

# Academic Content Support

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At some point in a student's educational path, they will need extra help in their studies. You may be in a position to proactively identify areas where they may need assistance or the student may reach out to you for guidance.

Before your first appointment with a student, take time to identify and understand which academic resources are available to online students. Connect with each department that offers student support to know their office hours, how they will provide assistance at a distance (over the phone, video chat, etc.), and what types of support they offer. Work with each resource to familiarize yourself with the tool(s).

Are there existing training materials offered to students before using a resource?

How does a student access each support option?

Do students need to schedule an appointment in advance? Or is it virtual drop in?

Are there any costs associated with using the resource?

As you begin your coaching session, it is important to take time to explain your role as a coach and how you are here to support them. Setting expectations of your role up front is a crucial step in the process. Then, ask the student what they have done to seek help already. For example:

Have they taken advantage of the faculty members office hours?

Have they scheduled time to talk one-on-one with their faculty member?

Have they asked questions of their graduate/teaching assistant (if applicable)?

Have they sought help from peers in a study group?

Have they used the campus tutoring center (if applicable)?

Which online resources have they used?

Have they consulted the relevant Library Guide (LibGuide) (if applicable)?

Have they talked to their academic advisor?

If the student would like additional guidance, you should ask the student open-ended questions to understand their academic needs before recommending the right support. After doing this, you have a good opportunity to help the student learn what is available and how to use each resource.

What is the student struggling with on their assignment?

Do they need help understanding a specific subject (e.g., chemistry)? If so, offer available online tutoring resources to them.

Do they need help with the actual mechanics of writing a paper? If so, connect them with a writing tutor.

Are they anxious about a math test that they have to take? Perhaps suggest that they use the campus math tutoring service and more intensive support such as obtaining a private math tutor. Offering tips on online test-taking strategies can be helpful as well.

Offer the student help by informing them that you will provide a detailed email with links to each resource that you identified in the call. Within the email, provide any additional guidance on how to use a resource, who to contact, and any associated office hours. Demystifying the resource up front can minimize anxiety and produce ease of use for the student. Also, inform the student that you will follow up with them to determine how their resources are working. Be certain to set a two-week reminder for yourself to connect with that student afterwards. This proactive follow-up is an important step that applies to all areas of coaching!

It can be intimidating for some students to reach out to a department (resource) that they haven't interacted with before. If appropriate, email your contact from that department and include the student in the message. A warm transfer takes the burden off the student for reaching out, guarantees that the student is connected with the right person, and ensures that the first step is taken.

Finally, the most important next step in this process is to follow up with the student. Oftentimes, students are reluctant to use resources, especially if it seems overwhelming or if they are feeling frustrated or lost in their assignment(s). By providing a follow-up, you are demonstrating your commitment to the student, building trust, and holding the student accountable to their own learning. Throughout the semester, continue to follow up with the student every few weeks to see if they have additional questions, if they have used the resources provided, and, if they have not used any, seek to understand why.