University of Utah
Psychology Advising Center

Peer Advising Syllabus
PSY- 4951

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Psychology Advising Center Mission

The Psychology Advising Center (PAC) exists to provide accurate information, guidance, and support to students pursuing a major, minor or certificate in Psychology at the University of Utah.

We do this by providing accurate information about Psychology requirements. We also provide information on preparing for graduate school and departmental opportunities such as the new Honors Track, departmental scholarships, research assistantships, field placement opportunities, and more.

The goal of every advisor who works in the PAC is to be an excellent listener, to be attentive, and to be motivated to improve the undergraduate experience for psychology students. All students who visit our office should leave confident of the requirements they need to meet.

Advising as a Class

Your advising experience in the PAC office was created to be an educational, hands-on experience. With this in mind, you are required to complete certain activities during your experience. You will be graded for your work in the PAC office.

Hour Requirements: All peer advisors are required to sign up for two credit hours during the first semester (Fall) in which you are required to work an average of 5 hours per week and attend a weekly 1 hour meeting; totaling 6 hours per week. Peer advisors have the option of signing up for two or three credit hours during the second semester (Spring) in which you are required to work 5 ½ or 8 ½ hours every week (depending on 2 or 3 credits) and a monthly one hour meeting; totaling an average of 6 or 9 hours per week.

Please note: If you start in the Summer you are required to sign up for two credit hours during the Summer semester, and 2-3 credit hours during the Fall semester. You may choose to stay on as a Peer Advisor during the Spring semester with 2 credit hours. Short meetings will be conducted 1-on-1 during regular shift hours.

Training: All peer advisors will attend mandatory training meetings weekly (for first semester advisors) or monthly (for second semester advisors). Training meetings DO COUNT toward your weekly hours; noted above in the hour requirements section.
First Semester Peers

**Project:** You are required to complete one, two hour long project that you can either schedule during your regular office hours or do on your own time and add it to your total hours. For this assignment, you will be asked to investigate a service, major, degree, or any other idea or place that will enhance the information used in this office or your own education.

Examples of this may be... *Career Services, the LPC Masters program, a PhD program, Trio, LEAP, how other departments advise, etc.* Once you have decided on a service, you may be assigned specific questions to answer.

The assignment is scheduled with the intention that 30-60 minutes will be used for research and the other time will be used to outline your findings for a presentation at the last training meeting. You are required to cite all of your findings, be prepared to answer questions, and to have a handout for your presentation.

- First Semester Project Proposals are due by Friday, Oct. 15th, at 11:59 PM.
- First Semester Projects are due by Wed., April 27th, at 11:59 PM.
- There are no scheduled shifts or meetings during finals week! (April 28th-May 4th)

**Quizzes:** You are required to complete 8 short quizzes. Each quiz covers what you need to know to be an effective advisor as well as information you will need to pass the “Flying Solo Test.” Each quiz is approximately 10 questions and each quiz will be discussed and graded during training meetings. You are allowed to complete them during your scheduled hours. Quizzes are not intended to be difficult, but to help familiarize you will important information that you will be sharing with students.

**Flying Solo Test:**

By the end of your first semester as an advisor, you are required to take a 4 part test.
- Part 1 - Present the Psychology Handbook to the AD, D, or another student.
- Part 2 - Pass a written exam portion with 90% or better.
- Part 3 - Successfully complete a checklist for a DARS
- Part 4 - Answer questions about that particular DARS

*Please Note: Training during the first semester is done at an individual pace for each Peer Advisor, so some may begin advising students on their own before others. It is expected that all peer advisor are fully trained to do 1-on-1 advising on their own by the end of their first semester.*
For the checklist portions you are allowed to miss one point on each. After you pass the test, you have the option to begin advising on your own.

**Assessment:** During the semester you will be evaluated twice. One of these assessments will occur during an introduction to the major for either a freshman or transfer student. This assessment will be followed by a feedback session with your evaluator.

You will also be completing specific Training Checklist during your time in the PAC Office, which will help you know when you are ready to start advising.

**Grading Scale:**
As a peer advisor, you begin with an “A” letter grade. If you complete assignments, show up for your shifts, and follow the procedures outlined in the PAC Peer Advising Manual, you will receive an “A”. It is when you choose to not complete the following that you will receive a lower grade.

**Flying Solo Test:** Receive at least 67 out of 75 points to receive full credit. After that, each subsequent retake will cause your class grade to go down one step (A to A- or A- to B+, etc.)

**Quizzes:** After 2 late or incomplete quizzes your grade will be lowered one step.

**Project:** You are required to complete the project by the end of finals week. If you do not finish, you will be downgraded two steps for the incomplete assignment (an “A” is now a “B+”).

**Assessment:** You will be officially observed and evaluated twice during the semester. If your advising is inadequate or does not match the standards outlined in this handbook, you could be downgraded a step for your grade. You will be informed and warned that this may happen and you will be given a chance to improve upon this before you are awarded the grade.

**Attendance:** Your grade may be taken down a step if you: (1) miss more than 2 trainings (2) have more than 2 unexplained absences or (3) miss more than 3 scheduled shifts (with reason) within a semester. Let the Assistant Director know (through email) if you are sick, etc. as soon as you know you will not be in for your shift. ***If you miss a shift or training, you can make up the time on another day when no Peer Advisors are scheduled.
Second Semester Peers

**Project:** You will also be required to complete a project for the PAC office. Sample projects might include: promoting and organizing high school or transfer day, reorganizing or developing new materials for the PAC office such as an improved checklist, an improved bulletin board, or doing research for the PAC office. The second semester project should take approximately 8 hours to complete and can be done during down time in your PAC Office shifts or on your own. Unique ideas for projects can be approved by the AD, or D.

- Second Semester Project Proposals are due by Friday, Feb. 26th, at 11:59 PM.
- Second Semester Projects are due by Friday, April 11th, 11:59 PM.
- There are no scheduled shifts or meetings during finals week! (Dec. 14th-18th)

**Advising:** You will be required to participate in regular advising.

**Grading Scale:**

- **Project:** You and the director will decide what a successful project looks like. If you do not complete the project, you will automatically be downgraded 2 grade points (A to B+).
- **Advising:** You are now required to advise students as a second semester peer. Because we are depending on you and setting appointments for you, your promptness is absolutely necessary. If your attendance or promptness becomes a problem, you will be officially warned twice before your grade is impacted.
- **Attendance:** Your grade may be taken down a step if you: (1) miss more than 2 shifts (2) have more than 2 unexplained absences or (3) miss more than 3 scheduled shifts (with reason) within a semester. Let the Assistant Director know (through email) if you are sick, etc. as soon as you know you will not be in for your shift. ***If you miss a shift, you can make up the time on another day when no Peer Advisors are scheduled.
Third + Semester Peers

It is true- some advisors stay for a third or fourth semester. You will be able to choose your assignments with the Director. Your grading scale works the same as other peers.

Advisor General Responsibilities

To keep the office running smoothly and maintain a beneficial advising experience for all students, it is important that you prioritize your advising responsibilities. Advising students is the PAC Office’s #1 responsibility. When you work in the office and are not advising a student, please complete your other responsibilities in this order.

1. Answer the phone (again, when not in an appointment)
2. Work on your Training Checklist
3. Work on your project
4. Make copies of handouts
5. Ask the Assistant Director or Director if there is anything else to be done
Be proactive.
There will most certainly be down times in the office as students fluctuate in and out throughout the year. You will have free time to do homework, surf the internet, etc. once these other tasks are attended to.

Your Schedules
Each advisor is expected to arrive on time their shift and be mentally prepared to advise students. We would rather you stay home and get well than come in sick and not be able to advise students confidently. If you are going to be late or if you are sick, please call or email the office to inform us. Any time missed time due to sick days or vacation must be made up before the end of the semester in order to fulfill your commitment to the PAC.

Your hours will also be shown on the Outlook calendar at the top of each day. We also do not anticipate your schedule changing often, if ever, so you will not be reminded of your schedule.

Any changes (i.e. vacation, work, or other needs) to your schedule during the semester must be given to the Assistant Director by the Tuesday prior to the following week (or ASAP).

*The office will be closed for the University’s listed holidays. These will be noted clearly in Outlook.*

Answering Phones
It is a regular task of everyone in the advising office. The only time we don’t answer the phone is when we are in an appointment. Even if you are not the one seeing the student, do not answer the phone in the same room. It is important that we are courteous and focused when speaking to students on the phone or in person.

Advisor Conduct:
**Confidentiality**

As an advisor you must keep all student information, academic or otherwise, confidential. You are not to release or discuss information with anyone except the student. This also means you are not to leave confidential information on your desk or other area if a student can see it or read it.

The academic right to privacy and confidentiality is called **FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act**. If you ever need additional information about these rights, ask the AD or D or visit [http://www.sa.utah.edu/regist/ferpa/faculty/index.htm](http://www.sa.utah.edu/regist/ferpa/faculty/index.htm).

Remember- releasing confidential information is not only a violation of the department and university's policies, you can also be personally prosecuted. Anything containing students' personal information, such as their Social Security Number, University ID, telephone number, address, etc., should be shredded. A shredder is located in the office work room.

**Dress Code**

Remember that you want your advisees to feel comfortable. Please avoid wearing revealing and/or offensive attire. You are free to change your clothes in the building if you so desire.

**Cell Phones**

Cell phone ringers and pagers MUST be turned to “off” or “silent” while in the office; talking and sending/receiving text messages on cell phones are NOT allowed while working in the PAC. If there is an emergency situation that might require you to use your cell phone, inform the Director or Assistant Director in advance.

**Computer Use**

Advisors may check personal e-mail or use the computer for personal use only when there are no students who need to be advised, all tasks are completed, and you have asked the AD or D if there is anything that needs to be done. **Please minimize all non-academically related programs if a student comes in for an appointment.**

**Advising Friends**

You are not allowed to advise friends because it is a conflict of interests. If you feel uncomfortable or wish not to advise someone in particular, please inform the AD or D as soon as possible.

**Training and Probation Period**

All advisors go through a training and probation period. Before you can advise “solo” you must pass the “solo advising” test. **Your first semester as an advisor will be for training, probation, and passing the “solo” advising test and your performance during that first semester will determine whether we ask you to continue as an advisor for a second semester.**

**Beyond** these responsibilities we encourage you to become familiar with the resources in the office. Doing this will make you a better advisor. Please speak up about any way you feel the office, web page, training, or advising system could be improved. We want you to be involved and have a positive experience as a peer advisor. You will also be given a chance at the end of your second semester to formally evaluate the peer experience.