Plan your first adviser meeting

**Establish a good relationship**
- Ask students about their background and motivation for coming to Essex
- Encourage them to tell you about their choice of course
- Find out how they are settling into university life
- Tell them something about yourself

**Establish boundaries**
- What they can expect from you as an adviser (what you can and can’t do)
- What you will expect from them
- When you are available and how to contact you
- When central support services will complement the Adviser system

**Set expectations**
- What do they expect their time at university to be like?
- How will it be different from FE, what do they expect their workload to be like?
- What do they hope to be able to do after Essex?
- What do they hope to get from the advising relationship?
How to... plan your first adviser meeting

Establish a good relationship
It's worth establishing a good relationship as early as possible, and the first meeting is the ideal opportunity. Although you will likely need to cover some of the practicalities of your departmental system, the meeting doesn’t need to be limited to that. Why not take the opportunity to get to know a little bit more about the students you're advising? This might include learning a bit about their background and motivations for being at university, why they’ve chosen their course, or how they’re settling in to their new lives. You could also take the opportunity to tell them something about your own background and the work that you do here.

Tip: One way to get the conversation started easily is to give your new students a few questions to consider before their first meeting. Carefully chosen questions can be useful both for structuring a conversation and also for setting appropriate expectations for your relationship early on.

Establish boundaries
In order for the adviser-student relationship to work as well as is possible, it is important to establish boundaries. These will vary from person to person, depending on how they prefer to work, but in all cases will help students understand what they can expect from the adviser system. There are details about establishing appropriate boundaries in the Handbook for Departmental Advisers, but some of the key things to consider include what advisers can and cannot do, the role of central services such as Student Support and the best way to arrange meetings. It’s not just you who has responsibilities – this is an ideal opportunity to establish what you expect from your students.

Tip: It’s helpful for your students to know what you can and can’t do for them and also that even if you can’t help you can direct them to someone who can. The Handbook for Departmental Advisers includes contact details for all the support services available to students.

Set expectations
Students arrive at the University with a range of expectations of what their experience will be like, and what they hope to do afterwards. The first adviser meeting is an ideal opportunity to help them to start to think about how they can get the most out of their time here. Getting them to identify some of their expectations and hopes is a good way to start the process – if their expectations are far-removed from what is realistic at university, or what their coursework will be like, you will be able to help them move towards more realistic expectations. Equally, depending on what they hope to get from their time here, you may direct them to the Students’ Union or the Employability and Careers Centre.

Tip: Getting students to clarify their expectations is a good way to start them thinking about setting goals and what they need to do to achieve them. Encourage them to write down their goals and refer back to them.

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