
Advisor takes responsibility for keeping advising file updated	Advisor and student share responsibility for file
Advisor keeps informed about academic progress through files and records	Advisor keeps informed about academic progress through records and talking to student about academic experiences
Advisor tells student what to do in order to get advised	Advisor and student reach agreement about nature of advising relationship

¹ Taken from The University of Texas at Dallas Office for Undergraduate Education web page: <http://www.utdallas.edu/dept/ugraddean/devadvis.html>

Advisor uses grades and test results to determine courses most appropriate for student	Advisor and student use grades, test results, and self-determined interests and abilities to determine most appropriate courses.
Advisor specifies alternatives and indicates best choice when student faces difficult decision.	Advisor assists student in identifying alternatives and weighing consequences when facing difficult decision.
Advisor takes care of academic problems.	Advisor teaches student problem-solving techniques.
Advisor does not deal with vocational opportunities in conjunction with advising.	Advisor deals with vocational opportunities in conjunction with advising.
Advisor suggests what student should major in.	Advisor suggests steps student can take to help decide on a major.
Advisor identifies realistic academic goals based on grades and test results.	Advisor assists student in identifying realistic academic goals based on grades, test results, and self-understanding.
Advisor is not knowledgeable about help available with non-academic concerns.	Advisor is knowledgeable about available help for non-academic concerns.
Advisor does not encourage discussion of personal problems.	Advisor encourages discussion of personal problems.
Advisor is concerned mainly about academic life of student.	Advisor is concerned about personal, social, and academic life of student.
Advisor unaware of student's outside-the- classroom life.	Advisor shows interest in student's out-of-class life. Advisor discusses academic and other-than- academic interests and plans.
Advisor provides information mainly about courses and class schedules.	Advisor provides information about workshops and seminars in areas such as career planning and study skills, and courses and class schedules.
Advisor does not spend much time discussing time management and study techniques.	Advisor spends time discussing time management and effective study techniques.

General Education Student Learning Goals

Recently, the faculty of Vassar College endorsed General Education Student Learning Goals, which are listed below, to provide a touchstone for ongoing conversations on campus among students, faculty, and the college community about the meaning and goals of a liberal arts education at Vassar.

No one course, department, or division will address all of the goals, but they are addressed through the totality of a student's education at Vassar. They should be interpreted broadly to acknowledge the different approaches of our myriad disciplines and the self-direction and empowerment of Vassar students to make independent choices in conversation with faculty advisors and mentors. We envisage that throughout your career at Vassar, you will aspire to achieve significantly in these four areas, although we recognize that students will not achieve all of these goals in the same way and to the same extent. These learning goals serve as resources for pre-major advising conversations and support student planning for a comprehensive liberal education.

(adopted 2/3/21)

1. Independent Thinking, Creativity and Curiosity: Students will

- Conduct original independent research using appropriate sources.
- Identify problems or issues for which there are complex, ambiguous, or contradictory answers that lead to creative outcomes or innovative solutions.

2. Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning: Students will

- Construct, analyze, interpret, and evaluate subject matter using quantitative techniques.
- Discern the kinds of questions that can be effectively addressed through quantitative methods.
- Demonstrate scientific reasoning by applying inductive and/or deductive analysis to evaluate a hypothesis.

3. Written Communication: Students will

- Construct a clear persuasive written argument.
- Use appropriate conventions for different audiences.

4. Intercultural Competency and Language Proficiency: Students will

- Demonstrate intercultural competency.
- Demonstrate proficiency in communication skills in a language other than English.

5. Diverse Ideas and Perspectives: Students will

- Demonstrate the ability to explain and reflect on important issues within one's own social and cultural context and those of others.
- Engage with ideas, beliefs, behaviors, values, or views that differ from one's own.
- Function effectively and work collaboratively in diverse groups.

Orientation and registration

Orientation overview

General Advising Meeting

Tuesday, August 22, 10:00 am–11:00 pm, Chapel

At this meeting the Dean of First-Year Students and the Registrar will review the basic information all students need in order to complete the registration process and offer strategies for constructing a course schedule that reflects the goals of a liberal arts college. The meeting will cover basic registration information and procedures, as well as provide an overview of academic policies and practices. Advisors are welcome to attend this meeting.

Meeting for Pre-Major Advisors

Tuesday, August 22, 11:00—12:15 pm, Rocky 300

At this meeting, pre-major advisors receive up-to-date information on such vital matters as registration (lists of open courses), review the drop/add policy, and will hear about challenges facing many of our students. Even if you have advised before, you should plan to attend this meeting.

Group Meetings with Advisees

Tuesday, August 22, 2:00–3:00 pm, advisor's office or alternate location

Each student will have pre-registered for up to 3 units of credit before arriving on campus, generally a First-Year Writing Seminar and two other courses. During this meeting, advisors will give students their preliminary fall schedule (the results of summer pre-registration) and answer questions about the registration process. Students will need advice about selecting the additional courses they need to complete their schedule. Be sure to remind your advisees to attend the Faculty Research Presentations as well as the relevant advising and advanced course placement sessions (department and program, pre-law, pre-health, science and math, English, music, art, education certification, and language studies) on Thursday morning. A suggested agenda for the group meeting can be found below.

Individual Meetings with Pre-Major Advisors

Thursday, August 24, 12:30–3:00 pm, advisor's office or alternate location

All first-year students must secure their advisor's approval (i.e. signature) before they can participate in registration, beginning on Friday, August 25, at 8:00 am. You should expect your advisees in alphabetical order every half hour beginning at 12:30 pm. In addition to discussing registration, advisors should start to get to know their advisees, talk about their goals, interests, potential involvement in campus activities and organizations, and other time commitments such as work-study jobs. This information will help an advisor guide students toward an appropriate course load for their first semester.

Before each student leaves your office, you must sign the student's registration form.

The top half of the registration form lists the courses in which the student is currently pre-registered. The bottom half is to be used to drop and add courses from and to this list. Be sure that the student lists the complete course ID, including section, (e.g., ANTH 101-01). Students may register for a maximum of 4.5 units.

Some classes will inevitably close during registration, so ***it is important to discuss various course options with your advisees and to list alternative course selections on the form.*** Although there are only six spaces for adding courses, many more should be listed.

Registration and Matriculation Book Signing

Friday, August 25, 8:00 am–4:00 pm, CCMPR, book signing at President’s House

First-year students register according to how many credits they were pre-registered for: students with 0 units go first, 0.5 units go second, and so forth. Within each group, students will be ordered by their draw numbers, which were assigned at random after the initial round of pre-registration. There is no correlation between a student’s draw number and the courses they got into. Students will find the date/time when they should come to CCMPR on Friday on the registration form. Students will sign the matriculation book at the President’s House after registering.

Any students who do not present an approved registration form in CCMPR will have their course registration canceled and will have to register via add/drop forms after the beginning of classes.

Individual Follow-up Meetings with Advisees

Monday-Friday, October 2-6, various times, advisor’s office

This meeting is an opportunity for first-year students to discuss their academic progress with their advisor. It would be best if you scheduled these appointments at the end of your individual meeting with your advisees on August 24. At this meeting it would be extremely helpful to review each student’s schedule online - as students are not always registered for courses they are attending and have not always dropped courses they no longer attend - discuss workload and study habits, review resources for academic support available on campus, remind students of the upcoming drop/NRO deadlines, and see if your advisees are academically and socially engaged and connected.

Group meeting with advisees—essential information and a suggested agenda

The group meeting can be used for friendly introductions, general advice about the academic expectations of college life, and to distribute the Class of 2027 registration forms. Please note that your advisees will learn the results of the summer pre-registration only when you hand them their registration forms. It is important to give the forms out at this meeting. Your advisees will then have time to think about what to do in light of their course assignments prior to their individual meetings with you on Thursday afternoon. *Remember, each student has been registered in no more than 3 courses. All advisees will need to register for 1 or 1.5 additional courses to complete their registration.* Here is an outline of the major topics to cover during the group meeting:

Registration procedures

Your advisees will be eager to know how they fared in summer pre-registration. They will often be anxious more generally (sometimes VERY anxious) about the whole business of choosing courses. This is the time to answer any general questions about the registration process and about first-year and college requirements. Remind and reassure them that they will be able to get more specific advice before they finalize their schedules with you on Thursday. (Please see the calendar inside the front cover for a schedule of advising sessions on Thursday morning.)

Incoming first-year students have registered online, generally up to 3 courses. They were referred to a special online “Schedule of Classes” that included only introductory (100-level) courses still open and selected 200-level courses (in languages, mathematics, and physical education) in which they could place themselves based on previous training or experience. For any other courses, first-year students need to consult the appropriate academic department on Thursday morning, August 24, from 9:00 am–noon. Any student who has a specific question about a course or department should go to that department on Thursday morning; a list of departments and their locations is provided in the Orientation Schedule. Please note that ALL students seeking advanced course placement in English should attend a group meeting on Thursday from 10:45–11:30 am in Sanders Classroom Auditorium.

A note on advanced course placement and AP credit

New students are often confused about the difference between “advanced course placement” (i.e., permission to enroll in intermediate-level courses) and “advanced placement credit.” Up to 2 units of college credit are awarded automatically to students who receive a score of 4 or 5 on AP exams, as soon as we receive official notification of their scores. Students don’t need to make any special request to receive these credits. But AP credit is NOT the same as advanced course placement. Each department and program has its own policies for advanced course placement; this information can be found in the [First-Year Handbook](#), in the Departments of Instruction and Multidisciplinary Programs section. If your advisees have questions, they should consult the appropriate department on Thursday morning. Some of your advisees may also have questions about credit and/or placement for the International Baccalaureate (IB), A-levels, or other examinations. Information about IB credit can be found on page 26 of the *First-Year Handbook*. Questions about college credit should be directed to Casey Trocino in the Dean of Studies Office (x5255; email: ctrocino). Students with questions about advanced course placement for IB and A-levels should consult directly with the relevant department or program. Note that AP and IB credits count toward the maximum 6 units of pre-matriculation credits allowed.

Note: you will not find copies of AP credit reports because the College Board no longer sends out duplicates for us to include in pre-major advisor packets. Some AP credit reports have been received and evaluated, and thus some online student transcripts will show AP credit. However, many AP credit reports are still outstanding. During the group meeting with advisees, please ask all your advisees to come prepared to the individual meeting with a list of all their possible pre-matriculation credit (AP/IB/A-levels, college courses) for you to review together.

A note on pre-matriculation credit

Many students arrive at Vassar having already taken college-level courses at nearby colleges, either during the academic year or over the summer. They can receive up to 6 units of pre-matriculation credit for these courses, provided that they were taken on a college or university campus with other undergraduate students and taught by a qualified college teacher, that the courses were not used to fulfill high school graduation requirements, do not appear on the high school transcript, and that the student earned a grade of C or better. If your advisees ask about getting credit for courses taken in high school, please refer them to Casey Trocino in the Dean of Studies Office (x5255; email: ctrocino). They will need to provide a copy of the course description or syllabus, as well as an official transcript. Pre-matriculation credits count toward the maximum 9 units of transfer credits allowed.

Note: A total of 6.0 units of pre-matriculation credit of any type will be awarded. This can consist of 6.0 units of transfer credit from college courses taken prior to matriculation, or some combination of transfer credits and exam-based credits. However, no more than 2.0 units of exam-based credit can count towards the total of 6.0 units.

Add/drop procedures

You can allay anxiety by reminding your advisees that they can revise their schedules after classes begin, during the add period. Remind your advisees that it is their responsibility to schedule any appointment to see you after Orientation. They will need your approval to make any change in their course selections (all adds and drops), to elect a course NRO, to petition the Committee on Leaves and Privileges for special permission, or to register for summer school courses. You should announce your fall-semester office hours now, and tell your advisees how you prefer to be contacted (email, voicemail, message at the department office).

Here are some important deadlines for the fall semester (see last page for more):

Last day to add	Tuesday, September 5, 2023
Last day to drop	Friday, October 6, 2023
Last day for NRO/student-initiated withdrawal	Friday, November 3, 2023

Please explain to your advisees that they will need to fill out an electronic jotform for all schedule changes. To add a course after classes begin, both the instructor's and the advisor's approvals are required; only the advisor's approval is needed to drop a course.

Faculty members may tell students that they are willing to let them into a course if it is closed, or tell the student that they got in off the waitlist. Also, faculty members may tell students they cannot be in a course, perhaps due to the lack of required pre-requisites or because of two or more unexcused absences during the first week or so of classes. **In all cases, it is still the student's responsibility to submit the proper add/drop forms for these courses.**

Invariably, some students wait until the last moment to obtain their advisor's signature and are surprised when they are unable to locate their advisor late on the afternoon of a deadline. The dean of first-year students will not sign any form on behalf of an advisor without that advisor's prior permission. If you know that you will be away from campus during deadline periods, please email the dean who will be happy to act on your behalf.

The ultimate responsibility for course and NRO elections lies with the student. The advisor's signature means that the advisor and student have discussed the student's choices, even if the student has chosen not to heed the advisor's advice. If you feel that an advisee is making a serious error that might affect their progress toward graduation (such as electing all four courses from one curricular division), please notify the dean of first-year students, who will be happy to assist or intervene.

Advice for the disappointed, consolation for the distressed

Even though the majority of incoming students have succeeded in pre-registering for at least 3 courses, these may not have been their first choices. Copies of their original pre-registration forms are included in your packet, so you can see any differences between what they asked for and what they got. Some students will not only be disappointed by this news, but may become upset when they learn that a course they wanted most is now closed. They will have to think quickly and creatively about their options. Here the advisor can be an invaluable source of both reassurance and solutions. Encourage all your advisees, including those who got the three courses they wanted, to use the time before registration to reflect on their course selections and consider some alternatives. They can get ideas by rereading the catalog and *First-Year Handbook*; by talking with faculty, House Fellows and fellow students; by attending the Faculty Research Presentations on Wednesday morning (a great chance to explore new fields and meet some of their future professors - please recommend them to your advisees!); and by visiting department offices on Thursday morning. Students with specific interests in pre-med, pre-law, science, engineering and education can also get advice at the information meetings on Thursday morning (see the Orientation Schedule and the advising schedule on the first page of this handbook for details).

Graduation requirements

There are three requirements of particular importance to first-year students:

The First-Year Writing Seminar requirement

Every entering first-year student, without exception, must successfully complete a First-year Writing Seminar prior to becoming a sophomore. You can assure your advisees that **students who are not enrolled in a First-Year Writing Seminar in the fall will be given priority in pre-registering for the spring term courses.** The First-Year Writing Seminars for 2023/24 are listed in the *First-Year Handbook* and are designated "FR" in the Schedule of Classes. No student may elect more than two First-Year Seminars, one each semester, and English 101 may be taken only once. Please check the registration forms of your advisees to see if they are registered for a First-Year Writing Seminar. You can identify open First-Year Writing Seminars on the Ask Banner Schedule of Classes by clicking Select a Course Type.

If your advisees were shut out of the First-Year Writing Seminar of their dreams, remind them that there are places available in courses that might be just as exciting. Some students shy away from the seminars offered by the

language departments thinking that they are “foreign language courses” when in fact they are literature courses and are taught in English. A wide variety of courses are offered in a range of departments and programs, and they all emphasize discussion, critical reading, and writing. Students should be encouraged to consider the full range of courses.

The Quantitative Analysis requirement

All Vassar students must complete, before the beginning of their third year, a full-unit course requiring the learning and practice of a significant amount of quantitative analysis.² Courses that satisfy the QA requirement are designated “QA” in the Schedule of Classes. Your advisees should be encouraged to fulfill this requirement early on, and you will find that many of them have already signed up for a QA course. Be aware that a student who registers for a QA course ONLY because it fulfills the requirement can lead to disaffection or even disaster. If one of your advisees has serious concerns about their quantitative skills, it might be better for them to wait until the second semester to tackle the QA requirement.

If any of your advisees should need extra help in their QA courses, please encourage them to seek out the Supplemental Instruction (SI) sessions or visit the Q-Center (Library, Room 122). Please contact the director of the Quantitative Reasoning Center with further questions.

The Foreign Language Proficiency requirement

Please determine whether each of your advisees has or has not completed this requirement, which operates according to the following guidelines:

- International students whose first language is not English must show formal academic study of their home language at the high school level or above to fulfill this requirement. For information about the exemption process consult the Office of the Dean of Studies.
- For those first-year students whose first language is English, proficiency achieved prior to Vassar can be demonstrated by a test score of 4 or 5 in a foreign language on an AP Exam. The Registrar automatically records completion of the requirement for those students who have presented the necessary scores; no further action on the part of the student is required.
- Any advisee not in the two categories above must complete the requirement before graduation - preferably during their first two years. Any advisee who has completed at least three years of one foreign language in high school may take the appropriate departmental proficiency examination; locations are listed in the Orientation Schedule. Test results will be sent to the Registrar and posted by the department on the following day.
- Students who elect an elementary language course must successfully complete the full year; students who are placed in an intermediate- or advanced-level course need complete only one semester to show proficiency. Students can also satisfy the language requirement by taking English 235 and 236 (Old English and Beowulf).

Assuming past patterns hold true, almost two-thirds of the Class of 2027 will need to study a foreign language - at Vassar, in summer school, or during an academic leave - before graduation. Please encourage any students who have not fulfilled the requirement to do so as soon as possible. You can remind them that some Junior Year Abroad programs will demand proficiency (see page 18 of this handbook). Finally, students should be discouraged from enrolling in coursework below the level of their previous training (e.g., a student who has completed three years of French in high school should not elect French 105-106). Any questions about placement should be directed to the appropriate department. If questions arise during your advising meetings, please feel free to consult with your fellow pre-major advisors who are members of the department in question. Remind students

² The exceptions to the full-unit requirement are MATH 126 and 127. Taken concurrently or consecutively, these two .5 credit courses fulfill the QA requirement.

that they can visit language department offices on Thursday morning for placement advising.

Academic expectations for Vassar students

When you first meet with your advisees they will have been at Vassar for about 36 hours, and very likely will have been up most of the night before. It's probably not the time to go into detail about rules and regulations or about academic issues that will not become real to them until they start attending classes and discover what college-level work is like. But your advisees are both excited and anxious about making the transition from high school to college. As their first academic contact at Vassar, you can address their concerns by saying something about what they can expect from their professors and what their professor will expect from them.

Each advisor will have their own sense of what to say, but probably all entering students would benefit from this advice: don't wait for professors to tell you what to do - speak up and take the initiative whenever you have questions or concerns. Many first-year students are not used to thinking of their teachers as people they can approach outside of class, as both authorities and resources. At the same time, aspects of academic life that are self-evident to faculty - the construction and uses of a syllabus, the ratio of class time to study time, the purpose of office hours, the conventions for citing sources - can be new and strange to first-year students. You can't possibly anticipate all the challenges that your advisees will face, but you can remind them that many things about college are going to be different, and that it is their responsibility to ask questions and to seek help when they need it. And you can point them in the direction of that help, whether to sources of information such as the *First-Year Handbook*, the *Vassar College Catalogue*, and *Going to the Source: A Guide to Academic Integrity and Attribution at Vassar College*, or to resources such as the Dean of First-Year Students Office, the Learning, Teaching and Research Center, Counseling Service, Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity, etc. Descriptions of these resources are in the *First-Year Handbook*; a list of useful telephone numbers is included later in this handbook.

Advising guidelines

The role of the pre-major advisor is an important one. During orientation, faculty advisors are the students' first link to academic life at Vassar and they can play a crucial role in helping their advisees make a successful transition to college. Good advising involves more than signing off on a set of courses. Vassar follows a developmental model of academic advising, which includes several activities such as (1) assessing a student's life and career goals, (2) connecting goals to academic courses and departments, (3) encouraging exploration of educational and career options, both in and out of the classroom, and finally (4) assisting students in developing a plan to reach their goals. Developmental academic advising acknowledges that students learn in and out of the classroom, and that academic work, community engaged learning, study away, and involvement in student organizations all contribute to a liberal education. The guidelines that follow are intended to assist advisors as they help students develop their educational plan for their time at Vassar.

A balanced academic program

Students tend to both be more successful academically and enjoy themselves more, when their program includes both diverse subject matter and a variety of approaches and learning styles. As an advisor, you will want to pay attention to the balance in your advisees' programs of discussion, lecture, and lab classes as well as the different types of course materials, workloads, and types of assignments.

Number of courses

First-Year Students are encouraged to elect 4 - 4.5 units in their first semester. The minimum course load is 3.5; the maximum is 4.5. The Committee on Leaves and Privileges will not approve a request from a first-semester first-year student to take more than 4.5 units. The ambitious student who wants to shoulder a five-course load can be reassured that four well-chosen courses (with perhaps an extra half-unit of physical education or music lessons,) can provide more than enough challenge in the first semester, especially considering all the other

challenges and adjustments that every first-year student faces. Conversely, the student who wants to start with only 3.5 units might be encouraged to sign up for one more course and see how it goes, but there are good reasons to stay at 3.5 units.

Apart from courses in physical education and individual music lessons, there are few half-unit courses available in the fall, since first-semester first-year students are not eligible for independent study. Faculty legislation does permit first-year students to drop to 3.0 units in their first semester upon approval of the dean of first-year students. However, this permission is granted only in very special circumstances, usually when the student is experiencing greater than usual difficulty adjusting to college. The dean of first-year students will not authorize late drops or reduced course loads merely because a student doesn't like a course. Please encourage your advisees to start with 4 - 4.5 units if possible, so that they may later drop a course if necessary. If an advisee comes to you wanting to drop back to 3.5 units, try to find out why. Depending on the nature of the problem, dropping may be neither the only solution nor the best one. Sometimes a conversation with the professor, a meeting with the dean of first-year students, or a consultation at the Learning, Teaching and Research Center can clear up confusion, allay fears of failure, or reduce stress, allowing the student to complete the course successfully.

After the first semester, students are encouraged to carry 4 units each semester to stay on track for graduation in four years. For the first year, however, "progress toward the degree" is a relative term. Since students are at the very beginning of their college careers, concerns about units of credit have to be weighed against concerns for the student's academic and personal welfare. Sometimes a slightly reduced course load can make the difference between a successful first semester and a desperately unhappy one. There will be ample opportunity to make up the shortfall later, either at Vassar or through summer work elsewhere.

Intensives

Since 2020-21, students have the opportunity to take courses designated as "intensives". "Intensive" is a name for a broad range of student learning opportunities mentored by faculty that go beyond regular classroom teaching. Taken together, these curricular initiatives are designed to recognize and catalyze deeper learning, to encourage more meaningful and close interactions between students and faculty, and to create space and opportunity for exciting, forward-looking explorations of what a Vassar education can and should be. It includes many offerings already present in Vassar's curriculum—senior theses, mentored laboratory experiences, independent studies, field-based learning, pop-up courses— as well as an open-ended set of similar kinds of teaching and learning experiences that go beyond typical classroom formats. Because instructors will offer intensives to fit their own areas of expertise or to respond to student interests and proposals, there is no set list of criteria that every offering will fit. Intensives may be credited for .5 or 1 unit, and have minimum workload expectations that are proportional to the expectations for one-unit courses. Intensive courses are denoted with INT as the 'course format' in the online course listing found on Ask Banner or in the course catalog. Intensives may be letter graded or ungraded (SA/UN); the grading format for each intensive will be indicated in the online Schedule of Classes.

Work across the divisions

Beyond the number of courses chosen, students should be encouraged to maintain some balance across the four curricular divisions. Of the 32 credits required for a degree, students may not count more than half, or 16 units, in a single field of concentration. At least one-quarter of the 32 units, or 8 units, must be in one or more of the divisions of the curriculum outside the one in which the student is concentrating. This minimum may, with rare exceptions, include interdepartmental courses or courses offered by the multidisciplinary programs. No more than 2 units of the 32 may be in physical education, with the exception of all dance courses and PHED 110 and 390.

Although not required to do so, first-year students should be strongly encouraged to take courses in all four curricular divisions as well as at least one course in a multidisciplinary program. The four curricular divisions of the College are:

Arts	Foreign Languages and Literatures	Social Sciences	Natural Sciences
Art	Arabic	Anthropology	Astronomy
Dance	Chinese	Economics	Biology
Drama	French and Francophone Studies	Education	Chemistry
English	German Studies	Geography	Cognitive Science
Film	Greek and Roman Studies	History	Computer Science
Music	Hebrew	Philosophy	Earth Science
Physical Education	Hispanic Studies	Political Science	Science
	Italian	Religion	Mathematics/Statistics
	Japanese	Sociology	Physics
	Russian Studies		Psychological Science

The multidisciplinary programs are: Africana Studies; American Studies; Asian Studies; Environmental Studies; International Studies; Jewish Studies; Latin American and Latinx Studies; Media Studies; Medieval and Renaissance Studies; Science, Technology, and Science; Urban Studies; Victorian Studies, and Women's Studies.

If an advisee's program seems overly concentrated in one division or if they have chosen courses only in subjects already studied in high school, try to persuade them to include at least one course in an unfamiliar area or discipline in the first-semester schedule. There are compelling arguments for this apart from the graduation requirements. It goes without saying that a liberal arts college offers students the opportunity to explore new fields of study and to discover new interests in the process. The first year should be a time of experimentation as well as a time for laying the foundations for advanced study in one or more areas. But many first-year students are overwhelmed by the diversity of the Vassar curriculum—especially with few requirements to structure their choices within it. A common response to this anxiety is to cling to familiar models of both study and self (“I'm good at English, so I'll be an English major”). Another is to choose courses “to get the requirements out of the way.” These students need to be encouraged to relax a bit and put their trust in the education they are beginning (which is probably impossible to do in the first weeks on campus, but still worth suggesting). There are always multiple paths towards a goal—and new goals to discover as well.

Year-long courses

Most courses open to first-year students are semester-long classes. Almost all elementary language courses, however, are year-long. Another year-long course open to first-year students is Art 102a-103b. Year-long courses are listed in the catalog with a “hyphen” (for example, French 105a-106b) and designated in the online Schedule of Classes with the notation “YL.”

Most year-long courses give one credit per semester, but certain comprehensive language courses, including elementary Chinese and Japanese, give 1.5 units of credit per semester. In all year-long courses, students must successfully complete the second semester to receive credit for the first. Occasionally a student's first-semester experience in a year-long course is so distressing that they decide not to continue in the second semester. Students may drop the second semester of a year-long course, but they should be aware that they will lose the credit for the first semester, even if they received a passing grade. If they complete the course at a later date, then the “lost” credit will be restored. The advantages and disadvantages of doing this should be weighed carefully before a final decision is made. If a student is convinced that it is better to lose the credit than to continue in the course, then they should fill out a drop form in the usual way, as all students in year-long courses are automatically enrolled in the second semester by the Registrar.

“Slash” courses are also year-long sequences, but students do not need to take the second semester in order to receive credit for the first (though they must complete the first semester before enrolling in the second). Music 105a/106b is an example of a “slash” course. Students who fail the first semester of a “slash” course may not enroll in the second semester without permission from the department chair.

Provisional grading

Some year-long courses are “provisionally graded.” This means that the final grade received at the end of the year automatically becomes the grade that will be recorded on the student’s transcript for both the first and the second semester - if a student receives a C in the first semester and an A in the second, two credits of A will appear on that student’s transcript at the end of the first year. Provisionally graded courses are marked “PR” in the online Schedule of Classes. If a provisionally graded course is offered NRO and a student would like to select the NRO option, both semesters must be taken NRO.

Ungraded work

Since first-year students are not eligible to take independent study or most reading courses in their first semester, the issue of the amount of ungraded work in the student’s program doesn’t usually come up in the first year.

However, it is important to remember that students may elect a maximum of 5 units of ungraded work over their four years here. Included in the total amount of ungraded work are community engaged learning (290), independent study (298), reading courses (297), and senior independent work (399), as well as some department senior theses. (Please note that this limit does not apply to any work taken in excess of the 32 units required for graduation.)

The Non-Recorded Option

Faculty legislation strictly limits the total number of NRO elections to no more than 4 units during a student’s four years here. This means that first-year students need to be extremely judicious in exercising this option. It may be helpful to advisors to recall that the initial motivation for the faculty approving the NRO option was not to help protect a student’s transcript, but rather to encourage students to sample areas of the curriculum that they might otherwise have shied away from. Please refer to the section entitled “To NRO or Not To NRO” in this handbook on page 19.

Transfer credit

Students may receive a maximum of 9 units of transfer credit of any kind (16 units maximum for transfer students). Pre-matriculation credits such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and A-level credit are included in this total. Study abroad credits earned from a non-Vassar sponsored program are included in this total.

Advising students with disabilities

Under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Vassar College is responsible for ensuring that students with disabilities have equal access and opportunity to participate fully in academic courses, programs, and services. When advising students with disabilities, remember to become familiar with their goals, academic strengths and weaknesses, their particular talents, skills and interests.

Some first year students have already self-identified to the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (AEO), and have been working with that office or with other college personnel this summer to arrange their accommodations. All students registered with the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity have been encouraged to inform their academic advisors of their disability and discuss how their disability may affect them academically. Students with disabilities, however, are not required to disclose to their advisor that they have a disability. Likewise, some students with disabilities may not have contacted the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity because they do not know about resources available at Vassar or because they do not want to use or need accommodations or services.

Group advisee meeting

When discussing campus resources with all of your advisees during the group meeting, we recommend that you

specifically mention that Vassar has a disability service office that can assist students who need disability-related accommodations. Even if the students choose not to use accommodations immediately, it is advisable for them to register with the office and provide documentation of their disability. This will help the office put accommodations in place easily if they are needed.

Here are some additional recommendations for the individual meetings with your advisees on Thursday:

- If a student discloses that they have a disability, be sensitive to student concerns about course selection recommended to them on the basis of the disability. For example, some students with chronic health impairments may need a class schedule that allows for frequent breaks during the day. Students with learning differences or attention deficit disorder may be concerned about balancing intensive reading and writing courses with classes that offer more experiential opportunities.
- Talk with students about taking a balanced course load. Ask them to describe their strengths and weaknesses and their interests, and to describe what types of courses are better suited to their strengths.
- Be sensitive to students' privacy with respect to a disability or need for accommodations. Do not share information about any of your advisees with other students or faculty members without the student's explicit permission.
- Consider a team advising approach with the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity.
- Encourage and guide your advisees to set realistic academic goals and help them monitor their progress towards meeting their goals.
- Do not advise a student to enter or dismiss a particular program of study or career because of a disability. As an advisor, it is appropriate to point out the necessary skills and abilities that will be required for success.
- Encourage your advisees to build relationships with a variety of resources on campus including the Learning, Teaching and Research Center and the Center for Career Education.
- Be accessible for meeting with advisees through office hours, telephone, email or web access. Arrange to meet students who have mobility impairments in a wheelchair accessible location if your office is not accessible.
- Assist students in working closely with their professors and with the Dean of Studies Office.
- Contact the Director of the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity if you have concerns about your advisees or if you suspect a student may have a disability.

Early registration for students with disabilities

Some students with disabilities are eligible for early registration, which occurs during the summer for first-year students and, subsequently, immediately before the "add only period" following pre-registration. The Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity coordinates early registration in consultation with the Registrar's Office.

Reduced course loads

Students who need modifications to their course load may petition the Committee on Leaves and Privileges in consultation with the Director of the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity, the class advisor in the Dean of Studies Office, and their academic advisor.

Foreign Language Proficiency and disability accommodations

Students with disabilities should contact the Director of the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (x7584) immediately if they need exam accommodations for a foreign language proficiency exam. When a student with a documented disability has an established history of failure in acquiring a foreign language (at the secondary or postsecondary level) due to the functional limitations of a disability, modifications to the curricular program may be warranted. In exceptional cases where there is strong evidence of a disability which effectively prevents achieving proficiency in a foreign language, a student may petition the Committee on Leaves and Privileges to substitute two units of study of foreign culture or other appropriate courses to meet the graduation requirement.

Advising for pre-health, pre-law, and teaching certification

Again this year, a very large number of entering students indicated a possible interest in careers in medicine or law on their Statement of Academic Interests forms. Several students expressed an interest in education certification. To the extent possible, the dean of first-year students assigned these students to advisors with expertise in relevant fields.

General advice for pre-law and pre-health students can be found on page 28-29 of the *First-Year Handbook*. These students often have more specific questions about their first-year programs, such as how many lab science courses to take in the first semester, or what the best sequence of courses might be given their particular preparation and interests. If any of your advisees indicated an interest in pre-law or pre-med on their SAI forms please direct them to the information meetings that will be held on Tuesday morning (see Orientation Schedule and the first page this handbook for details). Urge students interested in pre-health to meet with Casey Trocino in the Dean of Studies Office during their first year (email: ctrocino; x7553). Students considering law school should schedule time with the Center for Career Education to discuss their plans and learn about the informational programs spotlighting careers in law planned for the upcoming year.

Students who are interested in teaching certification should consult not only advisors in their major field of interest, but also the chair of the Education Department, to discuss various teacher education options: Erin McCloskey, (x7361; email: ermccloskey@vassar.edu).

For a full statement of the certification requirements and recommended sequence of study, please see the Education Department section of the 2023/24 catalog. Advice on preparation for teacher certification can also be found on page 28 of the *First-Year Handbook*.

Preparation for international study abroad

Judging from their Statement of Academic Interests forms, many first-year students have already begun thinking about studying abroad. Such students need to give particular consideration to their course selections for the first year. If a student is considering a non-English speaking country, foreign language study is of vital importance. For example, a student who wants to study in Italy but has never studied Italian MUST take Italian 105a-106b in their first year in order to reach the required level of language proficiency by the end of sophomore year. There is an advising session at 9 am on Thursday, August 24 to address foreign language competency and international study abroad. Students must also demonstrate to the Committee on Leaves and Privileges that they have acquired sufficient area studies coursework to support their academic proposals for international study abroad programs. Students applying to study away during their junior year must have declared their major at the time of application (December of their sophomore year), which puts pressure on them to define their academic direction earlier.

Further information on study abroad can be found at the Office of International Programs, Main N-173, or by making an appointment with the director, Kerry Stamp. Students will also find information on the program's web site, internationalprograms.vassar.edu.

Beyond orientation

By the end of the add period, Tuesday, September 5, your advisees should have finalized their schedules and be settling into the rhythm of their first semester. But some of the problems that first-year students typically encounter don't surface until later in the term. These may include: trouble organizing their time or staying on top of their reading assignments; difficulty finding a good space for study; too many extracurricular and social distractions; loss of energy and focus due to homesickness, loneliness, or sleep deprivation; increased pressure as papers and exams come due, sometimes leading to panic attacks; emotional crises that interfere with work; or problems with drugs and alcohol. This year, we are requiring all first-year students to have a "follow-up" meeting with their advisor during the week of October 2-6. This will give advisors a chance to talk about each student's experience, identify areas of concern, and offer suggestions for resolving any problems. This is also a good

moment to remind students of the upcoming drop and NRO deadlines, and to discuss the NRO option with them if they are considering it.

To NRO or not to NRO?

Each department and program designates the courses that may be elected under the Non-Recorded Option (NRO), and decides what—if any—restrictions apply. For example, an NRO in a course may be available only to non-majors, or only to juniors and seniors. Specific departmental restrictions are described in the Catalog. Courses that may be taken NRO are marked with “NR” in the Schedule of Classes. The general rules governing NRO elections can be found in the [Schedule of Classes Information Pages](#), which can be found online via a link from the online Schedule of Classes. If one of your advisees comes to you asking to NRO a course, check to see that it’s possible before proceeding!

In order to elect a course NRO, the student must submit an NRO form, approved by their advisor, with the Registrar’s Office no later than **Friday, November 3**. On that form, the student must indicate the lowest letter grade that they want to have recorded on the transcript. If the final grade assigned by the instructor matches or exceeds that grade, then the grade earned will appear on the transcript. If the student receives a lower grade, but still passes the course, then a grade of PA will be entered. If the student fails the course, a grade of F will be recorded.

For advisors, the NRO option raises some important questions: is the student choosing NRO for sound academic and intellectual reasons? And does the student understand the consequences of taking a course NRO? The NRO option was originally intended as a way to encourage students to take intellectual risks—to venture into new fields or to a more advanced level. But students often look upon NRO merely as a means of protecting their GPA, or worse, as an excuse for making only a minimal investment in a course, thinking something like: “I can skate by with a D and it won’t show on my record.” Alternatively, they can be serious students who somehow imagine that NRO will reduce not only their own anxiety, but also the level of difficulty in the course. But a course taken NRO becomes “easier” only if the student takes it less seriously. And ironically students often choose this option for the very courses that are the most difficult for them, thereby setting themselves up for failure. Then, too, some students mistakenly assume that NRO will protect them from an F. It does not.

Pre-major advisors should discuss a student’s motivations for electing the NRO option before signing the form - not necessarily to talk the student out of NRO, but rather to get the story behind the decision, and to point it out if the student isn’t thinking logically (as in the case of the student who came in with an NRO form on which the minimum acceptable grade was a “D”). Important: The Dean of Studies Office NEVER allows late NROs, for reasons of equity. Warn your advisees to make their decision and get their form in on time. The deans and class advisors will not sign forms without the permission of the advisor.

Dropping a course

If students start out with 4 - 4.5 units, they may drop a course (provided they do so before the October 6 deadline) without any special permission other than the approval of their advisor. The minimum number of credits a student may have and remain a full-time student is 3.5 units, so a student may not drop if they fall below 3.5 units. Please discuss with your advisee the reasons they are seeking to drop a course. That conversation may reveal helpful information about study habits, course selection, extra-curricular involvement, personal life, etc., that may help in advising the student. First-year students sometimes wait until after the drop deadline to make the decision to drop. Sometimes they do so out of ignorance (unaware that there is a deadline or that it is strictly enforced by the Registrar), and sometimes because they don’t even think about dropping until the going gets really tough, sometime around October Break. This is another reason why the follow-up meeting before October Break is a good idea: it’s an occasion to remind students that late drops require the dean of first-year students’ permission, and that such permission is granted only when there is a compelling reason. “I just got my midterm back and I got a C-” is not a compelling reason; neither is “I was only taking it to fulfill the QA requirement and now I realize that I don’t like it much.” Least compelling of all is “I was too busy to come over on Friday and hand in my drop form.”

Occasionally, however, a student really does have a good reason for requesting a late drop.

Withdrawing from a Course

Any student will be able to withdraw from a class through the 9th week of the semester as long as they do not fall below 3.5 units. That deadline this fall is **Friday, November 3**. If a student withdraws from a course, the course will appear on the student's transcript with WD in place of a grade (unlike dropping a course, which is then removed from a student's schedule and does not appear on the transcript). In order to withdraw from a course, a student will need their advisor's approval and the approval of the dean of first-year students on a withdrawal form, which are available on the Registrar's website. Please discuss with your advisee the reasons they want to withdraw from a course and help them determine whether it is the right choice for them. Also, remember to direct them to the dean of first-year students. In the special case of first-semester first-year students who are dealing with serious adjustment issues in addition to their academic challenges, a course reduction after mid-semester is sometimes appropriate or even necessary. In such cases the student, the advisor, and the dean of first-year students should all be involved in the decision.

Emergencies

Every year some first-year students experience unforeseen personal difficulties, ranging from accidents and illness to family emergencies to major emotional setbacks. When a student goes to Baldwin and is put on medical disability for longer than one day, the Dean of Studies Office routinely informs professors and advisors by email. We also notify professors and advisors at the student's request if they have to leave campus for one or more days due to a personal or family emergency or they are experiencing some sort of ongoing personal crisis that has interfered with their ability to attend class regularly and keep up with work. In all cases students are told that it is their responsibility to speak with their professors about making up any work missed; at the same time, professors are urged to allow the students an appropriate amount of time in which to do so. When in doubt, consult the dean of first-year students.

Your advisees may contact you in such situations asking for advice: My mother was hospitalized last night—should I go home? I spent last night in the ER with my roommate and didn't get my paper finished—what should I do? Whatever the situation, please urge the student to get in touch with the dean of first-year students right away. If it is not possible to see the dean immediately or speak with them directly, the student can leave a message or send an email. The most important thing is that we know where the student is and what is going on so we can best support the student, keep professors informed, and authorize academic relief if needed. First-year students also need to be reassured that faculty and deans can help in times of crisis. Please urge your advisees to meet with the dean of first-year students as soon as possible when serious difficulties arise; the dean can sometimes suggest solutions or resources for help that might not have occurred to them.

Student Support Network

The sorts of worries or behaviors that can be forwarded to the Student Support Network include, but aren't limited to: erratic or disruptive behavior, behavior indicating depression or severe anxiety, missing extended periods of class, worrisome substance use or abuse, threatening or violent behavior, medical problems, family problems, behavior that indicated self-destructive intent, etc. The key here is that the SSN concerns itself with worrisome behavior, not academic underachievement.

Emergency situations should obviously first be reported to Safety and Security at the CRC (845-437-7333), but then all urgent or worrisome behavior can be reported to a member of the SSN team. When a SSN member receives a report, the core group is immediately notified; the level of risk is estimated based upon the criteria we have established with the help of our consultants. A member of the SSN team will initiate quick action if it is warranted, and then will talk over the situation at its next meeting in order to come up with a thoughtful and coordinated response to the needs of the student or students.

If you are worried about a student, you can submit an [SSN Form](#), which can be found on the Dean of Studies website, or you can call or email any member of the core group:

Luis Inoa, Associate Dean of the College for Student Living and Wellness (845 437-5315) inoa@vassar.edu

Tom Porcello, Dean of Studies (845 437-5255) thporcello@vassar.edu

Wendy Freedman, Director of Counseling Center (845 437-5700)

wefreedman@vassar.edu Health Services (845 437-5800) health@vassar.edu

Lioba Gerhardi, Dean of First-Year Students (845 437-5258) ligerhardi@vassar.edu

Andrea Pesavento, Director of Health Promotion and Education (845 437-7769)

apesavento@vassar.edu

MaryJo Cavanaugh, Director of AEO Office (845 437-7584) macavanaugh@vassar.edu

Leaves of absence

Occasionally a crisis is so acute or prolonged, or disaffection so profound, that it may be best for the student to take some time away from full-time study. In such cases the dean of first-year students may recommend a personal or medical leave of absence for the remainder of the semester or academic year. Personal and medical leaves - which result in the cancellation of registration and housing for the current semester - can be taken at any point up to the last day of classes; all the student needs to do is to make a written request to the Dean of Studies Office. But while the college makes it easy for students to take a leave, the decision to do so is often a difficult one. Advisors, professors, and class advisors can help students to understand their options and decide what's best for them.

College policies regarding leaves of absence are summarized in the Degrees and Courses of Study section of the 2023/24 catalog. Any first-year student who feels unable to continue at Vassar should speak to the dean of first-year students as soon as possible.

Incompletes, missed finals, and other end-of-term crises

The last few weeks of the semester are a time of exhaustion, stress and even panic for many first-year students. It's also a time when new students are apt to get into trouble simply because they don't yet know how the system works—for example, that they should notify the Dean of Studies Office immediately if they miss a final examination for any reason; that only the Dean of Studies Office can give permission to reschedule a final; or that they will need to ask for an "incomplete" if they cannot finish their work by the end of the semester due to illness or emergency. If any of your students or advisees develop end-of-semester difficulties, please let the dean of first-year students know right away and tell the student to make an appointment with her.

Transfer

By the end of the first semester, some first-year students suspect that Vassar is not for them, and begin to consider applying for transfer to another college or university. If one of your advisees expresses a desire to transfer, please tell her or him to make an appointment to see the dean of first-year students. While we don't require students to meet with their deans or advisors or to reveal their reasons for wanting to transfer, it is sometimes very helpful to both the student and the advisor to discuss the student's particular situation. In the case of first-semester first-year students, the desire to transfer is often a response to difficulties that aren't particular to Vassar but rather to the inevitable sufferings of the first year of college. Sometimes an advisor or dean can help a student find ways of weathering the storm, and of finding whatever she or he is missing here (connections with the larger community, for example, or with like-minded students, which can alleviate feelings of isolation and dislocation). The dean of first-year student's primary function is to support the student's application for transfer by completing the form that certifies the student's academic and disciplinary status. Your advisee may ask you to complete this form; please refer the student to the Dean of Studies Office.

The pre-registration meeting for spring term classes

It is extremely important to have your advisees meet with you in person to evaluate how the current semester is going and to review their course elections for the following semester. Please notify your advisees about your office hours for the two-week period, **November 6-17, 2023**, and encourage them to plan on seeing you as early during that period as possible. Please do not succumb to the temptation to simply email your advisees their PINs for registration, as this serves to undermine the entire advising system here at Vassar.

Academic standards (and the consequences of failing to meet them)

Satisfactory work at Vassar College is defined as a grade of C or better. Instructors are asked to notify the Dean of Studies Office whenever a student's work falls below this level and to submit academic reports (via email) for any student whose final grade in a course is C- or below. To be in good academic standing a student's term and cumulative grade point average (GPA) must be 2.0 (C) or above.

According to the *Faculty Handbook*, "each instructor is responsible in early November for warning first-year students whose work promises to be below a grade of C and for reporting to the dean of first-year students any student who is failing or negligent in their course work. This warning should be given by a specific grade, not by comments alone. Faculty are urged to take this responsibility seriously in order to help first year students avoid academic difficulty." Advisors can use the pre-registration meetings in mid-November as an occasion to review their advisees' progress so far, and to suggest a change of direction (or attitude) as needed. Of course, November is fairly late in the semester and well after the drop deadline. It is to be hoped that your advisees will talk with you about these matters earlier in the term.

Academic probation and the Committee on Student Records

The status of all students with unsatisfactory records is reviewed at the end of each semester by the Committee on Student Records, which consists of the dean of studies (chair) and four faculty members. The dean of first-year students and the class advisors also attend the committee's meetings, where they present their students' cases. Any student who fails a course, earns two Ds, or has a GPA below 2.0 in a given semester is automatically put on academic probation for the following semester. This means the student's class advisor in the dean's office will closely follow their academic progress, and that instructors will be asked to submit mid-semester reports on their academic progress. At the end of the following semester the Committee on Student Records reviews the student's record again. The committee may also, at its discretion, recommend or require that the student take a leave of absence for a semester or an academic year, or withdraw from the college. In particular, according to faculty legislation, first-year students who, at the end of the year, have a grade point average of 1.5 or below usually may not return the following year.

While academic probation does not affect a student's financial aid or eligibility for varsity sports as it does at some institutions, it is nonetheless a serious matter; a sign that the student needs to understand the reasons for their poor academic performance and take steps to ensure greater success in the future. If the Committee on Student Records puts one of your advisees on academic probation or recommends or requires a leave of absence or withdrawal, you will receive a copy of the letter that is sent to the student. The student will be required to meet with the class dean or advisor, but it is also a good idea for you to raise the issue of academic progress in your next meeting with your advisee. In any case, the student's schedule for the new semester should be reviewed carefully, as should their plans to balance academic work and other commitments.

A note from the Dean of First-Year Students

The first year of college is a time of tremendous adjustment. Often it includes stretches of serious difficulty. One of the most important lessons for those of us in the Dean of Studies Office has been never to underestimate the issues that our first-year students are confronting, both in the classroom and outside it. Obviously, the earlier we become aware that a student is in difficulty, the better chance we have of making a positive intervention. We depend on instructors and advisors to keep us informed of a student's progress, and to get in touch at the first

sign of trouble. I would rather hear from you than not, so don't worry about being perceived as alarmist. For our part, we in the Dean of Studies Office try to keep advisors informed when difficulties arise, and to consult with them whenever it seems appropriate.

Relationships between students and their pre-major advisors vary from perfunctory to profound. Some advisees seek you out often, others not at all; some want you to be a friend, while others only want your signature; some expect you to know all the answers (and perhaps blame you when you don't), while others won't hesitate to find the answers for themselves. But no matter how the relationship develops (or doesn't), pre-major advisors do important work, particularly in the crucial first months of their advisees' college careers. As dean of first-year students, I want you to know that I greatly appreciate the time, effort and care you give to pre-major advising.³

Lioba Gerhardi
August 2023

³ I also want to thank Jennifer Herrera, Denise Walen, Susan Zlotnick, Ben Lotto, Joanne Long, Steve Sadowsky, Leslie Dunn, Pat Kenworthy, Donald Williams, and Brian Mann, who prepared earlier versions of this handbook.

Resource directory

Some important resources for first-year students (and how to contact them)

The following offices and people may be useful to the students you advise or teach at various points in their college careers; they can also be resources for you if you become concerned about a student or want to refer your advisees for information and assistance. The work of each office is described in detail in the *First-Year Handbook*.

Office of the Dean of Studies Tom Porcello, Dean of Studies Sarjit Kaur, Advisor to the Class of 2024 Mary Ellen Czesak, Advisor to the Class of 2025 Sophia Harvey, Advisor to the Class of 2026	Main North 128, x5255 email: dos email: thporcello email: sakaur email: maczesak email: soharvey
Office of the Dean of First-Year Students Lioba Gerhardi, Dean of First-Year Students	Main North 128, x5258 email: deanoffirstyear email: ligerhardi
Office of the Registrar Angela Anderson, Registrar Kathleen Giblin, Associate Registrar	Main North 118, x5270 x5276; email: registrar x5275; email: kagiblin
Office of International Programs Kerry Stamp, Director	Main North 173, x5260 email: kstamp
Pre-Health Advising Lisa Stephens	Main North 162, x5263 lstephens-guest@vassar.edu
Center for Career Education and Fellowships Stacy Bingham, Director	Main South 170, x5285 email: stbingham
Learning, Teaching and Research Center Matt Schultz, Director of the Writing Center Hudson Gould, Director of Quantitative Reasoning Center	Library, x5215 email: maschultz email: hgould
Office of the Dean of Students Luis Inoa, Associate Dean of the College for Student Living and Wellness	Main 121, x5315 email: inoa
Office of Residential Life Rich Horowitz, Assistant Dean and Director of Student Conduct and Housing	Main 120, x5860 email: rihorowitz
Student Growth and Engagement Wendy Maragh Taylor, Associate Dean of the College for Student Growth and Engagement	Main C110, x5953 email: wmaraghtaylor
Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity MaryJo Cavanaugh, Director	Metcalf, x7584 email: macavanaugh
Counseling Service Wendy Freedman, Director of Psychological Services	Metcalf, x5700 email: wefreedman
Health Service Margot Schinella, FNP-C, Director	Baldwin, x5800/5802 email: mschinella
Office of International Services Andrew Meade, Director	Main South 185, x5831 email: anmeade
Community Engaged Learning Office Elizabeth Cannon, Director	Main North 165, x5282 email: ecannon

Pre-major advisor directory 2023/24

Name (First)	Name (Last)	Department/Program	Office	Extension	Email
Tagreed	Al Haddad	Africana Studies	CH 103A	5626	tahaddad
Mark	Amodio	English	SC 015	5644	amodio
Ming-Wen	An	Mathematics & Stats	RH309B	5981	mian
Sole	Anatrone	Italian	CH 124	5613	sanatrone
Janet	Andrews	Cognitive Science	NE 109	7369	andrewsj
Jennifer	Appawu	Chemistry	BLS 235	7794	jappawu
Esteban	Argudo	Economics	BH 133A	5211	eargudo
Tobias	Armborst	Art / Urban Studies	TH 319	7330	toarmborst
Charles	Arndt	Russian Studies	CH 117A	5601	charndtiii
Alicia	Atwood	Economics	BH 136	7788	aatwood
April	Beisaw	Anthropology	BH 318	7971	apbeisaw
Hadley	Bergstrom	Psychological Science	OH 264	7363	habergstrom
Nancy	Bisaha	History / Medieval & Renaissance Studies	SW 306	5678	nabisaha
Anne	Brancky	French & Francophone Studies	CH 110	5719	anbranky
Robert	Brigham	History	SW 308	7189	robrigham
Andrew	Bush	Hispanic Studies / Jewish Studies	CH 141	5610	obush
Sea Hee	Choi	Asian Studies	SC 304		seaheechoi
Mita	Choudhury	History	SW 202	5665	michoudhury
Lynn	Christenson	Biology	OH 157	7418	lychristenson
Mark	Cleaveland	Psychological Science	OH 260	7375	macleaveland
Allan	Clifton	Psychological Science	NE 107	7381	alclifton
Zach	Cofran	Anthropology	BH 323	7637	zcofran
Colleen	Cohen	Anthropology	BH 221	5503	cocohen
Lisa	Collins	Art	TH 222	7031	licollins
Randolph	Cornelius	Psychological Science	NE 202	7376	corney

Josh	de Leeuw	Cognitive Science	OH 267	7374	jdeleeuw
Hiromi	Dollase	Chinese & Japanese	SC 321	7501	hidollase
Zachary	Donhauser	Chemistry	BLS 214	5739	zadonhauser
Eve	Dunbar	English	SC 221	5659	evdunbar
Kelli	Duncan	Biology	OH 265	7313	keduncan
Leslie	Dunn	English / Women's Studies	SC 207	5635	dunn
Eric	Eberhardt	Chemistry	BLS 222	7503	ereberhardt
Tom	Ellman	Computer Science	SP 104.2	5991	thellman
Marc	Epstein	Religion / Jewish Studies	BH 208	5517	maepstein
Rachel	Friedman	Greek & Roman Studies	SC 119	5602	rafriedman
Dustin	Frye	Economics	BH 290C	7354	dufrye
Megan	Gall	Biology / Neuroscience and Behavior	OH A52	7115	megall
Qi	Ge	Economics	BH 240D	7398	qige
Kathleen	Giblin	Registrar's Office	Main N-117	5275	kagiblin
Christopher	Grabowski	Drama	VCDF 315	5592	chgrabowski
Wendy	Graham	English	SC 125	5950	wegraham
Dara	Greenwood	Psychological Science	NE 103	7377	dagreenwood
Gordon	Hall	Art	T 101		gordonhall
Diane	Harriford	Sociology / Africana / Women's Studies	BH 304B	5514	diharriford
Jennifer	Herrera	Chemistry	BLS 226	7574	jeherrera
Thomas	Hill	Art, English, Media Studies	T 227	5791	thhill
Susan	Hiner	French and Francophone Studies	CH 111	5728	suhiner
Benjamin	Ho	Economics	BH 240A	7396	beho
Christine	Howlett	Music	SH Dept Office	7327	chhowlett

Bill	Hoynes	Sociology / Dean of Faculty	Main N-102	5300	wihoynes
Luke	Hunsberger	Computer Science	SP 104	5992	hunsberger
Luis	Inoa	Dean of Student Living and Wellness	Main 121	5860	inoa
Denise	Iris	Film	VCDF 314	5474	diris
Paul	Johnson	Economics	BH 126	5213	pajohnson
Stephen	Jones	Film		5586	stjones
Gisella	Kagy	Economics	BH 134	7399	gikagy
Jonathon	Kahn	Religion / Africana Studies / American Studies	BH 203	5521	jokahn
Martha	Kaplan	Anthropology	BH 215	5504	makaplan
Jamie	Kelly	Philosophy	RH 111	5532	jamkelly
Jennifer	Kennell	Biology / Biochemistry	OH A53	7438	jekennell
Elizabeth	Lastra	Art	T 223	5220	elastra
Andrew	Lemon	Economics	BH 243		anlemon
Gretchen	Lieb	Library	LI 114	5770	grlieb
John	Long	Cognitive Science / Biology / Neuroscience & Behavior Program	OH 259	7305	jolong
Ben	Lotto	Mathematics & Statistics	RH 309A	7437	lotto
Candice	Low-Smith	Anthropology, Africana, International Studies	BH 315	7724	caswift
Adam	Lowrance	Mathematics & Statistics	RH 406	5523	adlowrance
Lisa	Lowrance	Mathematics & Statistics	RH 406	5523	llowrance
Jenny	Magnes	Physics & Astronomy	SP 101.4	7081	jemagnes
Miriam	Mahdaviani	Dance	KH 118	7468	mimahdaviani
Melanie	Maksin	Libraries	Thompson 115	7346	mmaksin
Wendy	Maragh-Taylor	Office of Student Growth & Engagement	Main C110	5953	wmaraghtaylor
Zoltan	Markus	English, Medieval & Renaissance Studies	SC 218	7614	zomarkus
Erin	McCloskey	Education	OB 203	7361	ermccloskey

Kirsten	Menking	Earth Science & Geography	EH 115	5545	kimenking
Juan	Merlo	Physics & Astronomy	TBD	5758	jmerloramirez
Seungsook	Moon	Sociology	BH 300C	7662	semoon
Benjamin	Morin	Mathematics & Statistics	RH 409	5525	bmorin
Tahirih	Motazedian	Music	SH 205	7326	tmotazedian
Himadeep	Muppidi	Political Science	RH 110A	5561	himuppidi
Eduardo	Navega	Music	SH 017	7321	ednavega
Osman	Nemli	Philosophy	RH 206	5533	onemli
Leonard	Nevarez	Sociology	BH 308	7597	lenevarez
Joseph	Nevins	Geography	EH 109	7823	jonevins
Samson	Opondo	Africana Studies and Political Science	RH 404	5683	saopondo
Sofia	Ortiz-Hinojosa	Philosophy	RH 211A	5529	sortizhinojosa
Thomas	Parker	French & Francophone Studies	CH 113	7572	thparker
Dianne	Pater	Biology	OH 153	7795	dpater
Jose	Perillan	Physics & Astronomy / Science Technology & Society	SP 101.3	5750	joperillan
Nancy	Pokrywka	Biology / Science Technology & Society	OH 257.1	7429	napokrywka
Peipei	Qiu	Chinese & Japanese	SC 324	5253	peqiu
Ismail	Rashid	History	SW 303	5674	israshid
David	Rishell	Physics & Astronomy	SP 205	7301	darishell
Meg	Ronsheim	Biology	OH 157	7411	maronsheim
Erendira	Rueda	Sociology	BH 304C	5511	errueda
Claire	Sagan	Political Science	RH 103	5567	csagan

Colette	Salyk	Physics & Astronomy	SP 204	7075	cosalyk
Jeffrey	Schneider	German Studies / International Studies / Women's Studies	CH 131	7666	jeschneider
Elliott	Schreiber	German Studies	CH 133	5687	elschreiber
Shane	Slattery- Quintanilla	Film	VCDF 301	5588	shanesq
Christopher	Smart	Chemistry	BLS 230	5742	chsmart
Marc	Smith	Computer Science	SP 104.5	7497	mlsmith
Wayne	Soon	History	SW 203	5670	wsoon
Erica	Stein	Film	VCDF 313	7534	estein
Vinay	Swamy	French and Francophone Studies	CH 101	5718	viswamy
Jasmine	Syedullah	Africana Studies	OLB 305	5666	jsyedullah
Farida	Tcherkassova	Russian Studies	CH 128A	5610	ftcherkassova
Casey	Trocino	Assistant Dean of Studies	Main N 128	7553	ctrocino
Agnes	Veto	Jewish Studies	BH 104	5424	agveto
Silke	von der Emde	German Studies	CH 132	5618	vonderemde
Jason	Waterman	Computer Science	SP 104.4	5984	jawaterman
Kirsten	Wesselhoeft	Religion	BH 205A	5220	kwesselhoeft
Christopher	White	Religion/ STS	BH 205	7836	chwhite
Karen	Wovkulich	Chemistry	BLS 232	5744	kawovkulich
Debra	Zeifman	Psychological Science	NE 204	7384	dezeifman
Yu	Zhou	Earth Science and Geography	EH 119	5543	yuzhou
Susan	Zlotnick	English	SC 206	5648	zlotnick
Bojana	Zupan	Psychological Science	OH 271	7367	bozupan

The Fall 2023 semester as viewed by the Dean of First-Year Students

Wk #	Date	Coming up	Academic issues	Other issues
2	9/4	Add deadline (9/5)	Registration, possible adds/drops, initial impression of classes	Homesickness, adjustment to new physical campus, academic and social environment
4	9/18		Study habits, first papers/exams (library research assistance, LTRC, SI, office hours, etc),	Roommate/fellow group/value conflicts about alcohol, drugs, sex, race, class, morality, religion, social experiences/expectations, feelings of inadequacy due to discrepancy between high school status/grades and initial college status/grades
5 & 6	9/25 & 10/2	Drop deadline (10/6)	Planning/preparing/executing midterms, possible drop, need to add a 0.5 unit class to remain full-time	Time management and test anxiety, increased alcohol use as stress relief
7 & 8	10/9 & 10/23	Pre-registration for spring (11/6–17) Student initiated withdrawal/NRO deadline (11/3)	Results of midterms, follow-ups (library research assistance, LTRC, SI, office hours, etc), general thoughts about spring classes	Homesickness on return from break, realization that college isn't "perfect" as painted by self, parents, teachers, counselors, old problems continue/resurface and new ones arise
10	11/6	Pre-registration for spring (11/6–17)	Detailed pre-registration planning	Academic pressure mounts because of increased intensity and difficulty in coursework, procrastination, and perceived lack of ability
12	11/20	End of classes (12/6) Final exams (12/11-15)	Planning/preparing/executing final exams and papers	Increase in anxiety/fear/guilt about finals/overdue work, extracurricular time strains come to a head, family/financial/travel anxieties for break

Advising calendar, Fall 2023

August 21	Monday	New students arrive; Orientation begins
22	Tuesday	General Advising Meeting, 10:00 am–11:00 pm PMA Meeting, 11:00 am –12:15 pm Group meetings with advisees, 2:00 pm–3:00 pm
23	Wednesday	Faculty research presentations, 9:00 am –12:00 pm
24	Thursday	Dept/Program/Adv. Placement Advising, 9:00 am–12 pm Individual meetings with advisees, 12:30–3:00 pm
25	Friday	Registration and matriculation, 8:00 am–4:00 pm
28	Monday	Classes begin
30	Wednesday	Fall Convocation at 3:30 pm
September 5	Tuesday	Last day to add courses, including 1st 6-week courses
15	Friday	Last day to drop/NRO 1st 6-week courses
Sept. 29-Oct. 1	Fri-Sun	All Families Weekend
October 2-6	Mon-Fri	Follow-up Meeting with advisees
6	Friday	Last day to drop courses
13	Friday	October break begins at 5:30 pm
22	Sunday	October break ends at midnight
23	Monday	2nd 6-week courses begin
30	Monday	Last day to add 2nd 6-week courses
November 3	Friday	Last day for student-initiated course withdrawal/NRO full semester classes
10	Friday	Last day to drop 2nd 6-week courses
17	Friday	Last day to NRO 2nd 6-week courses
6-17	Mon-Fri	Pre-registration for spring 2024 semester
22-26	Wed-Sun	Thanksgiving recess begins at 10:00pm (Wed)
December 6	Wednesday	Fall classes end; last day to WD from all fall classes
7-10	Thurs-Sun	Study period
11-15	Mon–Fri	Final examination period