



JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY

Department of
Mechanical
Engineering

Graduate Academic Advising Tutorial and Tips

Updated September 8, 2023

BACKGROUND

The University's Academic Council expects that faculty members will participate in not only research and teaching activities but also academic advising duties. Faculty members will advise both graduate and undergraduate students, but will participate in a larger community of advisors that include both the Whiting School Academic Advising staff and the department's Academic Program Administration.

While academic advising includes helping a student plan to meet degree requirements, it also provides the potential to develop a meaningful mentorship relationship as you will help students navigate personal challenges and determine career paths.

MASTER'S DEGREE ADVISING

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1. COURSE PLAN

Students must discuss their plans with their academic advisors to select the courses that will best help them learn the skills they seek. These plans will be recorded on a [Master's Checkout Sheet](#).

The [MSE Certificate of Completion](#) can also be used, which is available in the back of the **Master's Academic Advising Manual** or in the "Preparing to Graduate" tab of the [Mechanical Engineering "Academic Advising – Graduate" page](#).

This plan is discussed in the initial contact with the student before they begin their first semester and reviewed every semester during Advising Week meetings.

2. ADVISING MANUAL

Take about an hour to read the Academic Advising manual located on the [Mechanical Engineering "Academic Advising – Graduate" page](#). It has a wealth of important information on degree requirements, suggested course tracks, policies, and resources to help both students and advisors.

3. ADVISING TIMELINE

The actions occur in roughly this order:

Summer

- Incoming master's students work with their academic advisors, in consultation with the department's Academic Program staff to select courses and answer policy questions.
- Current students may occasionally ask for help via e-mail or a visit.

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Early Fall

- Master's students will work with their academic advisors to create an academic plan that will meet either the "all-course" or "essay" option of the degree. This [Master's Checkout Sheet](#) will help.
- Any student may contact his or her faculty advisor or Academic Staff to ask policy and academic questions, as well as career advice.

Fall

- Late-October or early-November - Advising Week – all master's students will meet their academic advisors to review their course plans and checkout sheets and have the advisor hold release in SIS.

Spring

- The Academic Program staff will certify degree eligibility for master's students intending to graduate.
- Late-March or early-April - Advising Week – all continuing master's students will meet their academic advisors to review their course plans and checkout sheets and have the advisor hold release in SIS.

4. ROLE OF WSE GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS

The Whiting School of Engineering's Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs office oversees school-wide and university-wide activities and policy. They host events for both graduate students and postdocs throughout the year and serve as a school and university information resource. They also will work with departments to help students in academic or personal distress. [Visit their website](#) for additional information.

5. ADVISING WEEK

While students are encouraged to visit their advisors often, they are required to visit their advisors at least once during each of the Fall and Spring semesters during Advising Week. The University has set Advising Week to take place the week before course registration begins for the next semester.

The academic advisor will meet with each of his or her student advisees, who will bring or send ahead their updated checkout sheets. The academic staff will help schedule meetings, as needed. For advisors who will be on sabbatical or otherwise unavailable during Advising Week, the Academic Program Manager can act as advisor on the faculty member's behalf.

In the [Academic Advising Info for Faculty page](#) are a variety of advising checklists and advising tips that will help advisors ask the appropriate questions of their advisees to generate a good conversation.

SOME COMMON CONCERNS OF WHICH TO BE AWARE

- **EN.530.800 Independent Research** does not count for the degree.
- BS/MSE and MSE "all course" students can count only 3 credits of EN.530.820 (Fall 2020-Spring 2022) or EN.530.823 (Fall 2022 and later) MSE Graduate Research. Do not count more than one and do not advise students to try to get an exception to count more than one.
- Students *cannot* count **courses below the .400-level**.

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- **Career services** for graduate students are available at the University's [Life Design Lab](#). Keep this in mind as we share our own experiences and knowledge about careers. Visit the [Mechanical Engineering Careers and Life page](#) for Career info.
- Remind students that when doing research, they must take **Responsible Conduct of Research** and the **Lab Safety Assessment Modules**, preferably before starting the research. Please ensure that students do not wait until the end of their time here to scramble to complete these.
- The Academic Administration enforces **submission deadlines for Certificates of Completion** to avoid last-second emergencies as experienced in the past. Students should be responsible to submit their required documents. Communication is sent in plenty of time to students. Our [Preparing for Graduation webpage](#) has deadline information.

6. FULL-TIME STATUS and COURSE REGISTRATION

Master's students will register full-time each semester, which is nine credits or more. They can switch to part-time status for the final semester if less than nine credits are needed to complete their degree requirements. International students must first obtain approval from the International Office to switch to part-time status.

Students can achieve full-time status by registering for any combination of courses and seminars, as approved by one's advisor. ISIS is set to select appropriate credits:

- **Seminars** – 1 credit
- **WSE courses**, both undergraduate and graduate – 3 or 4 credits
- **EN.530.820 (Fall 2020-Spring 2022) or EN.530.823 (Fall 2022 and later) Master's All-Course - Graduate Research** – 3-10 credits.
- Enroll for these "Pass/Fail" courses when doing essay research and writing.
 - **Master's Essay - Research and Writing**
 - **EN.530.821 (Fall 2020-Spring 2022)**
 - **EN.530.823 (Fall 2022 and later)**
 - **Master's Essay – Co-Op – EN.530.822** - 3-10 credits
- **NOTE:**
 - Audited courses do not count toward a student's full-time credit load.
 - Krieger School of Arts and Sciences' graduate-level courses will not have credits listed in ISIS, but will be recognized as 3-4 credits toward one's full-time credit load.

For more information:

- [Whiting School of Engineering Graduate Credit Hours](#)
- [Mechanical Engineering "Academic Advising – Graduate" page](#)
- Academic Program Manager Mike Bernard – me-academic@jhu.edu or 410-516-7154

7. CAREER ADVISING

A student will ask for advice and information about jobs and internships, whether or not to go to graduate school, and how to connect with those in industry to launch their careers. Some students will want to pursue a mechanical engineering career and others will diversify their career choices in other engineering fields, consulting, finance, and even law and medical professions.

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Currently, we depend on alumni, industry partners, and the Whiting School of Engineering to provide and distribute information about internship and job opportunities.

Advisors are encouraged to share their personal experiences of working as a professional, and otherwise can offer a variety of resources.

- The [Mechanical Engineering Careers and Life page](#)
- The [Johns Hopkins Life Design Lab](#) – Life Design Educator Mark Savage – msavag16@jhu.edu
- Fellow Mechanical Engineering faculty
- Academic Program Manager Mike Bernard – me-academic@jhu.edu

8. RELEASING ADVISOR HOLDS

There is a wealth of important information on the Advisor Screen of ISIS. You will use this to release a student's Advisor Hold and access other information:

1. Go to <https://sis.jhu.edu>
2. Enter your JHED ID and password.
3. Click on [Advisor](#) at the top of the screen.
4. Click on [Advisees](#) → [Advisee List](#) to view your current advisees.
 - To release a hold on the advising page, click [Release Hold](#).
 - To put the hold back on, click [Apply Hold](#).
5. You can click on the following links for additional student information:
 - Enrollments (add/drop activity)
 - Grades
 - Schedule
 - Alerts/Holds

9. CONTACTING ADVISEES

Advisors are encouraged to contact their advisees at various times during the year, such as sending reminders of deadlines or to schedule meetings. In SIS go to your Advisor role, then select "Advisees" > "Advisees List" > "Email List Form" to send an e-mail to all advisees.

10. WHEN A STUDENT IS IN TROUBLE ACADEMICALLY OR PERSONALLY

If a student is having trouble in a class, the instructor is strongly encouraged to notify the Whiting School Graduate Affairs office for Student Support and Advocacy, who will contact the student to offer emotional and academic support services at 410-516-2328.

- Allison Leventhal, Director – aleventhal@jhu.edu
- Chase Oatis, Student Life Administrator – coatis1@jhu.edu

CANVAS

Canvas has replaced Blackboard as the internal site for course assignments, organization, and internal grading.

- Canvas [Website](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- Support and Help – cldtsupport@jhu.edu

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Starfish

- Access Starfish in SIS, which can be accessed in the Advisor role by selecting “Starfish” on the left menu bar.
- [Help and Instructions](#) - Emily Calderone at 410-516-9912 or starfish@jhu.edu.

OPTIONAL, BUT RECOMMENDED CHECK-IN WITH ADVISEES

As time allows, you are encouraged to check in with your advisees during the semester to see how they are doing, usually sometime between the first few weeks of the semester. An example note that Prof. Louis Whitcomb uses is shown here. You can use this as a base to create your own check in note. This can be sent individually or as a group to your advisees.

Dear Advisees,

As we begin the third week of class I want to check in with each of you. If you have not done so already, please let me know how your semester is progressing, and if there are any issues that I can help with.

The deadline to add courses has passed. The deadlines for dropping courses is October 10 for both undergrads and grads. The full schedule of course-registration-related deadlines is here...

- Undergraduate students: <https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/registrar/students/registration/>
- Graduate students: <https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/registrar/students/graduate-registration/>

Please always include the word ADVISING in the subject lines of all email to me - this helps me find your email in my email queue!

Best Regards,

PERSONAL TROUBLES

Occasionally, students may feel overwhelmed by the rigors of education, especially if coupled with outside stresses like health and family concerns. Johns Hopkins offers a host of resources where they can ask for and receive help.

If students need someone to listen, they are encouraged to talk to their academic advisors, **Academic Program Manager Mike Bernard** or **Senior Academic Program Coordinator John Soos**. Both can be reached at me-academic@jhu.edu or on Microsoft Teams. Sometimes, venting to someone may be all they need.

Allison Leventhal, the Whiting School of Engineering’s Outreach and Support Case Director for Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs is an excellent resource to offer help and to connect students with specific, acute assistance. She is available at aleventhal@jhu.edu.

Students may want or need to talk to someone who is trained to help people in distress. View these pages for information and hours:

- [Recognizing and Helping Distressed Students](#)
- [Office of Student Life](#) – for information on services, offices, events, and student groups

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- [Office of Student Disability Services](#) – to get help with a physical or mental incapacitation, no matter how minor.
- [Counseling Center](#) – to get help with any emotional concerns, when feeling overwhelmed, and when needing mental health support in a caring environment.
- [Sexual Assault Response and Prevention](#)
- Emergencies – call the Security office at 410-516-7777 or the Baltimore City Emergency Line at 911.

11. OTHER RESOURCES

- The [Mechanical Engineering “Academic Advising for Faculty” page](#).
- The [Mechanical Engineering “Academic Advising – Graduate” page](#) - academic policies, services, professional development, advising manual.
- [Advising Week page](#) – updated every semester
- The [Mechanical Engineering “Info for Faculty” page](#) – has info on advising and other items of interest.
- Faculty colleagues who have performed academic advising.
- Academic Program Manager Mike Bernard – me-academic@jhu.edu

PH.D. DEGREE ADVISING

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1. ACADEMIC PLAN

Students must discuss their plans with their academic advisors to select the courses that will best help them learn the skills they seek. These plans will be recorded on the annual Graduate Student Evaluation form, which is available in the back of the **Ph.D. Academic Advising Manual** or in the “Annual Evaluations” tab of the [Mechanical Engineering “Academic Advising – Graduate” page](#).

This plan is discussed in the initial contact with the student before they begin their first semester and reviewed every semester during Advising Week meetings.

2. ADVISING TIMELINE

The actions occur in roughly this order:

Summer

- Incoming Ph.D. students work with their academic advisors, in consultation with the department’s Academic Program staff to select courses, determine a course and research plan, and answer policy questions.
- Current students will remain in consultation through the summer with academic and research questions.

Early Fall

- Ph.D. students seeking to earn their master’s degrees will work with their academic advisors to create an academic plan that will meet the “all-course” option of the degree. It is rare, but a student may want to write a master’s “essay / essay” in addition to the Ph.D. dissertation.
- Any student may contact his or her faculty advisor or Academic Staff to ask policy and academic questions, as well as career advice.

Fall

- Late-October or early-November - all Ph.D. students will meet their academic advisors to review their course plans and have the advisor hold release in SIS.

Spring

- The Academic Administrative staff will certify degree eligibility for Ph.D. students intending to graduate.
- Late-March or early-April - Advising Week – all continuing Ph.D. students will meet their academic advisors to review their course plans and have the advisor hold release in SIS.

3. ROLE OF WSE GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS

The Whiting School of Engineering's Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs office oversees school-wide and university-wide activities and policy. They host events for both graduate students and postdocs throughout the year and serve as a school and university information resource. They also will work with departments to help students in academic or personal distress. [Visit their website](#) for additional information.

4. ROLE OF ACADEMIC CO-ADVISOR

In 2014, the department set a policy requiring all graduate students whose PhD advisor does **not** have a primary full-time tenure-track appointment in Mechanical Engineering to also have a Academic Co-Advisor with a primary appointment in Mechanical Engineering.

The Academic Co-Advisor's role is to provide a student with guidance on department-specific program requirements in these roles:

- Ensure that a PhD student is making good progress toward his or her goals, completing Teaching Assistant requirements, and achieving success in the Departmental Qualifier Exam and the Graduate Board Oral Exam.
- Ensure that there are no unexpected issues with one of our outside advisors that would lead to a difficult situation for one of our students.

The department requires that Ph.D. students meet with advisors at least once per year during the annual advising and evaluation meetings. The Ph.D. Advising Manual states:

[Section 2.4] Occasionally, a student may partake in specialized research where he or she will work with a professor in another department. If this is the case, the student will have two advisors:

- *A research advisor, whose primary appointment is in an outside department and may or may not have a secondary appointment in Mechanical Engineering.*
- *An academic advisor whose primary appointment is in Mechanical Engineering.*

[Section 4.2] For students with a primary advisor outside the Department of Mechanical Engineering and have a second co-advisor who is a full-time tenure-track Mechanical Engineering professor - both professors must participate in the evaluation and sign the evaluation form.

Both the Research Advisor and Academic Co-Advisor should meet the student to discuss, complete, and sign the annual evaluation form. As a best practice, the Academic Co-Advisor should meet the student one-on-one to ask if he or she has any concerns they would like to share regarding the Research Advisor.

5. ADVISING WEEK

Ph.D. students are not required to meet their advisors during Advising Week, but can do so. It is important that they meet with their faculty advisors.

In The Box file, "Mechanical Engineering - Academic Advising" on JHBox are a variety of advising checklists and advising tips that will help advisors ask the appropriate questions of their students to generate a good conversation.

6. FULL-TIME STATUS and COURSE REGISTRATION

Ph.D. students are expected to maintain “full-time” resident status most or all semesters, which means that they will register for at least 20 credits each semester.

Students can achieve full-time status by registering for any combination of courses and seminars, as approved by one’s advisor. ISIS is set to select appropriate credits:

- **Seminars** – 1 credit
- **WSE courses**, both undergraduate and graduate – 3 or 4 credits
- **EN.530.801 PhD Graduate Research** – 3-20 credits
- **NOTE:**
 - Audited courses do not count toward a student’s full-time credit load.
 - Krieger School of Arts and Sciences’ graduate-level courses will not have credits listed in SIS, but will be recognized as 3-4 credits toward one’s full-time credit load.

Students may switch to part-time status after the successful completion of the Graduate Board Oral examination and the Teaching Assistant requirement, with approval of both the research advisor and the Graduate Program Chair, as well as the International Office for international students.

Part-time students will take three or more credits of EN.530.801 Graduate Research each semester. Once a student is on part-time status, the research advisor may excuse the student from the EN.530.803 Mechanical Engineering Graduate Seminar requirement, if they wish. Part-time students or their advisors will pay the part-time per-credit tuition.

Students who have completed all degree requirements and research and are in the writing stage of their dissertations may apply for non-resident status, which is subject to research advisor, Graduate Program Chair, and where necessary International Office approval.

For more information:

- [Whiting School of Engineering’s Graduate Credit Hours](#)
- [Mechanical Engineering “Graduate Academic Advising” page](#)

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Advisors are encouraged to share their personal experiences of working as a professional, and otherwise can offer a variety of resources.

- The [Mechanical Engineering Careers and Life page](#)
- Johns Hopkins [“Phutures”](#) – [Roshni Rao](#), Director.

- Fellow Mechanical Engineering faculty
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