



ACADEMIC ADVISING HANDBOOK

Revised Fall 2014

**Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
Center for Student Success and Engagement
Advising Services
Eldridge Hall, Upper Level**

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**ACADEMIC
ADVISING:
AN OVERVIEW**

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Academic advising, done well, can be an important tool for implementing both student and institutional success. The National Academic Advising Association has established a set of core principles to help guide advisors as they do their jobs. These basic principles are designed to establish a set of concise concepts through which advisors can develop their own specific techniques of advising. These principles help provide a common ground for all advisors as we develop our skills.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES ABOUT STUDENTS AND ADVISORS

Students:

- Students can be responsible for their own behavior.
- Students can be successful based upon their individual goals and efforts.
- Students have a desire to learn, but learning needs vary according to individual skills, goals, and experiences.
- Students have their own individual beliefs and opinions.

Advisors:

- Advisors are responsible to the students.
- Advisors are responsible for making thoughtful referrals.
- Advisors are responsible to their college.
- Advisors are advocates for student success and development.
- Advisors are responsible to uphold the integrity of higher education (and that of themselves) through their actions and words.
- Advisors advocate the value of higher education and foster development of diverse concepts and new ideas.

ADVISING: A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Academic advising entails more than just answering questions. Advising also consists of working relationship between the student and the faculty member based on a shared commitment to education and academic success.

BEING A GOOD DEVELOPMENTAL ADVISOR

The Ways and Means of Creating a Working Relationship

- Involve students in their own college experience.
- Explore with the students factors contributing to their past success.
- Display interest in the students' academic work, extracurricular activities, and career goals.
- Encourage students to speak with department chairs, instructors, and other students before choosing a major.
- Discuss time management, study skills, and course planning techniques.
- Share with students your own experiences as a student and educator.
- Have students plan out their own schedule and then discuss it together.

ADVISOR ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN ADVISING

- Acquaint advisees with the core curriculum and departmental requirements, and College regulations, services, and opportunities.
- Help advisees understand their past educational achievements and how they are related to their present educational goals.
- Refer advisees to Career Services for assistance with self-assessment/career exploration services and individual career counseling.
- Help advisees plan each semester's program of courses and develop a plan for the completion of graduation requirements.
- Help students identify problems and areas in need of improvement and devise possible solutions/make educated referrals.
- Know your students' interests and be aware of their culture so they can be advised of educational opportunities centered on them.
- Know about the Honors Program and its requirements.
- Be available, approachable, and flexible. Seek out advisees in informal settings.
- Be a good general resource concerning opportunities in the College and community.

STUDENT ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN ADVISING

Students have many responsibilities as they adopt an academic lifestyle and pursue excellence at the College. One crucial responsibility is to seek out and take advantage of the benefits gained through advising. To utilize the resources available to them through their advisor, students should:

- Learn the name, location, and office hours of their advisor.
- Schedule early appointments during the course selection/registration period, and be prepared for advisement (students should have a copy of the course offerings and have an idea of what they would like to take and possible time constraints).
- Attempt to clarify their interests, personal values, and goals with their advisor.
- Become familiar with the Core Curriculum and graduation requirements.
- Consult with their advisor concerning changes in their approved schedule (add/drop or being closed out of a course).
- Consult their advisor when in academic difficulty.
- Inform their advisor before changing majors, transferring to another college, or withdrawing from the College.
- Accept responsibility for making their own decisions.

THE ADVISING SESSION

To assist advisees in planning their academic programs, the advisor should do the following:

Review and have on hand:

- The registration procedure and registration schedule.
- A copy of the schedule of courses. The schedule with current enrollment can be viewed in Self-Service Banner.
- The current college catalog and past catalogs for reference.
- The student's advisement file with current advisee report and up-to-date flow sheet. Academic transcript information may be found in Self-Service Banner.
- This handbook.

Discuss and evaluate:

- Exploration of life goals (graduate school/work).
- Exploration of career/life goals.
- Selection of educational program.
- Selection of courses and classes.

GUIDELINES FOR ADVISING

- Explain which courses are required and which are recommended.
- Be sure the student has had adequate preparation/prerequisite for courses which are recommended (consult advisee report).
- Be alert to course sequence (within and outside major program).
- Help the student understand his/her total four-year program in relation to course planning.
- Assist the student in utilizing elective credit and make recommendations as to what would be most beneficial according to the student's interests and goals. Elective credit can be used to:
 - *enhance a concentration
 - *fulfill more than one concentration
 - *fulfill a minor program
 - *fulfill a second major program, including education certification
 - *explore other educational interests
- Keep in mind that the choices belong to the student and the advisor is only responsible to give accurate information and sound advice. If the advice is not taken, the advisor is not responsible. It is a good idea to make a note of advice given.

FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION

Graduation in eight semesters costs students less money and is likely to become a standard by which the college's effectiveness is judged. Data indicates that students who earn at least 30 credits that count toward graduation before the beginning of their sophomore year have a better chance of persisting than students who don't. Reading, writing, and math skills courses do not count toward graduation. Students who fall behind can catch up by taking an additional course during a fall or spring semester or by taking courses at MCLA or at other colleges and having the credits transferred. Courses taken off-campus must be identified on the Off-Campus Study Approval form before the course is taken.

SIGNING THE FORM

After the student has had the opportunity to select and schedule courses with guidance from the advisor, the advisor must “sign” the registration form. This is done by giving the student the registration PIN. It is prudent for the student to complete and the advisor to sign a paper registration form in the event that additional signatures are needed.

- Never sign a blank form.
- Signature of the advisor only indicates the student has been advised; it does not indicate agreement.
- Carefully note areas of disagreement and course recommendations in the student’s advising file.

REGISTRATION IN SELF-SERVICE BANNER

Students can view everything in their Self-Service Banner records that advisors can view. Registration for most courses is done in Banner using the special PIN you give them; giving them the PIN is like signing a registration form and indicates you have discussed courses with them. Some courses must be registered on paper. All registration is done during the window assigned to each student. Preferred access, or early registration, is for students with documented needs, Honors students (for Honors courses only), and varsity athletes who will be playing a sport during the semester for which they register.

ADVISING RECORDS

Advisors should record information in the advisee file that may be helpful in future advising sessions with the student, and/or used by other advisors in case of referral or change of major. The advisor should also keep a record of those courses that the student was advised to take as well as a record of the student's final selections. If the student changes majors or advisors, the advisor will be notified by Advising Services to forward the file to that office.

*Pages 1-8 were adapted from “NACADA Statement of Core Values of Academic Advising,” NACADA Journal, Volume 15, Spring 1995.

WORKING WITH AT-RISK STUDENTS AND MAKING REFERRALS

Being an academic advisor is challenging in many ways. One thing that makes advising so challenging is the struggle to make a difference for the students you advise. Sometimes making a difference is as simple as taking the time to care and notice. Because of the contact you have with students, you are in an ideal position to notice a change in behavior that may indicate if a student is in trouble.

When students are in trouble or in crisis, it is imperative not to assume they can handle it or that they will find their way to the proper services on their own. Academic advisors must take the responsibility to see that students are given the proper support and referral resources when necessary.

These pages are designed as a guide to the resources available for at-risk students.

Your Responsibility as an Advisor

- Be open and supportive. Make students feel safe and welcome in your office.
- Decide how much time and energy you are willing or able to spend and know how to refer when you've reached your limit.
- Recognize the limits of your own knowledge and experience, and refer students to other resources when appropriate.

Warning Signs of Students at Risk

- Dramatic decline in academic performance (including frequent absences).
- Failure to meet deadlines, severe procrastination, difficulty concentrating.
- Loss of motivation, extreme test anxiety, fears about class participation and speaking in class.
- Alcohol or drug abuse.
- Physical illness, extreme weight loss, chronic fatigue.
- Problems with family or finances.
- References to suicide.*

***Note: Immediately refer to Counseling Services any student who refers to suicide or indicates that he/she may be suicidal.**

Things you can do:

- **Provide Support:** Listen and validate feelings, and allow the student to express him/herself and feel understood.
- **Provide Perspective:** Help your student see problems in context and recognize the value of an alternative interpretation. Show him or her the big picture to help move the focus away from the upsetting issue.
- **Provide Direction:** Encourage the student to seek and try solutions. Give the student information and discuss possible avenues to solutions.

Sometimes giving support, perspective, and direction is not enough to help the student get back on track. This is when a referral becomes an option. Counseling Services is always available to discuss options, offer general advice, and help you evaluate a student's needs.

MAKING A REFERRAL*

- Set aside a time and place to talk to the student about your concerns. Be interested and friendly. Begin by describing your concerns.
- Try to assess what the student's needs are. Encourage him/her to describe what he/she views as the problem. Use active listening principles and paraphrase what the student says for clarification.
- Help the student decide on a course of action; identify what service is appropriate.
- Explain the service you are suggesting and what the student can expect. Relay your own positive experience with seeking help from college services, if appropriate.
- Be prepared to counter resistance and to discuss negative stereotypes the student may have about seeking help.
- Allow the student to call the referral source from your office to schedule an appointment. Assure the student that she/he has made a responsible decision.
- Follow up with the student directly to show support and concern. (Counseling Services will not be able to share any information with you without a written release from the student.)
- Make a note of the referral in the student's advising file.

***Realize that accepting the referral is the student's decision. Don't be discouraged if the student rejects your suggestion. Be respectful and try again at another time.**

The information and concepts above were taken in part and in summary from Identifying and Referring Troubled Students: A Primer for Academic Advisors by Deborah R. Allen and Ralph W. Trimble.

**ADVISING
SPECIFIC
STUDENT
GROUPS**

ADVISING SPECIFIC STUDENT GROUPS

This section is designed to give advisors guidance in the advising of specific student populations. A community with a commitment to respecting diversity must ensure that each member of the population has every opportunity to succeed.

Advisors at the College work with students to develop tools for excellence. We also make it a priority to acknowledge that new perspectives are always on the horizon. We know that the challenge of gaining a new perspective is an informative and educational process. Through these pages, we hope to offer you new perspectives on advising and introduce you to ideas and concepts that will prevent students from falling through the cracks. Our ultimate goal is to help all students thrive in our community.

ADVISING HONORS STUDENTS

Honors students at the College can exemplify academic excellence and dedication. Cultivating and challenging these students above the regular requirements is vital to the health of the College. With the accelerated academic lifestyle that these students have chosen come unique challenges. As advisors, we should guide these students and help them overcome any challenges that may impede their success.

ISSUES CONCERNING HONORS STUDENTS

- Pressure to meet program requirements and rigorous curriculum.
- Pressure to pursue extracurricular activities and difficulty relating to other students not considered "Honors."
- Problems with time management.
- Problems in residence halls over lifestyle conflicts.
- Stress from the challenge of applying to graduate school or from trying to locate funds for international study.

WAYS AN ADVISOR CAN HELP

- Discuss the process of applying to graduate school (costs, testing, selection, application process) at an earlier date.
- Suggest international study, cross enrollment at Williams, or independent study options to challenge students and prepare them for their academic future.
- Give support and allow the student to know that sometimes failure is acceptable.
- Nominate exceptional students and encourage students with interest and potential to enroll in the College's Honors Program.

ADVISING FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

ISSUES FACING FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

- The struggle to fit in and become familiar with resources in the college community.
- Homesickness or transitional anxiety.
- Adjusting academically and defining goals.

WAYS AN ADVISOR CAN HELP

- Establish a good rapport; relate your own experiences as a first-year student.
- Discuss learning styles: what was effective in high school? Inform students that CSSE/Academic Support has tutors and study skill classes to help upgrade skill level if needed.
- Go over important procedures: Add/Drop, Registration, Declaring a Major or Minor, and understanding the college catalog and handbook.
- Establish a time to check back and write down office hours, phone, and e-mail address.
- Go over expectations: What should they expect from you and what you will expect from them?
- Encourage them to come to you for help and to use you as their college resource.
- Discuss Core Curriculum: Address challenges and benefits.
- Discuss how college life has responsibilities and offer tips about time management and study skills.
- Encourage students to become responsible for their academic choices.

ADVISING TRANSFER STUDENTS

Transfer students are like first-year students in that they are unfamiliar with the terminology, policies, and procedures at the College. Advisors may need to explain these things to them.

Transfer students all have a Transfer Credit Analysis, but sometimes the identification of a course as “XXXX elect” may not represent an accurate analysis of the course, especially if that course is in your discipline. A conversation about these transferred courses should take place as early as possible.

Students transferring a large number of credits may not be able to complete their Core and major program requirements in a reasonable amount of time because of prerequisites and courses infrequently offered. They should be apprised of this situation as early as possible to enable them to formulate a long-range plan.

**ACADEMIC
POLICIES AND
GUIDELINES**

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

The Core Curriculum requirements must be completed.

The requirements for the student's major must be completed.

A minimum of 45 credits must be completed through MCLA; at least one half of the courses in a student's major must be taken through MCLA.

At least 120 credits including the major program credits must be earned. No more than five credits can be fulfilled by personal fitness/skills courses in physical education.

A student's final 15 credits of coursework must be completed through MCLA.

At least 39 of the 120 credits must be in upper-division work (300-500 level).

Application for graduation must be filled with the Registrar's Office according to the following schedule (online application is also available):

Graduation in May:	February 1
Graduation in August:	June 1
Graduation in December:	October 15

Graduation Ceremony Attendance

Students may attend the graduation ceremony following completion of all graduation requirements. Students must complete an application for graduation by the deadlines listed above.

Graduation with Distinction

Students of superior academic achievements graduate with the distinction according to their grade-point average earned at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts only.

Summa cum Laude	3.80 – 4.00
Magna cum Laude	3.60 – 3.79
Cum Laude	3.30 – 3.59

CORE REQUIREMENTS WAIVER

- Students may seek a waiver of any Core Curriculum requirement.
- The request is initiated in consultation with their academic advisor, who then makes a recommendation to the department chairperson for further consideration and recommendation.
- **Sufficient justification** for the waiver must be given.
- Waivers of Core Curriculum requirements must be approved by the Dean of Academic Affairs.

COURSE SCHEDULING

The add period will end at the end of seven class days into the semester.

COURSE WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Students who enroll in a course have seven (7) **class** days to withdraw with no notation on their record of their enrollment in the course.

Students who withdraw from a course between the sixth day and eighth week will have no cumulative grade point average penalty but will have the notation of W on their permanent record.

Students may not withdraw from any individual course after the eighth week.

A student has not officially withdrawn from a course until submission of the necessary paperwork to the Registrar's Office for processing. A student who is registered for a course but stops attending will receive an F for the course if he/she does not officially withdraw.

Withdrawing from a course may affect a student's financial aid status. A copy of the Satisfactory Academic Progress Standard is included in the "Forms" section of this handbook. Students withdrawing from a course should ask the Financial Aid Office about exactly how the withdrawal will affect their status.

REPEAT POLICY

A course may be repeated. If the course is required and the student received an F, the course must be repeated. The grade earned in a repeated course replaces the earlier grade in the student's grade point average even if the repeated grade is lower. (The grade earned each time the student took the course remains on the student's transcript, but the course is marked as "Repeated," and the originally attempted credit is not calculated into the grade point average.) The Repeat Course Request and Approval form must be completed.

Courses taken off campus to be used as a repeated course must be approved prior to the course being taken. Forms to be completed include Off-Campus Study Approval form, and Repeat Course Request and Approval form. Both are available in the Registrar's Office.

COURSE OVERLOAD POLICY

College policy defines a course overload as enrollment in more than 18 credits during a given semester. All students enrolling in more than 18 credits must obtain the approval signature of the academic advisor on a Course Overload form prior to registering. Students seeking enrollment in more than 21 credits must obtain permission from their academic advisor, department chair, and the Dean of Academic Affairs prior to registering.

GRADING

Academic records are kept in terms of letter grades, credit hours, and grade points.

The college grading system is based on a 4.00 quality point method.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Quality Points</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Quality Points</u>
A	4.00	C	2.00
A-	3.70	C-	1.70
B+	3.30	D+	1.30
B	3.00	D	1.00
B-	2.70	D-	0.70
C+	2.30	F	0.00

The grade point average is a numerical indication of the student's academic achievement. It is a quotient of the total quality points earned divided by the total credits attempted for all courses in which grades A through F were received. No quality points are assigned to notations AU, I, P, PC, T, W or WX.

The grade point average may be computed as follows:

- a. Multiply the quality points of the letter grade earned in each course by the number of credit hours assigned to the course.
- b. Total the quality points earned in all courses.
- c. Divide the sum by the total number of quality hours.

Credit Hours

Credit hours indicate the quantity of work in a course and vary with different courses. The number of credit hours for each course is indicated in the college catalog and the semester course schedules.

Grade points are obtained by multiplying the grade value by the number of credits of a course.

Definition of Letter Grades

AU

Audit-No Credit indicates that the student has audited a course.

I Incomplete

A temporary grade that may be reported only when a portion of the assigned work, as clearly indicated in the course syllabus, has not been completed because of the necessary absence of the student or for other reason equally satisfactory to the instructor, and then only when the instructor judges the work already done by the student to be of passing quality. The course work must be completed by a date specified by the instructor. This date cannot exceed six (6) weeks after the beginning of the following semester. The I is then changed to a permanent letter grade. The obligation rests with the student to ask the instructor and the student to sign a standardized contract specifying the nature of the course work to be completed. Signed incomplete contracts must be submitted to the Registrar's Office. If the course work is not completed before the deadline specified in the contract, the I will be changed to an F. An I grade disqualifies a student for Dean's List recognition.

P Pass

Indicated completion of pass/fail course. Credit is awarded with no quality points.

PC Pass Continue

This notation is used solely for the courses offered by CSSE/Academic Support. It indicates that a student has demonstrated both effort and progress in a course but requires additional time and work to complete the curriculum. A student who earns a PC grade must re-enroll for the course in the next semester of enrollment and must complete assigned work during this time. A student is entitled to only one PC grade per SKIL course. Once a student has been re-enrolled for such a course, no further grades of PC can be awarded, nor can a student withdraw from the course. Only regular letter grades (A-F, and I) may be assigned. Students receiving a PC grade on their transcript are not eligible for the Dean's List for that term.

T Transfer

Indicates credit work that has been accepted by the College from another institution. No quality points are recorded for transfer work. Grades from other institutions do not appear on the MCLA transcript.

W Withdrawal

Indicates withdrawal from a course in the third through the eighth week of the semester. It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of the deadlines for withdrawal. No withdrawals for individual courses may be made past the withdrawal deadline.

WX Withdrawal from College

The student has officially withdrawn from the College. A student may withdraw from the College prior to the first day of final exams. All courses will be given the notation WX.

COURSE AUDIT

A student may audit a course with the approval of the chairperson of the department and the consent of the instructor. Auditors are subject to any conditions established by the department or the instructor. No credit is awarded for audited courses. Such courses are officially reported on the student's transcript with the notation AU (Audit-No Credit) when all course conditions are met. Auditor status cannot be changed.

Students register for audit during the first week after the add period. A student who wishes to attend class before audit registration may do so with the consent of the instructor. Students who have registered for a grade have enrollment preference over auditing students.

AWARDING OF ADDITIVE CREDIT FOR SKILLS COURSES

Additive credit will be awarded for the completion of the following courses:

SKIL 096	Mathematics for College	3 additive credits
SKIL 097	Writing for College	3 additive credits
SKIL 098	Learning Strategies: Reading and Study Skills	3 additive credits

These credits do not satisfy any credit requirements of the baccalaureate degree. Rather, they will be computed as an addition to the total credits earned to meet all degree requirements. The grades earned in these courses, however, will be calculated in the student's over-all grade-point average.

MIDTERM WARNINGS

Faculty members submit D and F reports on all students to the Registrar's Office two weeks before the end of the course/withdraw period. Copies of these reports are sent to the students and their advisors. Advisors should make contact with advisees receiving such reports in order to determine if any action (course withdrawal) is needed.

DEAN'S LIST

Matriculated students enrolled for six or more credits for the semester who achieve a grade point average of 3.30 with no incomplete grades including PC are placed on the semester's Dean's List.

PROBATION/SUSPENSION

A student's cumulative MCLA grade point average (GPA) combined with credits earned will determine the academic standing category at the end of each semester according to the following standards:

<u>Earned Credits*</u>	<u>Academic Good Standing</u>	<u>Academic Probation</u>	<u>Academic Suspension</u>
0 – 30	2.000 or above	1.500 – 1.999	under 1.500
31 – 75	2.000 or above	1.750 – 1.999	under 1.750
76 and above	2.000 or above	no probation	under 2.000

*Earned credits includes transfer credits and MCLA credits at the 100 level or higher in which a passing grade was earned.

Students who successfully appeal their suspension will be so designated by a separate category of academic standing that reflects academic probation following an appeal of academic suspension. The following designations reflect MCLA's policy on Academic Standing in accordance with a student's cumulative MCLA GPA:

- Academic Good Standing – cumulative GPA of 2.000 or higher
- Academic Probation – student on academic probation
- Academic Probation Following Appeal – appeal of suspension approved
- Academic Suspension – student academically suspended
- Academic Dismissal – student permanently dismissed from MCLA

Academic Warning

A student with a semester GPA less than 2.0 but a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or greater will be issued an Academic Warning. A letter of Academic Warning will be sent to the student and copied to the student's advisor explaining the consequences of poor academic performance, including successive semesters of Academic Warning or future Academic Probation or Academic Suspension. For each semester in which an Academic Warning is received, the student must meet with his or her academic advisor and complete an Academic Success Plan which will be submitted to Center for Student Success and Engagement (CSSE) for review and appropriate referrals.

Academic Probation

A student who fails to achieve a 2.0 cumulative GPA while achieving a GPA higher than the Academic Suspension cutoff will be placed on Academic Probation. A student on Academic Probation or Probation Following Appeal must adhere to certain conditions designed to promote academic success. These conditions may include:

1. Course load of not more than 15 credits
2. Academic schedule changes to allow for repeat courses
3. Meetings with an academic advisor or CSSE to complete an Academic Success Plan that will monitor student progress
4. Attendance at academic workshops (e.g. study skills, time management, etc.)
5. Restrictions on extracurricular activities as determined by the Office of Academic Affairs or its designate. (For the first semester on Academic Probation, a student will remain eligible for participation in extracurricular activities unless individual departments or activities have higher standards.)

STUDENT STATUS

Full-Time Student- A student registered for 12 or more credit hours that semester.

Part-Time Student- A student registered for fewer than 12 credit hours that semester.

Matriculated Student – A student who has been accepted in a major program or as undeclared and who is subject to all normal academic regulations and policies of the College.

Non-matriculated Student- A student not enrolled in a major program, or as undeclared. Such are not assigned class status and are designated as Special Students (SPU).

Class Status- Students are assigned class status according to the total number of earned credits at the conclusion of the most recent semester.

Credits	Class
0 – 29	Freshman
30 – 59	Sophomore
50 – 89	Junior
90 – or more	Senior

All students must have declared a program of study by the time they have attained junior status (60 earned credits). Transfer students entering the College with junior status have a one-semester grace period.

Declaring / Changing Majors

- Students should secure a Change of Major form from CSSE/Advising Services.
- The students will then meet with the department chairperson of the new major to discuss the requirements of that major. If the student wishes to proceed with the change, the department chairperson will sign the form and assign the student a new advisor.

Declaring / Changing a Minor

- Students interested in declaring a minor should get a Change of Major form from CSSE/Advising Services.
- Students should then meet with the department chairperson of the minor department to discuss the requirement of that minor. The chairperson along with the student's advisor should sign the form.

For both majors and minors the student then returns the form to CSSE/Advising Services, who will process the form through the Registrar's Office.

DOUBLE MAJOR POLICY

Students may, concurrently or through extended attendance, complete the requirements of two majors. Such students must fulfill the following:

- 1) Notify the Registrar's Office of the intention to complete a second major by completing the "Add a Major" line on the Change of Major form at least one semester prior to the anticipated graduation date. The department chair of the major being added must sign the form and assign an academic advisor for the student in the added major.
- 2) Complete the course requirements of both majors. Certain courses may satisfy the requirements of both majors.

Completion of both majors will be indicated on the transcript.

OFF-CAMPUS STUDY

Students who are matriculated at MCLA may enroll in course work at other approved institutions concurrent with their enrollment at MCLA or during vacation periods. All such course enrollments must be approved in advance by the student's major department and the Registrar's Office on a Request for Off-Campus Study Approval form.

Non-matriculated students completing courses off-campus will be subject to the Readmission Policy of the College. Readmission students will have approved courses accepted at MCLA. Grades from other institutions are not included in the student's MCLA cumulative grade point average.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A student whose personal, family, or medical circumstances require a temporary interruption of college study may apply for a leave of absence for up to two semesters. Students who attend primarily in the evening and need to attend on a less regular basis may also use this process. To apply for a leave of absence, a student must complete an application at CSSE/Advising Services. The Associate Dean of CSSE will make recommendations regarding requests to the Dean of Academic Affairs. The Dean will make the final decision on the request.

A leave of absence may be granted only to students who are matriculated and in good academic and financial standing. All students returning from a leave of absence must contact the Registrar's Office by December 1st for reactivation in the spring semester and by August 1st for reactivation for the fall semester. Students who are granted a leave of absence before the end of the drop/add period will have no notation on their record for that semester. Students granted a leave after the drop/add period will have a grade of WX on their record for that semester.

WITHDRAWAL FROM COLLEGE

Students leaving the College must complete a Withdrawal Form obtained from Advising Services. Students officially withdrawing before the first day of final examinations will receive a notation of WX in all courses. After this time, students will receive a final grade in all courses. A student is not officially withdrawn from the College until the appropriate form has been completed and has been validated by the Registrar's Office.

HONORS PROGRAM CHARTER

Criteria for Honors Courses

Courses offered for credit toward graduating with All-College Honors must meet the following criteria:

- Interdisciplinary in both subject matter and method of inquiry.
- Use a “seminar” or “student-based” mode of instruction which features discussion, reports, oral presentations, student-oriented learning projects, and analytical examinations.
- Be limited to 16 students per section (The director, after consulting with the course instructor, may increase the number of students allowed in each section of each course).
- Be organized and conducted in a manner appropriate for work at the 300 level or above.
- Be reviewed and approved by the Honors Advisory Board after a thorough review of the course syllabus and reading list and rationale that explains how the course meets the goals of the program.

Thesis/Project Option

Students who elect to complete a senior-year project (a thesis, an artistic project, or other capstone project) may substitute the thesis for one upper-level honors course. Students who complete a thesis/project and graduate in the Honors Program will have the title “Commonwealth Honors Scholar” inscribed on their transcript and diploma.

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Independent Study should be work in a subject not covered in depth by the normal course offerings of an academic department. It should provide within its own structure a valuable independent research, analysis, and reporting project that will enhance the student’s grasp of a subject and develop the motivation, skills, and discipline of independent work.

Independent study proposals must be approved before or during the first week of the semester. Proposals are developed jointly by the instructor and student, and require approval of the Department Chairperson and the Dean of Academic Affairs. Students are limited to a maximum of 12 credit hours of independent study as part of their baccalaureate degree; freshman, and under most circumstances sophomores, are excluded from the option. The number of credits to be earned in any independent study course is determined by the instructor at the time the proposal is submitted and may vary from one to three credits, depending on the subject, objectives, difficulty, or complexity.

INTERNSHIP

An internship is a learning experience provided for specially prepared individuals who aspire to become professional practitioners, apply their academic skills and knowledge to work environments, and explore vocations. The internship should be recognized as one part of a series of learning experiences provided for professional aspirants.

Each academic department may establish an internship program following the guidelines below. Departments may choose to develop internship objectives, strategies for meeting the objectives, and criteria for evaluation. The department submits the internship program proposal to the College Curriculum Committee for approval.

Guidelines:

- 1) Applicants must be matriculated juniors or seniors with a minimum GPA of 2.0 (Business Administration/Economics majors need a minimum of 2.5 GPA).
- 2) Students may take up to 15 credit hours of internship experience during their four years of college.
- 3) A minimum of 45 clock hours of onsite experience are required for each credit hour.
- 4) To apply for an internship, students must fill out an application from CSSE/Career Services.
- 5) Upon acceptance of the student's proposal the faculty sponsor will submit it to the department chairperson for approval.
- 6) The internship application must be approved by the Dean of Academic Affairs.

PRIOR LEARNING CREDIT

Portfolio Evaluation (1-30 credits)

- 1) Credit for prior learning can be granted only to matriculated undergraduate students.
- 2) Prior learning credits are transcribed at a grade of P, have no impact on the student's GPA, and do not count toward the College's residency requirements for graduation.
- 3) Application for prior learning credit must be submitted no later than the fall or spring deadline for submission of the student's graduation application (see Catalog). Students are strongly encouraged to submit prior learning applications during their first semester as a matriculated student at MCLA.
- 4) Procedures to be followed in evaluating prior learning are as follows:

This is a comprehensive evaluation for students who enter college with an unusual range of learning experiences. The student consults with the relevant academic department chairperson about the experiences as they may be credited and applied to the student's degree program. Students develop a portfolio in which learning experiences are explored and described in detail and matched with college requirements. Portfolios should include: a narrative resume; flow sheet showing course work completed; essays that include learning statements; documentation; and examples of work produced appropriate to the request. The student completes an Application for Prior Learning Credit available at CSSE/Advising Services. Completed applications and portfolios are received in CSSE/Advising Services, reviewed by the Academic Department(s), forwarded with departmental recommendation to the Dean of Academic Affairs, and sent to the Registrar's Office for processing.

Note: Portfolio candidates must enroll in a workshop/course, Experiential Credit Portfolio Preparation and Writing (ENGL 395).

Once credits are approved the student will be billed for \$100/per credit via Student Accounts.

PRIOR LEARNING PHED CREDIT / VARSITY SEASON

Students have the right to apply for PHED (Physical Education) prior learning credit for participation in a varsity sport for one season (one credit). Maximum of two credits. The application fee is waived.

PRIOR LEARNING PHED CREDIT / OFF-CAMPUS ACTIVITY

Students have the right to apply for PHED prior learning credit for participation in an off-campus physical exercise activity. The activity must be documented. Maximum of two credits. The application fee is \$25.

POLICY ON ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

To ensure the rights of all persons to obtain access to courses for which they are qualified, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts has established policies for advising, registering, evaluating, and keeping records of students with disabilities.

These policies recognize that 1) the responsibility for academic performance ultimately lies with the student; 2) academic decisions lie with the involved faculty; 3) modifications can be made only by the department responsible for the course. These policies should, in effect, act as a framework to ensure that the rights of every student are protected while academic standards are maintained.

Disability:

- A student with a disability may choose not to disclose a disability and assume responsibility to engage in regular registration, advising, classroom assignments, and evaluations. In this case, the policies that follow do not apply.
- If a student with a disability formally discloses that disability through MCLA CSSE/Academic Support, then certain procedures will be completed in requesting accommodations for a course. Records will be kept to document decisions and actions taken.

Disclosure of Disability:

A student may initially identify a disability on the New Student Survey or through the admissions process. These students will be notified by CSSE/Academic Support Learning Specialist about available support services and relevant policies. Students will be encouraged to make contact with the Learning Specialist to discuss their needs. Once enrolled, they can contact the Learning Specialist at any time to disclose a disability. However, accommodations are not retroactive and begin the day the accommodation paperwork is delivered to the faculty. In order for students to qualify for academic accommodations or policies pertaining to disabled students, the student must provide documentation within the past three years of the disability by a qualified professional. Students for whom documentation does not exist will be eligible only for services offered to students in general. Students will also be required to sign a Disclosure of Information form if the Learning Specialist is to intervene in situations related to disability.

Preferred Access:

Students with specific disabilities who disclose their disability may be granted “preferred access” registration. Students are responsible for requesting this through the Learning Specialist who will approve eligible students. The listed courses must have been approved by the student’s academic advisors and must be courses in which the students are eligible to enroll.

Accommodations:

Accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis after review of all documentation. The Learning Specialist will work with students on a semester-by-semester basis to determine accommodations that are reasonable for them. An accommodation worksheet is developed to provide equal access and it is the responsibility of the student to deliver and discuss their accommodation with their professor.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

APPEAL OF A COURSE GRADE

In the event a student wishes to appeal an instructor's grade, the process for filing an appeal is as follows:

- The student will bring a written statement to the instructor explaining in detail all facts relevant to the appeal. This must be discussed with the instructor. If a decision or resolution acceptable to the student is not reached:
- The instructor shall give the student a written statement of his/her decision, explaining in detail his/her reasons for the decision.
- The student will then bring both statements to the chair of the academic department sponsoring the course. The chair will read and discuss the statements with the student and consult with the faculty member as appropriate.
- The chair will provide the student with a written statement of his/her decision, recommending support or denial of the case.
- All materials will be forwarded to the Dean of Academic Affairs, who will read and discuss all statements with the student and other parties as necessary.
- The Dean will forward all information to the Registrar's Office as necessary. Meetings of the Academic Appeals Committee will be called as needed by the Registrar's Office.

The student must receive statements from each of the individuals listed above within one week of the meeting with the student. Requests for hearing before the academic Appeals Committee must include written statements from all parties as outlined above. Such requests must be made to the Registrar's Office within thirty days of initiating the appeal.

In cases involving appeals of a course grade, a student has one month into the following semester to initiate an appeal relating to grades earned in the regular fall or spring semesters. In all other cases (e.g. summer) the student has one month after receipt of the grade to initiate an appeal through the aforementioned channels. No grade appeals can be made after the above deadlines.

APPEAL OF ACADEMIC SUSPENSION

In cases involving academic suspension, students wishing to be readmitted must appeal in writing by the date specified in the student's suspension notice. Forms explaining suspension appeal will be sent to the student at the time of notification.

Students will submit **written appeals only**.

Students will be dropped from all courses in which they have pre-registered.

All students academically suspended from the college must meet the following minimal conditions for readmission:

- At least 6 credits of transferable credit with a GPA of at least a 2.00
- A Readmission Approval form must be completed by the student and approved by the Associate Dean of CSSE prior to enrolling in classes. Courses must be taken at an accredited institution other than MCLA.
- Students must sit out one full academic semester from MCLA. (An academic semester does not include summer sessions at MCLA).
- Other conditions may be imposed by the academic appeals Committee based on the student's overall record.
- A student academically suspended from MCLA more than twice is **ineligible** for readmission.

Students who have been academically suspended from the college more than once must meet the following conditions for readmission:

- Raise his/her MCLA GPA to at least an overall 2.0 by repeating courses. A Readmission Approval Form must be completed by the students and approved by the Associate Dean of CSSE prior to enrolling in classes at another institution.
- Meet other conditions of readmission as determined by the Associate Dean of CSSE. Courses must be taken at an accredited institution other than MCLA. Students **may not** take courses at MCLA during the summer if suspended.
- A successful appeal of academic suspension requires the students to meet with specified conditions of readmission and complete an Academic Success Plan.