



## The UT System Excellence in Academic Advising Rubric

### INTRODUCTION

The *UT System Excellence in Academic Advising Rubric* represents the aspirational goal of improving advising across the UT System. It was developed by advising leaders and professionals to advance the [UT System's student success pillar on advising](#), which makes the following commitment to students:

- *All UT students will receive the advising they need to help them discover clear pathways to degree completion and beyond.*

The rubric supports the *Evaluate* component of the [5E Framework for Advising Excellence](#) by providing direction for evaluating institutional advising through continuous assessment and data-driven improvement. The rubric is designed to reflect the different phases of improvement as programs attempt to reach full execution of the ideals of advising. It is not intended to evaluate or assess individual advisors. Rather, it is intended to support advisors as professionals essential to the success of students as well as institutional effectiveness and responsiveness. This tool is intended to support a deeper understanding of the elements of high quality advising at an organizational level.

Originally developed in 2020-21, the rubric was intentionally revised in Winter 2022 to reflect a system-wide commitment to excellence and closing gaps in outcomes and for all students in advising, with special attention paid to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on advising. It was revised again in July 2024 so that it could be posted on the Advising in the UT System webpage.

## EVALUATE

Effective academic advising can only occur when there is continuous assessment, evaluation, and data-driven improvement.

Many frameworks exist for evaluating Academic Advising Programs as a whole; the most familiar of these is the CAS Standards for Academic Advising (2014). This framework invites administrators to assess the mission, program, organization and leadership, human resources, professional personnel, ethics, law, policy and governance, technology and resources related to advising, among other categories. This framework provides important tools for self-assessment and is sufficiently flexible to provide guideposts for different campuses, recognizing the importance of aligning expectations to the institution's mission, vision, and goals. Interested users should log into the [NACADA website for the CAS Standards](#).

Outside of the CAS Standards, most advising professionals look to the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) whose extensive history as the voice of advising professionals across the country has led to the development (2005) and subsequent revision (2017, in press) of Core Values of Academic Advising. These core values and the Academic Core Competencies Model were developed “to identify the broad range of understanding, knowledge, and skills that support academic advising, to guide professional development, and to promote the contributions of advising to student development, progress, and success” (2017). The model is an important step in the professionalism of the field and also provides tools for academic advising programs to align their professional development of advisors to competencies necessary across the profession.

The Core Competencies are derived from three major core areas of training necessary for successful advisors: Conceptual, Informational and Relational (2017). These core areas align closely with the Educate, Elevate and Enhance areas of the proposed framework for UT System academic advising. This framework is an important guide for advisor training and could serve as a foundational document for the UT System Advising Institute.

What is lacking in the documentation about CAS Standards and NACADA Core Competencies is specific context to the role academic advisors play in student success. Indeed, very little empirical data exists about the impact of advisors on student success. Only one study (Bettinger & Baker, 2014) meets the threshold for the *What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations*. In order to move forward a systemwide-worthy agenda in Academic Advising, a different kind of advising assessment is needed: an academic advising rubric.

*The Boyer 2030 Commission's Blueprint for Undergraduate Education at Research Universities* argues for the importance of advising to all students, citing research that finds good experiences with advising have the largest effect on students' overall experience of their education. In addition to students' experiences, advising experiences are correlated with student success rates. (3).

The report advocates for holistic advising that is student-centered and includes academic, career, and basic needs guidance. When universities undertake projects of advising reform, improved retention and graduation rates generally follow (32).

## UT SYSTEM ADVISING RUBRIC

The rubric represents the aspirational goal of improving advising across the UT System. The rubric is designed to reflect the different phases of improvement as programs attempt to reach full execution of the ideals of advising.

Elements of Successful or Excellent Advising	EXEMPLARY	ACCOMPLISHED	DEVELOPING	BEGINNING
<b>Required Advising</b>	Academic advising is required of all students every semester; holds are placed to help track advising	Academic advising is required of most students; holds are placed to help track advising	Academic advising is required of some students; priority is given to those with identified risk factors; holds may or may not be used	Academic advising is available but not required
<b>Caseload Advising</b>	A strategic caseload supports excellence and positive student success outcomes across populations. Every student has an assigned advisor who is responsible for the student throughout their academic career and it is clear to the student who their advisor is. Budgetary resources are sufficient so that caseloads for advisors are strategically designed to be manageable and to accommodate for advisor outages, prospective students and other duties.	All students have an assigned advisor and it is clear to the student who their advisor is; that advisor may change as students progress through the institution. Caseload may be strategic but not manageable for accommodating of advisor outages, prospective students or other duties.	Some students have an assigned advisor; others have access to advising services that are not caseload-based. Caseloads that are assigned are not strategic or manageable.	Students have access to an advisor but the advisor may not be assigned to the student. No effort is made for strategic, manageable, or outage-supportive assignments.
<b>Holistic Advising (academic and non-academic realities)</b>	All advising is customized to each student by taking into consideration each student's unique goals, realities, and identities, grounded in student development theory.	Advising may be customized to student needs but lacks a solid grounding in student development theory.	Advising may be customized to meet needs of large groups of students but is not individualized, unique or grounded in theory	Advising is not customized, is largely prescriptive, and lacks foundations in theory.

<b>Individualized degree maps and/or pathways</b>	Every student has access to a customized degree pathway that is timely and updated for the student with an advisor <b>to ensure timely progress to degree</b>	Every student has access to a generic degree map; the degree pathway may or may not be customized by an advisor	Students receive limited information about the map of a degree; degree pathways may not be available for all students or all majors	Timely degree maps or pathways are absent or unavailable beyond what is printed in catalog
<b>Advising resources available 24/7</b>	All advising <b>resources and materials</b> are accessible outside of standard business hours for all students. Advising materials are standard, uniform, and consumable by the student. Access may include online tools, non-standard hours and other technology	Most advising materials are accessible outside of standard business hours; Advising materials may lack uniformity and ease of use.	Some advising materials are available outside of standard business hours; options may be limited.	Advising materials are only available in-person during standard business hours
<b>Advisors are trained to a system-wide standard</b>	All advisors complete comprehensive, unified training that is grounded in the UT System standards including appropriate student development theory. This is complemented by unique campus-specific instruction.	Most advisors are trained to a campus wide-standard OR all advisors are trained within a department standard only, but neither includes UT System-wide standards.	Some advisors are trained to a campus wide-standard OR most advisors are trained within a department standard only.	Advisor training is largely non-standard and may not be available to all advisors
<b>Advisors participate in annual professional development</b>	All advisors have designated time and fiscal and human resources and tools as well as expectations to participate in some form of formal professional development annually. This may include opportunities to national, state, regional, local, system conferences or other formal development.	Advisors are encouraged to participate in some form of formal professional development annually but may not have the tools or designated time to do so.	Some advisors are encouraged to participate in some form of formal professional development annually.	Professional development for advisors is largely absent, not encouraged or occurs infrequently.

<b>Advisors have access to technology that facilitates communication and interaction with students</b>	Advisors have access to technology that facilitates communication and interaction with students and have training and guidance for actionable and consumable use of technology to drive student success interventions. Those processes are integrated into the culture of the campus/unit.	Advisors have access to technology and training on the tool that facilitates communication and interaction with students but may lack a full adoption process and/or cultural integration.	Advisors have access to technology that can facilitate communication and interaction with their students but may lack adequate training to use it and/or commitment to fully adopt processes.	Advisors have access to technology that can facilitate communication and interaction with their students. Training may not yet be fully developed.
<b>Advisors have access to data about their students</b>	Advisors have access to current and historical data of all of their students and have training and guidance for actionable and consumable use of data to drive proactive student success interventions.	Advisors have access to current and historical data about all their students but may not be able to act on it in real time.	Advisors have access to data about some of their students but mostly rely on post-event records to conduct advising.	Advisors have limited access to data about their students.
<b>Advisor involvement in curricular decisions</b>	Advisors are integrated by design into the faculty committee or curricular processes as critical stakeholders in the flow and implementation of curriculum decisions on the impact of student success.	Advisors are regular consultants with faculty or curriculum committees about curricular decisions/degree plans as stakeholders in the flow of curriculum decisions on the impact of student success.	Advisors are infrequently consultants with faculty or curriculum committees about curricular decisions/degree plans.	Advisors are never consultants with faculty or curriculum committees about curricular decisions/degree plans.
<b>Student experience with advising interactions</b>	Students report their advisors provide timely and accurate information with empathy with the goal that students are heard and feel that they matter.	Students report mostly positive experiences regarding the level of empathy, timeliness and accuracy of information received in their advising interactions.	Students report limited positive experiences regarding the level of empathy, timeliness and accuracy of information received in their advising interactions.	Students report negative experiences with their advising interactions.
<b>Advisor Retention</b>	University makes a strong budgetary commitment to retaining advisors along with other proactive	Campuses include proactive strategies to retain advisors because of the positive impact of	Campuses make some important but limited attempts to support advisor retention.	Advisor retention is ignored, and student success suffers because of turnover.

	retention strategies including: hybrid or remote work, career ladders for advisors, compensation increases, and role definition.	advisor retention on student success, but budgetary commitment is limited. Retention strategies may include hybrid or remote work, career ladders for advisors, compensation increases, and role definition.	Budgetary resources are insufficient and student success may be impacted by advisor turnover.	
--	--	--	---	--

## References

Bettinger, E. & Baker, R. (2014). The effects of student coaching: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student advising. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp.3-19. DOI: 10.3102/0162373713500523.

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2014). CAS Standards for Academic Advising. Retrieved from <http://standards.cas.edu/>

NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. (2017). NACADA academic advising core competencies model. Retrieved from <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreCompetencies.aspx>

The Report of the Boyer 2030 Commission – *The Equity/Excellence Imperative: A 2030 Blueprint for Undergraduate Education at U.S. Research Universities*. 2022. Fort Collins, CO: Association for Undergraduate Education at Research Universities (UERU).