

What is An "Appropriate" Adviser Load?

At Iowa State University, there is a significant range in adviser load when it comes to academic advising of undergraduate students. The number of advisees per adviser varies not only by College, but also within departments and curricula. To determine what an "appropriate" advising load might be for a unit, it is suggested that the following factors be considered.

Students often differ in the amount of advising time needed for success. Students new to campus (first-year and/or transfer students) often have an adjustment period where more academic advice is sought, especially undecided/open-option students. Students whose academic performance falls below institution requirements must see their adviser more frequently and often have more questions regarding academic resources. Multicultural students, veterans, and adult students also often require more advising services. Students who participate in the ISU Honor's Program and those who are preparing for graduate or professional school often seek more time and information from their adviser. **Therefore, the type of student advised should be considered when assigning an "appropriate" advising load.**

Another factor that may influence adviser load is the type of curriculum in which the adviser works. Those curricula that have professional accreditation or various licensing standards are more complex. These programs will likely have an application process and specific student performance criteria that must be monitored which impacts the amount of advising time needed. **An adviser load for staff who work with students in more complex curricula should be reduced to allow for the time necessary to monitor professional an/or licensing standards.**

Other factors that must be reviewed when determining "appropriate" adviser load are additional job responsibilities expected of the adviser. Will the adviser coordinate specific recruitment and/or retention initiatives? Does the adviser have the authority to approve/deny academic special academic requests for the department or college? Does the adviser manage the advising staff within that unit? What level and load of committee work is assigned as part of the adviser's student services responsibilities? Does the adviser work with students in programs such as the Admissions Partnership Program or pre-professional program students who seek advising time, but are not officially declared as an advisee of the adviser? **An "appropriate" adviser load must also be determined by reviewing other job expectations and additional responsibilities assigned to the adviser.**

The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), the leading professional organization of academic advising in higher education, has addressed the issue of appropriate adviser load in several position papers. In the most recent report by NACADA (2003), the mean adviser load nationally for a full time adviser at a four-year public institution is 285 advisees/full time adviser. NACADA suggests that this load should be adjusted downward, depending on the student advised, the complexity of the curriculum and the other job responsibilities assigned to the adviser. See the attached materials for details of the surveys reviewed.

