

Fall 2024 Academic Advising Survey

October 28, 2024

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Department of Research and Advocacy



Overview

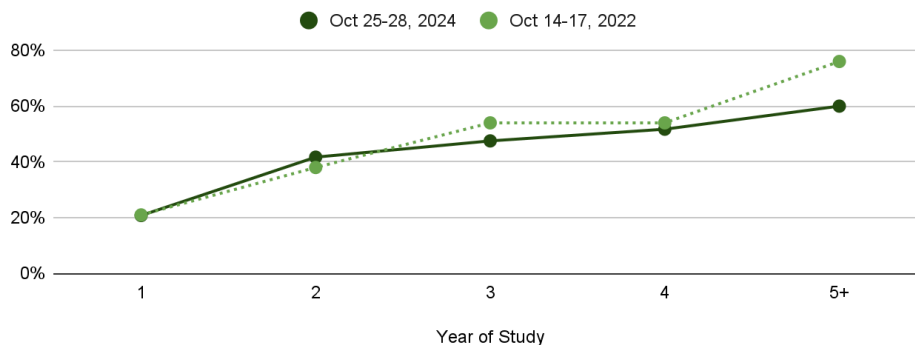
This survey ran on the UASU Perks platform October 25-28, 2024, and reached 910 respondents. It repeated questions used in [October 2022](#) (n=955) and December 2018 (n=363), several of them originally designed by Vice President (Academic) Akanksha Bhatnagar.

- Compared to 2022, fewer upper-year students had met with academic advisors. This is likely a positive development, as students are less likely to not know how to get in touch with one (24%, down from 30%), and more likely to find answers to their questions online (34%, up from 31%).
- Compared to 2022, respondents were much less likely to say that the reason they had not met with an academic advisor is because they did not need one (36%, down from 44%). This may reflect a combination of growing need and improvements in other resources.
- In a major trend, respondents who met with academic advisors about degree requirements and course scheduling have declined strongly and consistently across the three surveys.
- Respondents are now much less likely to seek out academic advisors over transferring programs.
- Respondents are becoming more likely to seek out academic advisors for career advising and financial aid.
- Respondents, on average, are finding slightly less value in speaking with their advisors (average of 3.4 on a 1-5 scale, down from 3.5 in the past two surveys), and the share of positive responses has fallen from 56% to 50%.
 - Graduation, academic standing, degree requirements, and financial/mental health support may be areas of concern.
 - Science and Business may be areas of concern. Note that Business recently conducted an Exceptional Tuition Increase on the grounds that it would strongly increase academic advising, among other commitments.
- Respondents, on average, are feeling slightly more welcome when meeting with their advisors (average of 3.9 on a 1-5 scale, up from 3.8 in 2022 and 3.6 in 2018), and the share of very positive responses has increased from 33-35% to 41%. Science and Business may be areas of concern.
- Dominant themes in text responses related to lack of staff availability, long wait times, and well-intentioned but unprepared/overworked staff. ALES, CSJ, KSR, Engineering, and Augustana tended to have the most positive responses. Arts responses wavered between very positive and very negative, and Science responses were an area of concern.
- Respondents are becoming less likely to seek academic advice from instructors or the Academic Calendar, and much less likely to seek it from peers or older students.

"In your time at the University of Alberta, have you ever met with an academic advisor?"

39% had done so, down from 44% in 2022, and the difference seemed to reflect modestly lower usage from upper-year students.

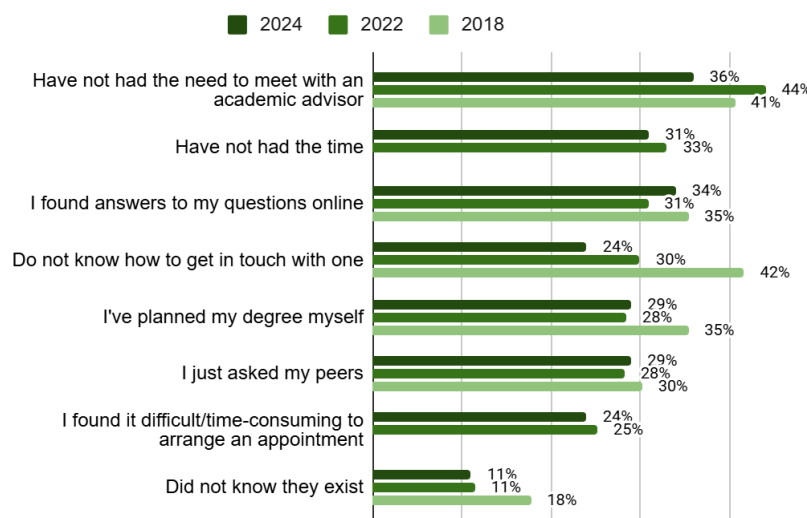
Percent of respondents in each year of study who had ever met with an academic advisor



"If you haven't met one, can you tell us why you haven't met an academic advisor yet? (Check all that apply.)"

Results were closely comparable to the 2022 survey, with exceptions: respondents were much less likely to say they had not needed an advisor, more likely to say they found answers to their questions online, and less likely to say they do not know how to get in touch with one. This may shed a more positive light on the results above: many upper-year students may simply be finding their needs met by improvements in the University's online information.

Only respondents who had not met with an academic advisor

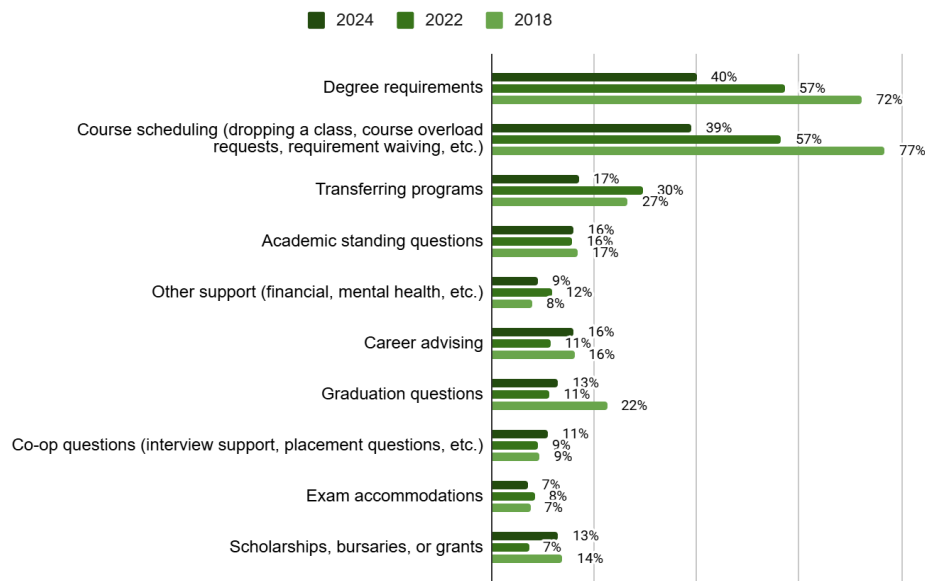


"If you saw an academic advisor, why? (Choose all that apply.)"

The reasons why students meet with academic advisors continue to shift, based on students' wide-ranging needs and the availability of other information and resources.

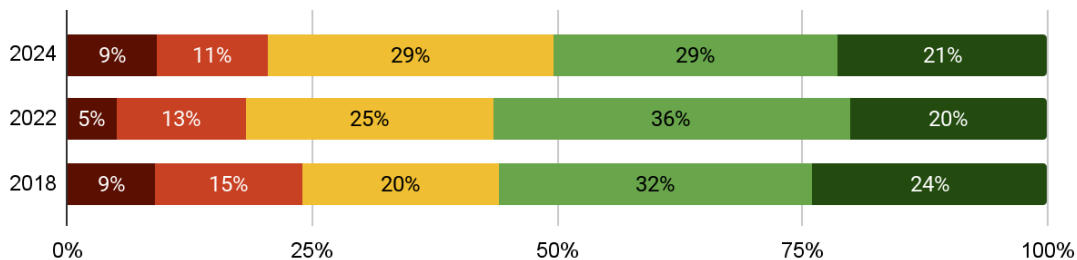
- While degree requirements and course scheduling are still the front-running reasons, they are now cited by less than half of the students who had met with academic advisors.
- 'Transferring programs' has fallen even more dramatically.
- Meanwhile, while still cited by only a fraction of respondents, career advising and student financial aid have become more common reasons for students to meet with academic advisors, likely reflecting rising financial anxieties in recent years.

Only respondents who had met with an academic advisor

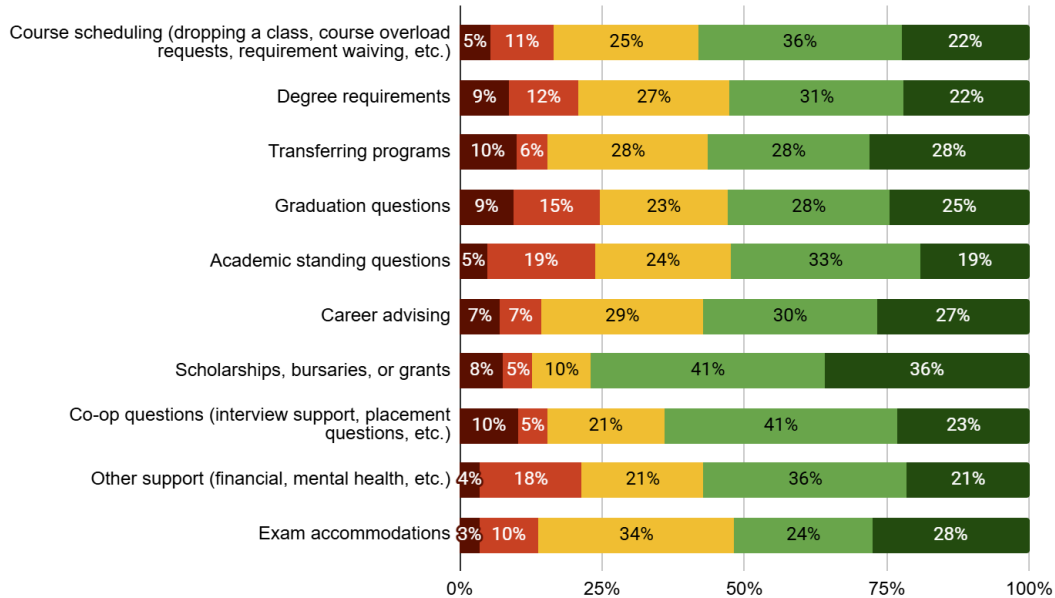


"How much value did you find in speaking with your advisor?"

This question ran on a scale from 1 ('least value') to 5 ('most value'). The average response was 3.4, down from 3.5 in the two previous surveys, and the share of positive responses fell noticeably.

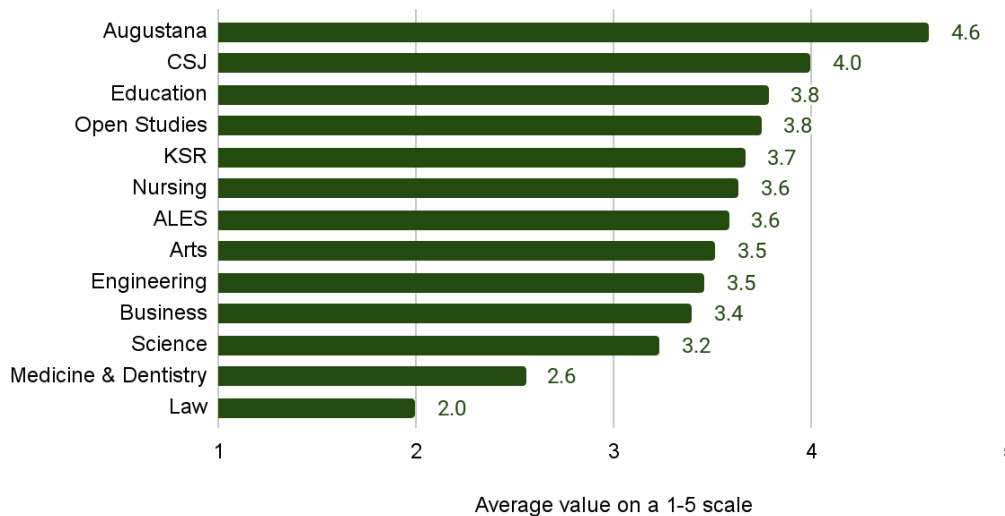


The obvious question is whether these shifts have anything to do with specific topics or vary by faculty. It is important to note that cross-tabulating that far within a sample this size will be less reliable due to the small number of respondents who met with academic advisors on any given issue, or who come from a specific faculty. However, it does appear that graduation, academic standing, degree requirements, and financial/mental health support may be areas of concern.



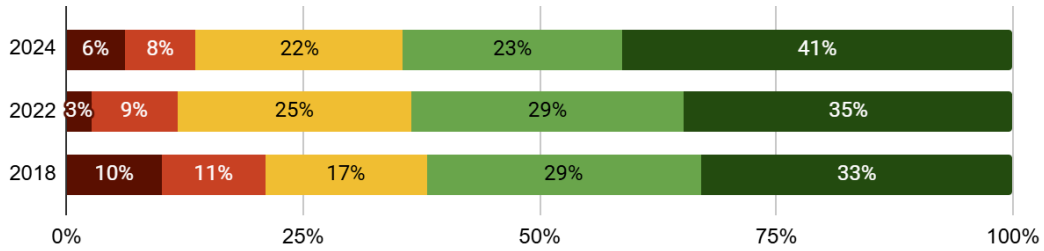
Again, note that faculty-level results, particularly for small faculties, should be taken with a large grain of salt for this survey.

How much value did you find in speaking with your advisor?

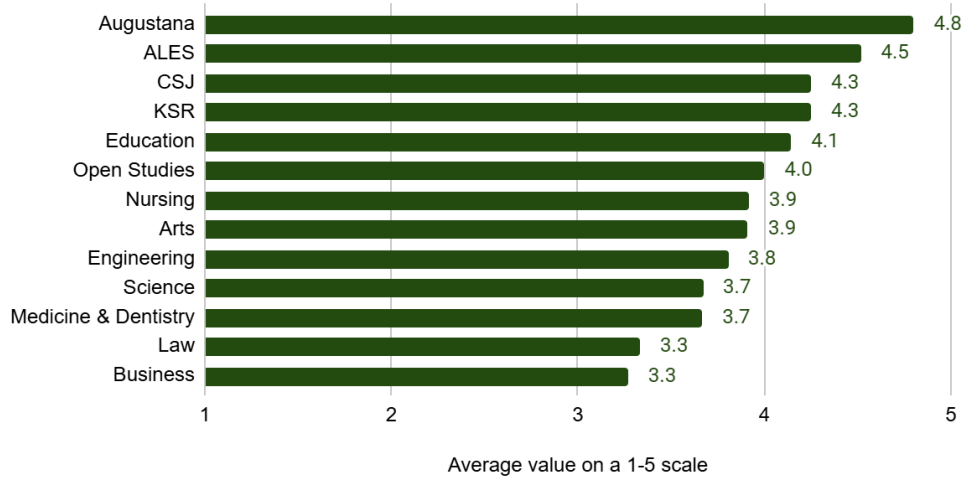


"How welcome did you feel when meeting with the academic advisor?"

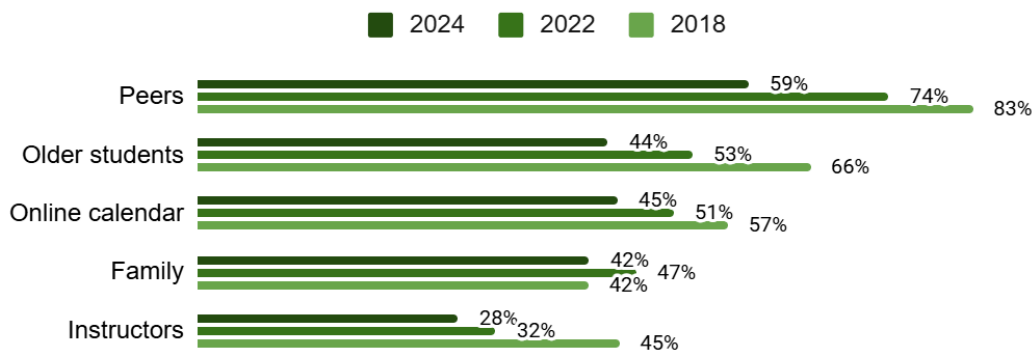
This question ran on a scale from 1 ('least welcome') to 5 ('most welcome'). The average value was 3.9, up from 3.8 in 2022 and 3.6 in 2018.



How welcome did you feel when meeting with the academic advisor?



"What sources of academic advice have you consulted, other than an advisor? (Choose all that apply.)"



The reduced numbers across all categories suggest that the list of options should be expanded, but may also indicate that students are simply seeking out academic advice less frequently.

Considering 'family' something of a stable control question outside the university environment, students appear to be consistently less likely to go to instructors, the online Academic Calendar, older students, or peers for academic advice. This data particularly suggests that students are becoming less likely to talk to each other about these issues, which is of a piece with longstanding concerns about student community in recent years.

"Thinking about times you've tried to get appointments with academic advisors, what have your experiences been like?"

ALES:

- A bit of a wait in person but not that bad. However very long online. Not very accessible for people with mobility issues who may not be able to always make it in person
- Decent
- Easy
- Fine
- Fine for the most part, although I've found online booking a bit tricky for my faculty.
- I have never had to book an appointment in advance for ALES- i just show up and wait for around 10 minutes max
- Inconsistent, it's hard to find a suitable time
- It was easy as I went during drop in
- It's been really good so far. Never had to wait too long. I like the way you can just register online and then it puts you on a line, it helps with time management, so you don't wait while doing "nothing". You can prepare yourself too when you see your next in line.
- Restricted availability. Only Tuesday to Thursday.
- Walkin - good

Arts:

- A lot of waiting
- Bad
- Easy
- Easy to get in online
- General answers that I can get online.
- Getting appointments was very easy and accessible.
- Getting the appointment wasn't bad. The advisor was.
- Good
- Great experience

- I contacted them via email. It took around ten days to hear back and they told me to email back to set up an appointment time, I did and they never got back to me.
- I have never had an appointment with an academic advisor but I have emailed with him a few times. If it is a non urgent question that would take 5 minutes to manage it really doesn't need to be done in person.
- I haven't had time
- Impossible to book an appointment. The website had the wrong year. When I met one at a career fair they took my email and said they would let me know when it was fixed and then never contacted me. I have tried phoning but always get a machine.
- It takes a long time to get an in person appointment, and only being 15 minutes really limits what you can talk about
- It was quite easy, I emailed her and then set up an appointment
- My program advisors are always really busy so my peers and I try to avoid appointments
- None
- Not good. It was very difficult to get an appointment with their limited hours and I had to wait a long time. It was a lot more difficult and took much longer to secure an appointment than it should have.
- Only done it once, and it was a little confusing, ended up emailing several people who referred me to the right email which then turned to an online booking link
- Positive; was before classes started so booking was pretty easy and quick.
- Really long wait times.
- The websites would be down or just unavailable or hard to reach especially during the beginning of the year. It's very hard for no reason because websites will make it super complicated when a student told me I could just walk in and get an appointment.
- they take absolutely forever to respond so I just give up
- They were all booked up at the time
- They were pretty easy
- VERY easy! quick in person and online and phone.
- Very good, once I knew the opening hours I was able to get appointments pretty quickly each time
- Walked in, no appointment, didn't wait long

Augustana

- I got appointments during the summer, so it was very easy.
- Really easy and straightforward
- They've been pleasant. I really felt like they were invested in my journey and wanted the best outcome. I study at Augustana though so in this situation, I might have privileges that North Campus students don't.

Business

- Difficult
- Great. Easy, convenient. I can usually find one in a time that works.

- Horrible, can't get an appointment
- I felt like I just wasted time booking an appointment. They are not really helpful.
- It is challenging with limited options that fill up quickly
- It was difficult to schedule
- Stressful, office can be intimidating at first
- The time slots when I booked were getting full really quick
- There have been long waits for drop in and it was too difficult to get appointments

CSJ

- Pretty great, the CSJ advisors are the best.

Education

- Easy.
- I cried, I think I made the [staff] at the desk uncomfortable...
- It takes a while which can be frustrating when it is something urgent. Even getting an email response can take time, and sometimes I have no control of things coming up quickly, and then needing a response quickly.
- They have been unavailable and the faculty of education has the wrong number online/is outdated in information needed

Engineering

- Best.
- During the beginning of the year it can be very difficult to get an appointment, later in the year it is much easier to get appointments that work with your schedule.
- For me, engineering student, I just walk into DICE and ask if i could see someone and they said sure (this was two years ago).
- Long wait time.

KSR

- Difficult, limited work schedule openings and times
- I just emailed, it was easy
- I've actually only ever emailed them
- It's been a pleasure and useful experience meeting my advisor
- It's really hard to get an appointment

Law

- Limited time slots. Unable to get appointment in time.

Medicine & Dentistry

- Easy enough
- Getting appointments have actually been fairly straightforward and for the most part wait times weren't that bad.

Native Studies

- The learning disability advisors are kinda hard to get an appointment with.

Nursing

- Easy, It was more during COVID times, so the appointment was online, but it was good
- I've heard from people they were hard to get appointments from

Science

- All of the appointments were booking too far in advance when I had a specific concern that had time constraints (e.g dropping a class)
- Awful. Their scheduler said there were no available appointments for 5 years. Then when I went in person, they said I could only book an appointment online
- Beginning of semesters can be very packed in the CCIS office, but I just went back at non-peak hours.
- Booked online
- Busy
- Could not book one, no time slots
- Didn't get appointment on time, so not satisfied
- Difficult
- Fine
- Good. Just emailed him and he was readily available
- I've met once before with my department advisor in physics (Kirk Kaminsky) and he was extremely welcoming, encouraging, informative, and easy to schedule an appointment with within 1 weeks notice
- It was very difficult to book an appointment on the website, since it was very unclear which advising office I needed to speak with, and every link I clicked seemed to lead me back to the home page. Once I finally found somewhere to book an appointment with a science advisor, the entire page was in French, and thus was prompting me to book a 'French speaking meeting.' I do not speak French. I tried to email someone about my problems, and asked my questions about course registration, but the long wait for a response made me have to figure everything out on my own. This was a very frustrating experience for me, especially since none of my family has been to university, so I was on my own to figure everything out.
- It's impossible to get an appointment with an advisor unless you check right when they get released and no one will help you for an outside minor.
- [Specific advisor] is the worst, absolutely had no help
- Stressful and time consuming
- There are very little times
- They weren't working that day and that made things very difficult for me
- Unhelpful, they often say the something that you already know and u just end up feeling stuck

"Thinking about your past appointments with academic advisors (if any), what have your experiences been like?"

ALES:

- Always very supportive, helpful and straight to the point

- Fulfilling, helpful
- Good :)
- Helpful, they had my account pulled up and gave me as much information as possible
- I always have positive experiences interacting with my faculty's advisors. very understanding of the difficulties students face and very helpful as well!
- It's been really helpful in my university journey.
- lowkey unhelpful
- Talk to them and then leave, no advice really
- They were sweet but couldn't answer any questions about what I needed. There was no attempt to put me in touch with someone who did either.
- Tried to get transfer credits, advisor told me there is none, even though there are on U of A website
- Very good
- When I was in Engineering, my academic advisor gave me some bad advice and told me to drop all my courses in order to transfer. I kept one chemistry course I knew would transfer over, but ended up dropping an ENGL course that I later found out was also transferable. It was frustrating because I was doing well in that course, so it was 700 dollars down the drain from bad advice.

Arts:

- Amazing. It was so helpful and I really gained a sense of direction and the options available to me, and all the people and places I needed to reach out to fund the things my advisor couldn't do
- Awful. She didn't answer my very specific question and instead told me my degree was worthless unless I became a doctor or a lawyer. I was asking a clarifying question about honors degree requirements and she refused to answer me. Awful experience.
- Bad never got good answers and they also didn't know what to do
- Good
- Got all the help I was hoping for, very nice, very helpful
- Great, the wait wasn't horrible and he was very helpful and straight to the point.
- Helpful with my questions
- My experiences with Rachel Persad have been phenomenal!
- Never available
- Overall not great. They provided little insight to the questions I had and left more confused than before the meeting. I also found it very difficult to get an appointment and had a long waiting time. Overall I felt very unsupported and felt like I did not receive the support I was hoping. The advisor was very friendly and welcoming and had a positive energy which made the experience slight more positive.
- Overall positive. Sometimes unproductive as they just read information online without additional input.
- Personally I have met with the Faculty of Arts advisor and the person I got assigned with was not helpful
- Positive; very helpful and willing to answer any and all questions even if it wasn't something that was marked for the reason of booking.

- Really insightful
- Some appointments were less helpful than others, especially when asking about switching programs and bachelor requirements, but once I went to the faculty I wanted to switch into, the appointment was very helpful.
- The advisors are uninformed
- The last time I met with an advisor wasn't really a good experience. I was asking about psych 300 courses and if there was any way to get into them earlier/other methods and she went "You're not special, there are no other ways to get into some classes early" and I felt terrible. I wasn't mean, I wasn't condescending or acting superior than my peers to get into classes that I need for my degree, I was concerned about my classes and credits and I felt terrible when she said that.
- They seemed to just want to get me out of their office as soon as possible and not care very much. When I was asked if I knew what a "what if" report was and I didn't she got very upset and guffawed instead of just explaining it. No one has ever told me anything about Bear Tracks, I learned it all from past students, so how on earth am I supposed to know if no one ever talks about it? Would have been nice if she just explained it and helped me with changing majors as well.
- They were okay. The academic adviser told me he didn't know much about my degree, but no one would know more, so basically "sorry" (i'm a BA/BEd Drama/Education).
- Unhelpful at best.
- Very positive. I've spoken to a handful of different advisors and they were never judgemental about anything.
- Very positive. The arts advisor is super helpful

Augustana:

- It was really good, and helpful too!

Business:

- Great. They were very helpful.
- I wanted an update on my transfer credit evaluation process and they said we can't do anything. It's up to experts who evaluate your application. My application wasn't processed. I was already past the due date of withdrawal from course.
- Mediocre
- The advisor did not know anything about my program or its requirements so she was no help at all
- Very good

CSJ:

- Pretty good
- I used to be a student at Campus Saint-Jean and the advisors over there are 50/50. I've heard a lot of people say that they're useless and don't know how to help you so I never really went to see the advisors. The only time I went was when I couldn't sign up for the class even though I had the prereq (there was a bug in Bear Tracks). My sister went to see an advisor at Campus Saint-Jean in

September and he was terrible (didn't know anything, didn't answer her questions).

Education:

- Excellent!

Engineering:

- Excellent
- Me speaking to a webcam is a little weird but whatever works (again, this was two years ago)
- Very good.

KSR:

- Good and informative
- Very positive, advisor is very useful and is quite welcoming

Law:

- Lacked sufficient knowledge to answer my questions. Just printed off information from websites Googled in front of me.

Medicine & Dentistry:

- Most of my experiences have not been great. They often just told me things I already knew and found online. Sometimes I've encountered rudeness. A few times I got the help I needed in terms of document printing but when I actually needed advice on courses and careers, etc, I was better off just doing my own research and not asking them for help.
- They do not seem very knowledgeable. I honestly prefer to use peers or online forums like reddit to get advice.

Native Studies:

- UofA makes it a lot harder to utilize my learning disability supports. Compared to Concordia's University of Edmonton. To try and request a tutor with UofA is unfair. We're entitled to those supports and to say you have to have failed a class or be failing is not a support. Nor should one have to continuously meet with advisors to utilize the already approved government supports.

Science:

- Frustrating. I always go at the beginning of the year for drop in so it's busy and they give you a little help but mostly just tell you which other people to talk to
- Good
- I dislike the plexiglass sheet, please get rid of it, it makes talking and understanding much harder with and without other people around you and the advisor
- I have had extremely negative experiences with advisors and they have told me to take multiple courses now that do not count for my degree
- I walked up to the counter at the CCIS office, which was very convenient. A person was there to help me immediately and they answered all my questions

and more, showing me resources to use for the future. So helpful! (I did not book an official appointment)

- It didn't feel like I was getting a proper answer to my questions
- My time with the advisor felt very rushed. I understand that the first few weeks of classes are a busy time for them, but I still would've appreciated feeling more heard during my appointment. As a first year student, I naturally had a lot of questions, and needed help fitting in certain degree requirements. But the advisor gave very quick, non informative answers, and continuously asked if I was finished with my questions. It felt like the advisor didn't care about helping me at all, and just wanted to get to the next person as quickly as possible. Again, I understand the advisors are busy, but I hoped my experience would be better, and way more helpful than it was. I ended up leaving very confused, and still had problems with my schedule. Overall this was not a good experience, and so I have been hesitant to go back. I've found it much more approachable to speak with professors and department heads about my questions, since they seem to genuinely care, and do not rush my questions.
- Ok I guess
- [Specific advisor], absolutely shattered my mental state
- Solved my problem within 5 minutes, really efficient
- Very short answers that are not always applicable
- Waste of time, told me to do "whatever I felt was best"