

# Empowering Student Success



## School of Biomolecular and Biomedical Science

Academic Advising Case Study 2024-2025

Professor Geraldine Butler, Senior Academic Advisor

### At a Glance

Overview of the academic advising pilot

**330**

**Total Students**

**39**

**Academic Advisors**

**8:1**

**Student-to-Academic Advisor Ratio**

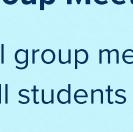
**Stage 4  
167**

**Stage 3  
163**

**Students by Stage**

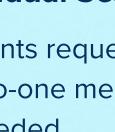
### The Academic Advising Model

A flexible student centric approach from a group meeting to personalised support



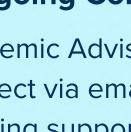
#### Group Meeting

Initial group meeting for all students



#### Individual Sessions

Students request one-to-one meetings as needed



#### Ongoing Contact

Academic Advisors connect via email for ongoing support

### Connecting with Students

Tailored initial communications set the stage for effective advising

#### Stage 3 Welcome Email

The initial email for Stage 3 students focused on a warm welcome and an introduction to the exciting period ahead.

- Welcomed students to their specific subject
- Congratulated them on their progress
- Announced upcoming academic advising appointments
- Encouraged thinking about topics like summer research
- Provided contact via the academic advising system

#### Stage 4 Welcome Email

For Stage 4, communication acknowledged the final year and prompted consideration of future steps.

- Welcomed students to their final undergraduate stage
- Expressed hope for an interesting year and exploration of opportunities
- Prompted reflection on next steps (further training, job market)
- Announced upcoming academic advising appointments
- Provided contact via the academic advising system

### Key Meeting Focuses

Academic advising topics were strategically tailored to the unique needs of Stage 3 and Stage 4 students

#### Stage 3: Building Foundations & Setting Goals

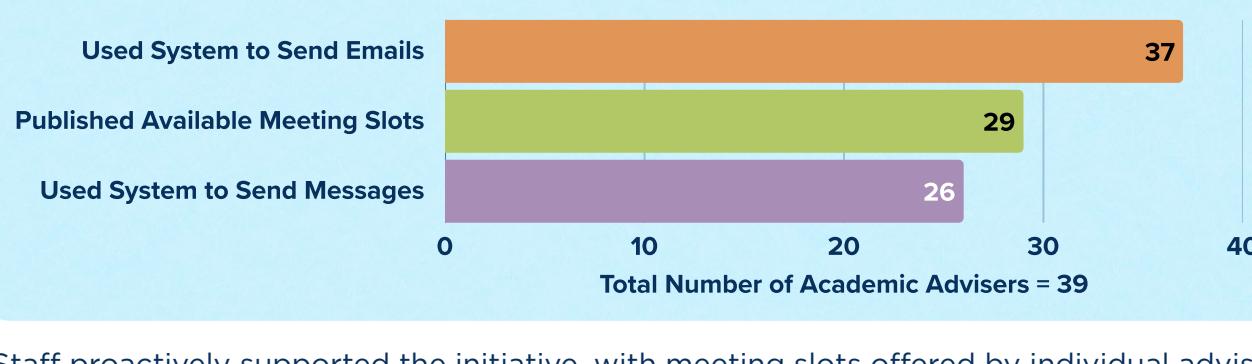
- Academic Skills:** Emphasising attendance and time management
- GenAI Policy:** Clarifying rules for using AI tools in research
- Research Experience:** Guidance on finding summer research and internships
- Capstone Planning:** Discussing Stage 4 project options like Erasmus and industry placements

#### Stage 4: Planning Futures

- Independent Work:** Managing the shift to a more demanding final-year workload
- Postgraduate Study:** Exploring Masters and PhD routes and their application timelines
- Career Advice:** Connecting students with UCD's career office for CVs and graduate programmes
- Deadlines:** Highlighting the urgency of early applications for jobs and further study

## Academic Advisor Engagement

A high level of staff participation was a feature of the approach



Staff proactively supported the initiative, with meeting slots offered by individual advisors ranging widely from 7 to 133, showing a deep commitment to student access.

## Lessons Learned

Key insights and takeaways from the implementation of the academic advising approach

### Strengths of the Approach

- Clear advisor role:** Well-defined responsibilities for academic advisors
- Structured Touchpoints:** Formal group meetings with extra follow-up meetings on request provided key interaction points
- Accessible Resources:** Signposting of students for queries outside of academic advising
- Communication Optimised:** Academic advisors could use academic advising system messages for answering questions where meetings were not needed and see a record of all communications to students

### Areas for Consideration

- Workload Scalability:** Concerns about increasing advisor workload with future cohorts and additional work for subject leads
- Ongoing Engagement:** Need to formalise or better encourage communication beyond the initial group meeting
- Random Allocation:** Randomisation where it is not possible to assign students to cognate staff
- System Adoption:** More consistent use of the academic advising system for meeting scheduling and attendance tracking

