

# **Toward Academic Success: A Guide to Advising at Yale**



Freshman advising at Yale is designed to help students develop immediate and longer-range academic goals, to offer guidelines for achieving those goals, and to provide information about deadlines and requirements. Advisers are available through the residential colleges, academic departments, and various offices connected to the Yale College Dean's Office. The descriptions below provide information about each of these resources.

**Your Residential College Dean** Your primary academic adviser is your residential college dean, to whom you may always turn for academic and personal advice. The dean can answer questions about academic requirements and connect you to other advising resources on campus. Your residential college dean lives in your residential college and also has an office there. He or she supervises the advising networks in the college.

On the first evening of Freshman Orientation, your dean will welcome you at a meeting of all the freshmen in your residential college. At that meeting the dean will give you some recommendations about how best to take advantage of the opening days and Yale's resources. If you have a question to which you cannot find an answer, or if you need advice you cannot find elsewhere, consult your dean.

**Your Freshman Adviser** Your freshman adviser is a Yale faculty or staff member or administrator affiliated with your residential college who has volunteered to talk with you about your academic interests and aspirations. He or she can offer general guidance about constructing a sensible overall schedule for your first year, help you think through larger questions and plans, and direct you to relevant resources. The primary purposes of these conversations are to provide general advice about acclimating to Yale's academic culture and to give you an opportunity to become acquainted with a member of the faculty or administration affiliated with your residential college. Specific questions about particular courses or requirements should be directed to the relevant academic department or your residential college dean.

**Your Freshman Counselor** Your freshman counselor is a senior who lives near you and who can be a source of information and assistance throughout the year. Your counselor can offer suggestions about your curricular and extracurricular choices, answer questions, and give firsthand advice on how best to use the academic and other resources of your residential college and of Yale College.

*Your First Meeting with Your Freshman Adviser* You will meet your freshman adviser at the advising meeting in your residential college on Monday, August 29. Be aware that advisers typically serve two to four students from the same college, and this first meeting usually takes place in a small group. The principal purpose of this meeting is to discuss your academic interests and general questions and to arrange a follow-up meeting when you can talk one-on-one. As you plan your individual meeting, be sure you know your adviser's name, how to contact him or her, and the location of the meeting. If you are not sure, ask your residential college dean. Bring your calendar so that you can schedule a second follow-up meeting.

*Follow-up Meetings with Your Freshman Adviser* You and your adviser should plan to meet one or two more times before course schedules are due. Meetings usually take place either in your adviser's office or in your residential college, perhaps over a meal in the dining hall. You don't need to come to these advising meetings with a settled plan; it is perfectly appropriate to be considering six to eight courses during course selection period ("shopping period"). Conversely, even if you have a clear idea about which courses you want to take, be receptive to the advice and suggestions your adviser offers. Be prepared, however, to discuss your aspirations for your Yale education and your freshman year.

If you have any difficulty finding answers to a particular question, your adviser or residential college dean can guide you to the right source of information. Please be aware that you may need to address specific questions about courses and requirements to faculty affiliated with the relevant academic department or to your residential college dean. Before the end of course selection period, be sure to schedule one more meeting with your adviser to discuss any last-minute changes to your course selection and to secure his or her signature endorsing your fall-term program of study.

Finally, keep in mind that advisers are also available to meet throughout the term about any matter you wish to discuss, and the amount of contact you have with your adviser depends largely upon your interest and initiative. Your adviser may also contact you to offer tips or additional advising meetings, and you are urged to respond appropriately. We particularly encourage you to arrange a meeting with your adviser around midterm to discuss how your courses are going, and again toward the end of the term as you begin to think about the spring term.

- Departmental Advising** Each academic department has a director of undergraduate studies (DUS) who can discuss with you the department's offerings, course prerequisites, and requirements for the major. Contact information for each DUS is available on line, in the Subjects of Instruction chapter of *Yale College Programs of Study* (YCPS), and at [yalecollege.yale.edu/student-services/advising/directors-undergraduate-studies](http://yalecollege.yale.edu/student-services/advising/directors-undergraduate-studies). Large departments may also have departmental representatives affiliated with the residential colleges; the names of these representatives are listed in the YCPS.
- Academic Fair** A particularly important opportunity to learn about Yale's academic programs and departments is the Academic Fair on Tuesday, August 30, from 2 to 3:30 P.M. in William L. Harkness Hall and Linsly-Chittenden Hall (please see the map on page 34). Directors of undergraduate studies and faculty members from most academic programs and departments will be at the fair to offer guidance about courses, placement, and prerequisites for majors. It is an outstanding opportunity to gather information and advice from a broad range of sources, and you are strongly urged to attend.
- Specific Guidelines and Information** As you consider course selection, be sure to read the Academic Information section of the Class of 2020 Web site, [catalog.yale.edu/freshman-handbook/](http://catalog.yale.edu/freshman-handbook/). This section summarizes Yale's academic requirements and resources and provides guidance for putting together a schedule that suits your interests and abilities. Keep in mind the following points in particular.
- Distributional Requirements for the Freshman Year** During your first year, you must enroll for one course credit in two of the three required skills categories: writing (WR), quantitative reasoning (QR), and foreign language (L1-L5). While you are required to enroll in only two of these categories, it is in your best interest to begin fulfilling all three skills requirements during the freshman year, if you are able to do so. A full explanation of the distributional requirements is available in the YCPS. Your residential college dean can answer any questions you may have.
- Credit/D/Fail Option** The Credit/D/Fail option was established to encourage experimentation and to promote diversity in students' programs of study. Complete information about this option is found in the YCPS. Some of the pertinent restrictions are:
- Up to four of the thirty-six credits required for the bachelor's degree may be earned under the Credit/D/Fail option. No course credit earned

on a Credit/D/Fail basis fulfills any distributional requirement for the bachelor's degree.

- No more than two credits per term may be taken Credit/D/Fail; at least two credits per term must be taken for letter grades.
- You cannot earn acceleration credit by taking a designated advanced course during freshman year if you enroll in the course under the Credit/D/Fail option.

*Deadlines* A summary of pertinent deadlines is available in the YCPS under "Yale College Calendar with Pertinent Deadlines," [catalog.yale.edu/ycps/calendar](http://catalog.yale.edu/ycps/calendar), including deadlines for submitting your course schedule, dropping a course, or changing a course from Credit/D/Fail to a letter grade. These deadlines are strictly enforced.

*STEM and  
Premedical  
Students* If you are interested in a major in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM), or if you wish to pursue a premedical program, you will need advice specially tailored to those areas. Detailed information on placement in STEM courses may be found in the Class of 2020 Web site under "Preparing for Health Care Professions," [catalog.yale.edu/freshman-handbook/academic-information/preparing-health-care-professions](http://catalog.yale.edu/freshman-handbook/academic-information/preparing-health-care-professions). This page also contains pertinent advice. Further information for STEM and premedical students is provided at departmental meetings during the opening days; see the listings in the "Departmental Meetings" section.

Note especially that members of the Health Professions Advisory Board will hold a meeting for students on Tuesday, August 30, from 1 to 2 P.M. in Davies Auditorium, Becton Center, 15 Prospect Street.

*Course  
Selection Period  
("Shopping  
Period")* The idea of a "shopping period," during which you may consider alternative courses, may be new to you, but it is a useful way to look at classes you are interested in without having to sign up for them immediately. Take advantage of this time to explore Yale's rich curriculum. Freshman "shopping period" extends from the first day of classes (Wednesday, August 31) to the day you submit your course schedule (Wednesday, September 14). Please be aware that classes conducted during the first two weeks of the term are regular, full-fledged classes in which readings and homework are assigned, so you should be prepared to keep up with assignments and participate fully in each class that you visit. We encourage you, therefore, to limit the number of different courses you plan to visit and to settle on a course schedule as quickly as possible.

**Summary** Freshman advising is a year-round activity, although we give special attention to it at the beginning of each term. If at any time you are confused and do not know where to go for help, consult your freshman counselor, freshman adviser, or residential college dean. He or she should be able to answer your questions or guide you to the appropriate resources.