



DEERFIELD ACADEMY
ADVISOR'S HANDBOOK
2020-2021 School Year

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INTRODUCTION

The advising system at Deerfield positions students centrally in their high school experience. It seeks to foster self-reflection, responsibility and agency.

The purpose of this *Advisor's Handbook* is to equip advisors with the resources they need to support advisees' progress toward the development of these skills through the accumulation of clear, individualized, daily habits and practices. Colleagues who are comfortable with advising may access this handbook only for occasional reference and reminders. Others, for whom the advisor role is less familiar, can use it routinely.

Each of us has an approach to advising that feels natural, so the *Handbook* is not designed to serve as a singular script for interactions with students. Rather, it is a resource for faculty who might consider it helpful.

This is an internal document.

PART I: ADVISING BASICS

Advisor Job Description

Advisors are the primary point of contact for Deerfield students and their parents/guardians. They are invested, caring, proactive and responsive. Deerfield advisors connect personally with each of their advisees. They gather as a group regularly and set aside time for one-on-one meetings. Advisors develop a working knowledge of the Academy's academic program, partnering with advisees to provide opportunities for exposure to new courses and for depth of exploration in existing areas of interest. They communicate with parents and guardians regularly beyond winter comments and spring advisor reports.

In the 2020-2021 academic year advisors take on an additional role in shaping advisees' plans for engagement during December's D-Term.

Advisor Evaluation Process

In order to submit their advisor request forms in May, students first are required to complete a survey about their advising experiences that year.

The survey evaluates advisors according to the criteria below. Only individual advisors and the Assistant Head of School for Student Life have access to responses, usually in mid-June.

Advisor Evaluation Questions

My advisor:

- Knows me and cares about me
- Helps me set goals
- Supports me in working toward them
- Knows my strengths and helps me create opportunities to emphasize them
- Understands my shortcomings and helps me create opportunities to address them
- Communicates effectively with my parents/guardians
- Has shown a commitment to inclusion at Deerfield and encouraged me to do the same
- Is available when I need him/her/them
- Sets aside one-on-one time with me
- Helps me take ownership of my Deerfield Experience
- Has a good understanding of Deerfield's academic program
- Exposes me to new interests
- Helps me delve more deeply into my current areas of interest
- Helps me establish my place in / contributions to the Deerfield community

PART II: 2020-2021 ADVISING CALENDAR

Aug. 24–28: Advisors hold Zoom meetings with individual advisees and their parents/guardians. (15 minutes/student suggested)

Opening Faculty Meetings: Advisor training and preview of the year's important dates

Sep. 8–12: Advisor/advisee meetings.

Oct. 7–14: Students write and submit goals letters in DAinfo.

Oct. 19–26: Students' goal letters serve as foundation for advisee parent/guardian Zoom meetings.

Nov. 2–6: Students refine their plans for D-Term and prepare for discussions with advisors.

Nov. 9–16: Students submit their D-Term plans to DAinfo.

Dec.21: Students submit to DAinfo Reflection Letters incorporating reflections on the year-to-date and on their D-Term experience.

Jan. 11: Advisor comments due*

May 17–21: Students submit advisor feedback and request forms.

June 21: Advisor reports due*

PART III: COLLABORATING EFFECTIVELY WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS

This year in particular, when parents' and guardians' access to campus will be restricted, the role of the advisor as a source of information and support is even more important. Families will rely heavily on advisors for regular updates about their children. Through the unique challenges of the year ahead, how do we partner with parents and guardians in a meaningful, child-centered collaboration while also fostering in our advisees the independence and self-reliance that have always been cornerstones of Deerfield's advising system and of the boarding school experience more generally? The following resources are designed to help advisors find that balance.

Best Practices for Working with Parents and Guardians

Initiate contact early. The DAinfo advisee roster includes a parent/guardian distribution list. As early as August, you can use it to introduce yourself and offer your contact information. Do not feel compelled to offer your cell phone number if you use a landline. Those who would like to can share the advisee parent/guardian questionnaire (below).

Once the school year is underway, call or Zoom parents/guardians to check-in. Give them a sense for how their child is (re)adjusting to Deerfield. At this time, you can refer to the advisor-parent/guardian communication guidelines below.

The week of October 19-26 is set aside for individual Zoom meetings with parents and guardians and will provide a good opportunity to review the parent/guardian questionnaire and the advisee's recently-submitted goals letter.

Stay in regular contact over the course of the year, possibly setting aside a schedule of communication that feels appropriate to you and the family.

Note: This may be more frequent than in previous years.

Generally, Zoom, phone call and email—not text message—are the best way to communicate with advisee families. When placing a Zoom or call, set clear start and end times so families are aware of the schedule. It can be reassuring for parents and guardians to know when you'll be in touch again.

Advisee Parent/Guardian Questionnaire

- What considerations did you discuss with your child in preparing to return to school?
- What do you think your child is most looking forward to in the year/term ahead?
- About what might your child be most anxious?
- What are your goals for your child in the term/year ahead?
- What are your child's goals for the term/year ahead?
- Please offer an anecdote that you think captures your child's strengths.
- Please offer an anecdote that you think captures your child's weaknesses.
- Now that your child is at Deerfield Academy, how often and through what medium do you expect to communicate with your child?
- At Deerfield, we encourage students to develop certain skills. How do you help your child learn the values of self-reliance, grit, and resilience? How might Deerfield partner with you most effectively in those efforts?

Guidelines for Communication with Parents and Guardians

Advisors should seek to respond to parent/guardian calls and/or emails within 36 hours. If an advisee is in danger or there is an emergency, advisors should respond as soon as they are able. Security (413.772.9880) and the SOC (413.772.9070) are available 24 hours a day.

Should the situation warrant, advisors may also refer the parent/guardian to a Class Dean, the Dean of Students or the Assistant Head of School for Student Life. As well, advisors should alert a school administrator to parental demands that are consistently excessive.

PART IV: ADVISOR COMMENTS AND REPORTS

At Deerfield, advisor comments are submitted in January, and more comprehensive reports are written in June.

Winter Comment Guidelines:

Winter comments serve as advisors' brief responses to their advisees' November Reflection Letters. They can offer:

- an appraisal of progress toward goals set in September and October
- further insight into themes and trends from end-of-term teacher comments and cocurricular reports
- a reflection on advisees' engagement in D-Term activities
- a preview of the second half of the school year
- any other relevant factors prompted within reflection letters

Spring Advisor Report Guidelines:

June's advisor reports reflect back on the full academic year. They can start with an anecdote you think reveals something about the student. As the year progresses, try to remember those anecdotes; write them down for use in the first paragraph of your reports. From that point, you can consider the following areas of interest:

Academics: Parents/Guardians will have read the same academic comments you have, so you don't need to reiterate teachers' end of term comments. Instead consider identifying motifs/patterns, noting your advisees' strengths and weaknesses, and sharing specific advice. What steps should they take to improve their academic performance? Have you had any discussions with your advisees about what they find most challenging? Most rewarding? Strategies to handle the workload and pace of life at DA?

Cocurriculars: In what activity did the students participate during the fall and winter? Parents/Guardians will not have received co-curricular comments, so you should feel free to quote them as you see fit. Personal observations or anecdotes you have regarding students' performances might be worth sharing as well as any insights gleaned from conversations with your advisees.

Extracurriculars: Do your advisees participate in any clubs or have any particular responsibilities (Alliance Leader, Proctor, Peer Counselor)? Are they contributing to the community in any important ways? Do you have any recommendations for the students about getting involved in this realm of Deerfield life? Are there any leadership opportunities your advisees should be aware of or pursue?

Residential/Day Student Life: How well do your advisees fit into dormitory life? Do your advisees participate in feeds? Get along with neighbors? How well do they use study hall/hours? At check-in, are your advisees working, socializing, staring intently at their computers...? Are their rooms clean? Do your advisees get enough sleep? Are they staying healthy?

Social Life: Are your advisees happy and comfortable at Deerfield? How do they feel about their social lives? Are they making friends? How extensive are their friend groups? Are they expanding or shrinking?

Advisor-Advisee Relationship: How would you characterize your relationship with your advisees? Any final recommendations or commendations?

PART V: ACADEMIC ADVISING

The heart of academic advising is program planning, annually visible in the process of April course requests. The following should help provide context for, and details of, that process.

Expectations for Advisors

- Be familiar with the current Course Catalog, *Employee Handbook*, and *Advising Handbook*.
- Work within and align with principles, guidelines, procedures, and deadlines established by the Academic Dean's Office.
- Help connect advisees with resources and programs that support their needs and interests.
- When needed, ask for help from the Office of the Academic Dean.
- Check in with your advisees' college advisor, or suggest the student does, about any particular curricular expectations by the colleges the student is considering.

Timeline for Course Requests

- Year-long course requests due mid-April
- Schedules posted on DAinfo August

Objectives in Program Planning

- We want students to take the most rigorous academic programs in which they can be successful (i.e., happy, healthy, and productive).
- Breadth, then depth. Ideally, students would satisfy our diploma requirements early in their careers—sampling all disciplines by end of tenth grade year—before digging more deeply into elective courses in which they are able, interested, and passionate.
- Identify and support areas of ability, interest, and passion. In choosing electives, students define and distinguish themselves, hinting at possible future majors and careers.

Course Request Process

The course request process is overseen by the Academic Dean's Office, managed by Lydia Hemphill and Erin Donnally Drake. The following ideals guide their work:

- 1) Students should be placed in their 1st, 2nd, or 3rd choice for each course;
- 2) Sections of the same course should have an equal number of students; and
- 3) Sections should be gender-identity balanced.

It is important to be aware of the following threats to realizing those ideals:

- Special requests (i.e., teaching times, rooms)
- Improper initial placements
- Special arrangements teachers make with individual students (i.e., offering to let additional students in when a class is full)
- Student demand—we can only run a course if it draws sufficient enrollments

The first of these limits flexibility in building the master schedule, resulting in more students with irreconcilable conflicts; the last two cause mobility after optimal balance has been achieved. To mitigate these threats, the office observes three principles:

- 1) Faculty may make no more than one special schedule request, which will be honored when possible.;
- 2) Only the Office of the Academic Dean has the authority to move students into classes, and they usually do so in consultation with the affected teacher(s) and Chair(s); and
- 3) No moves will be granted between multi-section courses regardless of section size.

It is critical that individual teachers defer to the Office of the Academic Dean any requests to move into a class. The Office has a global view of both the entire schedule, and also which students have made requests and been denied.

Role of Department Chairs

It is important for Advisors to avoid raising unrealistic expectations in their advisees, bearing in mind that Chairs have the final say, employ well-tested rubrics, and have a broader view than Advisors.

- Helping set enrollment limits for all courses in their department
- Overseeing placement recommendations of (math, science, and language) faculty
- Vetting course change requests (math, science, and language)

Role of Department Faculty

- Math Department teachers are responsible for assessing their current students to recommend which course to take next. The chair vets teachers' recommendations in consultation with the department when necessary and enter those placements in DAinfo. While Advisors do not help choose students' math courses, it is important for them to bear math placements in mind as they counsel students regarding overall balance of workload.

- Science & Computer Science Department teachers are responsible for consulting with current students to recommend which course, if any, to take next. Chairs vet teachers' recommendations and all course change requests. While Advisors do not choose which science course advisees will take next, they play a role in deciding when advisees take that course.
- Language Department teachers recommend which level students should take next; Advisors help advisees determine how far to go in their language study.

PART VI: ADVISOR RESOURCES FOR FOSTERING SELF-REFLECTION

The following section offers a set of optional resources designed to encourage self-reflection in advisees. Each advisee is different; advisors will know best which—if any—could prove useful.

For Choosing Goals

The questions below offer questions you might ask advisees as they're setting goals for the year ahead. They're designed to engage students in thoughtful one-on-one conversation about who they are, what they value, and where they want to go.

Possible Goal Categories: Navigating transitions; Wellness/self-care; Study habits and time management; Involvement in school/community life; Cultivating meaningful relationships;

Classroom participation

How did you arrive at this particular goal?

How does this goal reflect a deeper value(s) you hold?

What experiences have you had in the past that taught or reinforced this value?

Who in your life has been influential in shaping this goal in you?

What does this goal reflect about your past, present, and hopes for your future?

Setting a Course of Action

Beyond your advisor, who knows that you are setting this goal?

What are you currently doing that might represent evidence that you are already moving in the direction of your goals?

What might represent a best first/next step?

What skills do you have that will be useful as you work towards this goal?

Do you have any role models whom you can look to in approaching this goal? How have they approached this goal?

Is this something you can talk about with them to gain strategies or ideas for your own life?

Anticipating Obstacles

Are there situations, relationships, or places that make it hard for you to work towards this goal?

What are effective ways of dealing with these obstacles when you notice them?

Who or what around you helps to remind you of what's important to you in positive ways?

Effects/Benchmarks

What benchmarks can you set to measure your progress toward this goal? How might progress toward this goal affect your life?

For Setting Goals

This is a more structured approach to goal-setting for students. It offers a template for brainstorming goals and strategies for tackling them. Both might prove useful during advisory meetings as students begin to define their goals for the year.

Step 1:

Brainstorm four goals - at least one in each of the goal-type categories below. Label your goals by type.

Goal Types:

- **Specific skills:** Developing a new skill or improving current skills
- **Habit improvement:** Beating old habits or developing better ones
- **Achievement:** These describe results that you will have when you finish the goal. Examples include: reach the Honor Roll, get named captain/club president, raise a grade in a specific class.
- **Personal growth:** These goals tackle bigger picture life priorities such as: becoming more independent, identifying academic passions, making more friends.

Step 2:

Identify strategies that align with and will support each of the goals you've set. Explain how you will employ these strategies. Employ at least two strategies per goal.

Goal Tackling Strategies:

- **Action strategy:** These describe specific actions that you will take to accomplish achievement goals. Examples: devote one free period per day to homework, attend extra help sessions, arrange to work with a peer tutor
- **Limit strategy:** These set boundaries and manage priorities. Examples: go to bed by 11 pm on weeknights, allow yourself to watch Netflix only on weekends
- **Rate strategy:** These specify actions done repeatedly over time. Many personal growth related goals can be approached via the rate strategy. Examples: take one practice SAT per month, call Mom three times per week, write in a journal every day
- **Exclusion strategy:** These state things that you will not do. Examples: do not login to Facebook after 8 pm, do not eat junk food, do not take naps during free periods.

Step 3:

Fill in the Goal Chart (see template on following page).

Step 4:

Referring to this chart, write up your goals in paragraph form.

GOAL CHART

	GOAL	ACTION	LIMIT	RATE	EXCLUSION
Specific skill					
Habit improvement					

GOAL CHART

	GOAL	ACTION	LIMIT	RATE	EXCLUSION
Specific skill					
Habit improvement					
Achievement					

GOAL CHART

	GOAL	ACTION	LIMIT	RATE	EXCLUSION
Specific skill					
Habit improvement					
Achievement					
Personal growth					

EXAMPLE TEMPLATE

	GOAL	ACTION	LIMIT	RATE	EXCLUSION
Specific skill	Learn to play the piano	Sign up for piano lessons		Practice 1 hour a day, 2 hours per day on weekends	
Habit improvement	Develop a better sleep schedule		Go to bed by 10:30 on weeknights.		Do not nap during free periods
Achievement	Get my GPA up to a 90 or above	Sign up for a peer tutor in math		Attend math extra-help every Wednesday	
Personal growth	Meet new people and friends	Sign up for Uke and Bongo club		Sit with at least one person I don't know at each walk-through meal	

Self-Assessment Rubrics

The questions and rubrics that follow, to be completed by advisees with supervision and follow-up from advisors, can serve as a springboard for further conversation and self-reflection. Advisors who remain with advisees for more than one year can use advisee responses as a metric of growth over time.

Advisee Self-Assessment (Academic)

Time Management and Preparedness	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
I arrive at classes and other obligations on time.				
I make a schedule for my study hours.				
I outline specific goals for my study hours.				
I make a daily "to-do" list.				
I begin major assignments well in advance.				
I come prepared for class with the necessary materials.				
I hand in my homework on time.				
I use a planner for tracking homework and other obligations.				
Concentration	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
I study in a place free from auditory and visual distractions.				
I find that I am able to concentrate, that is, give undivided attention to the task for at least 20 minutes.				
I am confident with the level of concentration I am able to maintain.				
I avoid activities and people that may distract me from my studies.				
I can easily remember what I have studied.				

Study-Aids and Note-taking	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
When reading, I mark or underline parts I think are important.				
I write notes in the book while I read.				
When reading, I can distinguish readily between important and unimportant points.				
I break assignments into manageable parts.				
I relate material learned in one course to materials of other courses.				
Participation	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
I am alert in classes.				
I ask the teacher questions when clarification is needed.				
I volunteer answers to questions posed by my teachers and my peers during class.				
I participate regularly and frequently in class discussions.				
I take the initiative when working on a group project				
Writing	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
I find that I am able to express my thoughts well in writing.				
I write rough drafts quickly and spontaneously.				
I review my writing for grammatical errors.				
I have others read my written work and consider their suggestions for improved writing.				
I allow sufficient time to collect information, organize my thoughts, write the assignment, and revise.				

Self-Assessment (Personal)

- Do you feel comfortable approaching students and faculty about your needs?
- What has been your most rewarding personal experience so far?
- What has been most challenging personally so far?
- What experiences are you looking forward to most?
- What obstacles are keeping you from reaching your goals?
- Please rate your emotional and physical health. What makes you feel better physically? Emotionally?
- What role do you play in this community?
- Is there anything else I should know?

FINAL REMARKS

We hope this edition of the Advisor's Handbook is helpful to you in your work with advisees this year. We're eager for any contributions that might complement these efforts and also for your feedback so we can continue to refine and edit for next year.

APPENDIX

NOTES FOR RISING TENTH-GRADERS

English - Required

Defining Literary Traditions is preselected.

Language

Honors-level courses will be vetted by the department, but encourage advisee to speak to current teacher about recommendation.

Math

The Math Department will consult with advisee's current teacher and enter placement. Advisors will be notified of placement but will not enter these courses. Course changes require Math Department approval.

SELECT TWO OF THE FOLLOWING DISCIPLINES:

History & Social Sciences

Rank three choices preferentially.

Advisees who took history in ninth grade at DA have fulfilled the ninth/tenth grade history requirement. Tenth-graders are welcome to take a second year of history.

Humanities

Two terms of Visual & Performing Arts and one term of Philosophy & Religion. For alternates, enter a total of four arts courses and two phil & rel courses.

Science & Computer Science

Recommended science sequence is physics, chemistry, biology.

Tenth-graders with weak math skills are advised to delay chemistry until junior year.

OPTIONAL/SUGGESTED

Writer's Craft P/F

Students are invited by the English Department.

Advisors do not request this. Course meets once a week.

NOTES FOR RISING JUNIORS

English - Required

Rank top six choices. Be sure that your advisee would be happy and able to take any of the requested courses. If requesting American Studies, your advisee must request American Studies in history as well.

SELECT FOUR OF THE FOLLOWING DISCIPLINES:

History & Social Sciences

It is expected that all juniors will take US History. Honors US and European History and American Studies are vetted by the department.

Language

Honors level courses will be vetted by the department, but encourage advisee to speak with current teacher about recommendations.

Math

The Math Department will consult with advisee's current teacher and enter placement. Advisors will be notified of placement but will not enter these courses.

Science & Computer Science

Alternates can be in any discipline. Select the alternate from the drop-down list, then select the course. Research courses are vetted by the Science Department.

Visual & Performing Arts

Will often be sixth course P/F Alternates can be in any discipline. Select the alternate from the dropdown list, then select the course.

NOTES FOR RISING SENIORS

Seniors with Phil & Rel and/or VPA requirements to fulfill have the option of doing so with spring term electives, which will be requested in January.

English - Required

Rank top six choices. Be sure that your advisee would be happy and able to take any of the requested courses. Most students will take a fall/winter course that is followed by a spring term elective (requested in January).

One-year seniors and PGs must take English for the whole year, including a spring elective.

SELECT FOUR OF THE FOLLOWING DISCIPLINES:

Language

Honors-level courses will be vetted by the department, but encourage advisee to speak with current teacher about recommendations.

Math

The Math Department will consult with advisee's current teacher and enter placement. Advisors will be notified of placement but will not enter these courses.

History & Social Sciences

Alternates can be in any discipline. Select the alternate from the dropdown list, then select the course. Economics is vetted by the History Department.

Science & Computer Science

Alternates can be in any discipline. Select the alternate from the dropdown list, then select the course. Research courses are vetted by the Science Department.

Visual & Performing Arts

Will often be sixth course P/F. Alternates can be in any discipline. Select the alternate from the dropdown list, then select the course.