Advising Scenarios

1. Caitlin, a first-semester freshman, has decided to take a semester off to save money. She wants to live at home in Connecticut for the spring semester where she has a part-time job waiting for her. She hopes to take a course at the local community college there – MATH 144: Mathematical Thinking. She wants to know if this will transfer back to UMW. She also wants to return to UMW the following fall and wants to know if “this is ok.”

Official response:

Any course taken outside of UMW that the student wishes to receive transfer credit for from UMW requires the student to seek permission from the Office of the Registrar. The Registrar’s new site Eagle Transfer will help you research how courses at other institutions have transferred in to UMW in the past. Per the Undergraduate Academic Catalog, students must receive permission prior to registering for the course. The Request to Study at Another US Institution form can be accessed on the Registrar’s website. Emphasize that the process of having the Registrar look at a course first guarantees that the course will transfer if the student earns a C or better – the process is not meant to be a burden. Also, once the student knows how the course will transfer, it is easier to determine if the course will satisfy a general education requirement, a major requirement, etc.

A student can be out up to three semesters without having to reapply for admission. This is important because reapplying means a student falls under a new academic catalog and is subject to any changes to the degree/major requirements. While is not required to let the Registrar know if a student is not returning for a semester, you should always encourage the student to inform his or her advisor and the Registrar, and check with Financial Aid, Student Accounts, Residence Life, etc.

2. While in high school, Joe worked part-time at TGI Friday’s back home in Roanoke and made good money when they were busy. He was a waiter, but also worked in the kitchen for a short time, and is interested in learning more about the restaurant business in general (he wants to major in business). His old boss at the restaurant told Joe that he could come back to work next summer. Joe heard that you can get credit for working. He wants to know how he can set this up.

Official response:

It’s important to understand that students can earn academic credit for internships, not for simply working a job. The internship must be relevant to the major granting credit, allow
students to gain new skills and knowledge, and be related to career goals. Earning internship credit requires you to complete a signed internship contract between the student, an agency supervisor (somebody who works at the job site), a faculty sponsor, and Academic & Career Services. This entire process needs to be complete (with all required signatures) before the internship begins. No retroactive credit for hours worked at an internship is permitted per UMW policy. The agency supervisor will complete an evaluation at the end of the internship, and the student will complete an agreed upon academic component to be submitted to the faculty sponsor (e.g. a portfolio and a reflective essay). Commonly, this academic component consists of a short paper documenting and reflecting on the experience or a blog which is regularly updated throughout the experience. There are other options as well and these must be agreed to in conjunction with the faculty sponsor and are written into the contract. When the internship ends, the faculty sponsor will assign a grade based upon the evaluation by the agency supervisor and the student’s academic component.

As many students complete internships during the summer, a final very important point is that credits cost money. When a student enrolls, for example, in 3 credits worth of internship through the College of Business, the course BUAD 499 appears on the student’s transcript, and the student will be billed for 3 credits. Many students do not realize that internship credits are billed just as any other credits are billed, so this should be clarified. If a student asks you how to start the process, the answer is to set up an appointment with one of the career specialists or attend an internship workshop through Academic and Career Services.

3. Robert is a second-semester freshman. He took CHEM 111 the first semester of his freshman year and it was tough. He pulled through with a D+, but he knows he can do better. So, in the fall you recommended that he consider retaking the course in the spring to pull up his GPA, especially considering that he wants to go to medical school. So now, in the spring, Robert is retaking CHEM 111 and is pretty certain he’ll earn an F. He is shocked that he’s doing so poorly and is still committed to one day going to medical school. He heard that you cannot retake a course a second time, so wants to know his options.

Official response:

He is indeed correct about the repeat policy. Officially, a student can repeat a course only one time. So, once the course has been completed twice, he’s done. Only the most recent grade counts and contributes toward the student’s GPA. So, in this situation, it might be a good idea to get out of this course. Students can drop a course in the first 3 weeks of the
term. When a student drops a course, it is completely removed from their academic record. But this situation sounds like we’re past week 3. The next option is a withdrawal. Students can withdraw from individual courses during the first 9 weeks of the semester. If Robert is still in that 9-week window, he could consider a withdrawal. That would give him a “W” on his transcript for that course, and then he could consider repeating the course again. Each of these situations is described in the Course Changes section of the catalog.

Another option which should be mentioned – but probably is not a good idea – is the option to switch the grading of the course to Pass/Fail. If Robert thinks he could earn a passing grade, this might be an option. However, he should be warned that if he takes the course Pass/Fail and he passes, the course cannot count toward any major requirement or for general education. Pass/Fail is only a reasonable option for elective credits. So, Pass/Fail probably doesn’t make sense in this situation. Also, if he is seriously considering medical school, a “Pass” in chemistry may not look favorably for admission as he will not have earned a letter grade for this course.

It’s also worth mentioning that some departments on campus have minimum grade requirements for students to progress in sequenced courses. Chemistry requires a C- in CHEM 111 in order to move on to CHEM 112. So, a “Pass” won’t allow the student to move on.

Lastly, if Robert hasn’t been able to “successfully” complete CHEM 111, it is also worth having a conversation on whether medical school is a realistic career path for him. If he is struggling in an introductory chemistry course this may be cause for concern as he progresses into upper level courses.

And, it is important to point out that if he fails the course on the second attempt, the grade of F will replace the D+ and he will actually vacate the previously earned credit.

4. Meredith heard from her friend’s roommate that there’s a trip to Spain every year where, if you go on the trip, you satisfy your language requirement and you get credit for the Experiential Learning requirement. She hates languages and thought this might be a great way to just knock out two gen ed requirements, and get a free trip to Spain at the same time! She wants to know where to sign up for the trip.

Official response:

It is indeed true that UMW sponsors a trip to Spain every year. The Spain for All program, run out of the Center for International Education is a wonderful opportunity, as are all of
the programs that the office sponsors. Students can earn UMW credit while studying at a university in Spain taking courses that, in some cases, are taught by UMW faculty. But a few things need to be clarified. First, it’s not at all clear that the student will be able to completely finish the language requirement during the trip. That will depend on the student’s background and preparation, and also which courses are being offered. Second, the Experiential Learning requirement can only be satisfied by completing both the *experience* and a *reflective component*. The student will need to find a faculty member to sponsor the experiential learning component of the course. There is a form to complete and students can get the form and all of their questions answered at the Center for International Education on the fourth floor of Lee Hall (much of this information can be found on their “*Getting Started*” page).

Also, it will be important to be very clear that these trips are not free as the student stated. CIE facilitates two types of trips: *faculty led* and *non-faculty led*. The faculty led experiences are often shorter trips that occur outside of the regular semesters (spring break, summer, etc.). There is a program fee for these trips.

While CIE encourages students to visit their office as early as their freshman year to become familiar with services offered, they recommend that students contact them at least a year in advance of when they plan to travel abroad. They may visit with a staff member in CIE or speak to a Peer Advisor in the office, All Peer Advisors have studied abroad themselves and have been trained to initiate the exploration process for students looking to study abroad.

5. Scott took calculus in high school and really loved it. He was going to take the Calculus AP test, but got really sick toward the end of his senior year and ended up never taking it. He decided to just forget about it since he decided to major in Sports Training and wouldn’t need calculus for that. But half-way through his fall semester – and PHYS 105 – he realized that he actually wants to major in Physics. He looked up the major requirements for Physics and saw that calculus was required. He wants to know if there’s any way to “get out” of having to take calculus since he knows it already.

*Official response:*

OK, first let’s make certain Scott understands that we don’t offer a “Sports Training” major. Now, on to the calculus question. Questions such as these are best directed toward the chair of the department. So, direct the student to the chair of the *Department of Mathematics* in this case. For this situation, the department could offer a placement test for the student and, if he scores highly enough, allow him to start in Calculus II (or maybe even Calculus III). In this case, the chair of the department can tell the registrar to
permanently waive Calculus I for Scott. No credit is awarded, but it would allow the student to start a little further along.

6. Sarah has always wanted to be an elementary school teacher. She really wants to declare her major in Education once she gets enough credits to declare – she heard that you can’t declare until you finish your Gen Eds. She went to the Education Department upstairs in Trinkle, but couldn’t find anybody to ask. She wants to know how to declare her major in Education.

*Official response:*

There is no “major” in education per Virginia licensure requirements but the path to a license and graduate degree will be the equivalent of another major and take up a large number of electives. Students interested in the elementary education program may major in any major program offered at the University. One of the requirements for admission into the College of Education is to attend an information session. These are offered during summer orientations and also several times both semesters. Encourage the student to contact the College of Education office (540-654-1034) to request an appointment with one of the professors to review specific admission criteria and course sequences to become a licensed teacher. While an elementary education student must meet certain requirements to enter the College of Education he or she can start work on the endorsement courses which can, at times, “double dip” with General Education courses. The advisor should pull up the endorsement check sheet which is accessible via the College of Education’s website and go over that with the student.

It’s also important to note that any student can declare a major (not education!) at the end of their first year, or upon completion of 28 credits, whichever comes first. This is completely independent of when the student finishes his or her general education curriculum.

7. Brett admits that he’s bitten off more than he can chew. He’s on the rowing team and has realized that he’s spent too much time with crew and he’s now worried that he might fail a course. He spoke with his parents when he was home for fall break last weekend and they agreed that he’s overextended himself and needs to make some changes. He heard that you can still get out of a class now, but his parents are worried about it affecting his financial aid. So he wanted to ask if it’s ok to drop a class now and have it not affect his
financial aid. The class he wants to drop is BIOL 121. He was only using this for gen ed though, so he can just retake it in the spring, right?

**Official response:**

Where to begin? First, there’s a deadline for withdrawing from an individual course and it is right after fall break. So he needs to get moving if he plans to withdraw. This would give him a “W” on his transcript, but would save his GPA and allow him to repeat the course in a future semester. It should also be clarified that BIOL 121 isn’t typically offered in the spring. Many sequenced courses are in a set rotation and do not run every semester. It’s always worthwhile to check with the department chair if you’re unclear on course offerings in future semesters. Of course, in this situation, it’s late enough in the semester that you could just check the spring schedule to see that BIOL 121 isn’t running in the spring.

In regards to the financial aid question, please refer the student to the Financial Aid Office on the second floor of Lee Hall to discuss any potential consequences this may have on his financial aid.

8. Last year, Monique took a dual enrollment course at her high school in New Jersey and was told that she’d get college credit for the course. Somebody out in the lobby in Lee Hall helped her to log in to Banner to look at her transcripts. But when she did that, she couldn’t find that course listed. She’s worried sick about getting credit for this course. What can she do?

**Official response:**

This is a Registrar issue. Chances are good that the college sponsoring the dual enrollment course just didn’t send the transcript (yet). You might first ask Monique if she knows whether or not her transcript was sent to UMW. If she doesn’t know, you could recommend that she contact the college or university that sponsored the course and ask them to please have her transcript sent to UMW. Beyond that, Monique should be asked to speak to somebody at the Registrar’s window on the second floor of Lee Hall. They might be able to offer more specifics about her situation. It’s possible that UMW does have the transcript, but that there was some problem with the transfer. For example, if she earned C- or lower, the course doesn’t transfer. As a general rule, students who have not received credit for something they think they should have received credit for can submit a form: Request for Reevaluation of Transfer Credit. The Registrar’s Office can direct them on the procedures involved.
9. James thought that college was the right thing, but now, after a few weeks here, he’s feeling very bad about his decision. He’s missed a lot of classes, except for his FSEM which he thinks is really fun and interesting. When not in FSEM, he spends most of his time playing *Yoshi’s Island*. He’s not sure why he made the appointment with you. Maybe just to see what to do if he fails a bunch of courses.

Official response:

Let’s first look at his academics and ignore the undertone for the moment. James probably needs to have a discussion with his faculty members to see where he stands in his courses. Is he truly failing or are there classes he can salvage? If he cannot salvage enough classes he may think about withdrawing from individual classes or withdrawing from the University. Both forms can be found on the Registrar’s website or by visiting their window on the second floor of Lee Hall.

In the bigger picture, James needs to decide if he wants to be at college and what interests him. That decision should probably involve discussion with everybody in the student’s support network. In some cases, something as simple as tutoring might solve the problem. In more extreme cases, the Talley Center or Disability Resources may need to be involved. As the academic advisor, that discussion should probably start with what the student likes about the FSEM. Sometimes you can learn a lot from a student speaking openly about why he or she likes certain courses. Inquiring whether the student has interacted on campus in the form of clubs, career events, Major Explorations Days, etc. may also be helpful. If he’s not engaged in his college experience outside of the classroom, it may be a good sign that this isn’t the best investment of his time. On the other hand, a good open conversation may reveal specific issues that, when properly resourced, could put James back on the right path to success.

10. The semester is winding up and pressure is mounting on poor Gabriel who is freaking out about final exams. A guy in his residence hall told him that he could get an “Incomplete” for courses if he needs more time to finish his papers. Gabe wants to know how to do this and if it’s ok to do it just for the classes with long papers due at the end.

Official response:

Incompletes are reserved for serious situations—medical/psychological issues, family emergencies, etc. The undergraduate catalog states that Incomplete grades are issued on a
case-by-case basis when students cannot complete the assigned work or final examination for a particular course due to unforeseen circumstances, e.g., illness, natural disaster, or family catastrophe. Supporting documentation may be required. So, while the advisor should explore “life” issues to see if there is a justification for an incomplete, this is probably not an option. Talk to Gabriel about resources and make sure that he understands that his best resource is faculty members. He should reach out to his faculty for help. Depending on timing and where the conversation goes (how much stress the student is under) there may be the option to withdraw.

Beginning the 2015-2016 academic year, the incomplete process will no longer involve Academic and Career Services. This means that the faculty member will directly make the decision regarding a student’s request for an Incomplete. If approved, faculty will then coordinate with the Registrar’s Office to ensure that the Incomplete is notated on the student’s academic record.