Many authors have noted the importance of conducting academic program assessment in the field of academic advising (Campbell, 2008; Robbins, 2009; Troxel, 2008; Zarges et al., 2018). Sometimes, though, the conversation is a difficult one to get started. To assist leadership in raising and focusing an advising team's effort on program assessment, the following rubric was developed to highlight key components of the NACADA (2006) Concept of Academic Advising and the quality of advisor/advisee interactions based on a study conducted by Fosnacht et al. (2017). The rubric's purpose is to help focus conversations about advising programs' strengths and possible weaknesses.

The NACADA's Concept of Academic Advising (COAA), which was adopted in 2006, comprises three components: learning outcomes, an advising curriculum, and a pedagogy of critical thinking. The COAA is summarized as:

> Based on the teaching and learning mission of higher education, academic advising is a series of intentional interactions with a curriculum, a pedagogy, and a set of student learning outcomes. Academic advising synthesizes and contextualizes students' educational experiences within the frameworks of their aspirations, abilities, and lives to extend learning beyond campus boundaries and timeframes. (para. 10).

The three components of the COAA are described as follows in the rubric.

- **Learning outcomes**—intentionally defined goals the advising program seeks to have students demonstrate and master through learning activities related to creating their academic and career plans and their success and progress at the institution.
- **Advising curriculum**—the organization of related learning outcomes shows the scope, sequencing, and scaffolding of intended student learning through the advising program.
- **Pedagogy**—the use of critical thinking approaches is essential and should be the primary focus for acquiring evidence of its use by students as they create their academic and career plans.

The fourth component is the quality of advisor interactions. This component was developed to assess advisor and advisee interactions' frequency and was based on a study done by Fastnacht, McCormick, Nailos, and Ribers (2017). In their study, these authors investigated over 200 diverse institutions and over 50,000 full-time, first-year students. They found that the typical first-year student met with an advisor one to three times during their first college year. They also reported that the number of meetings varied across student subpopulations and institutional types (p. 74). A brief overview of each element of the rubric is presented as follows.

- **Has the institution increased advisor and advisee interactions across students' two- or four-year experience by offering engagement points beyond one-to-one advising sessions from orientation to graduation?**

On each of the four issues in the rubric, potential points can be assigned on a 0–7 point range. The higher the points assigned, the more fully developed an individual reviewer judges an issue. Hence, institutions can have individuals conduct a review, and individual responses can be compared and contrasted with aggregate results, thus forming the basis of a conversation amongst the advising team. The follow-up questions are designed to encourage reflection by advisors on their responses.
To initiate the conversation, it is recommended that participants score their institution, college, or department advising unit on each of the four conditions. Results should be shared among the advising team for comments, reactions, and suggestions for future improvements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>0–1</th>
<th>2–3</th>
<th>4–5</th>
<th>6–7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No academic advising learning outcomes are identified</td>
<td>General learning outcomes are identified but none specifically related to the development of educational and career plans</td>
<td>Learning outcomes are identified that are specifically related to the development of educational and career plans, but there are no identified methods of evaluation</td>
<td>Learning outcomes are identified that are specifically related to the development of educational and career plans, with identified methods of evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advising Curriculum</th>
<th>0–1</th>
<th>2–3</th>
<th>4–5</th>
<th>6–7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No advising curriculum is identified</td>
<td>There is a written advising syllabus, but the focus is not on the creation of academic and career plans but other topics such as advisor and advisee responsibilities</td>
<td>There is a written advising curriculum with advising topics categorized by general learning outcomes. These include students' creation of their academic and career plans. However, the relationship between learning outcomes, activities, and methods of evaluation is not stated.</td>
<td>There is a written advising curriculum with advising topics that are associated to general learning outcomes. These are scaffold over students' college experiences and include students' creation of their academic and career plans. There is an explicit relationship between learning outcomes, activities, and evaluation methods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Pedagogy of Critical Thinking

Nothing is stated for advancing critical thinking as the primary method of engaging students for academic advising. The importance of promoting critical thinking as the primary method of engaging students is stated. But associating critical thinking with the advising curriculum, learning outcomes, and student evaluation is not addressed.

## Means of Delivery

Primary reliance is on individual advising sessions, but workshops and use of peer or coaching advisors are also used as means of delivery. A balance of individual advising sessions combined with either a strong instructional presence in orientation, a first-year survey course, and/or other approaches that are both synchronous and asynchronous that are used within the means of delivery.

### Possible Follow-up Questions

- How were individual team members' scores similar and different from aggregate results?
- What were the least and most surprising results?
- What issues are “low hanging fruit,” and which ones will require more strategic discussions?
- What talents do individual team members have that can be matched with issues you want to address?

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References


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