



# UCF My LAS Advising Tool and Manual

**Note:**

These materials were developed at UCF and are included in the [CREATES Toolkit for Faculty Advising](#) as sample higher education advising tools or practices.

For more information and additional educational tools, visit: <http://europe-creates.eu>



# My LAS Student

What are your 5-10 most important learning experiences so far?

A yellow sticky note with an orange border, intended for a learning experience.A yellow sticky note with an orange border, intended for a learning experience.A yellow sticky note with an orange border, intended for a learning experience.A yellow sticky note with an orange border, intended for a learning experience.A yellow sticky note with an orange border, intended for a learning experience.A yellow sticky note with an orange border, intended for a learning experience.A yellow sticky note with an orange border, intended for a learning experience.A yellow sticky note with an orange border, intended for a learning experience.A yellow sticky note with an orange border, intended for a learning experience.A yellow sticky note with an orange border, intended for a learning experience.



# My LAS Advisor and Student

What patterns can you identify in those learning experiences?

Skills, Methods,  
Knowledge

A light blue rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for notes related to skills, methods, and knowledge.

Themes, Questions,  
Problems

A light green rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for notes related to themes, questions, and problems.

Goals, Aspirations,  
Purposes

A light orange rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for notes related to goals, aspirations, and purposes.



UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE  
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# My LAS Student

Now, write a brief story of your studies based on the reflection with your advisor.

A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a thick red border and a light beige background, intended for the student to write their reflection story.

## My LAS: An Academic Advising Tool

### Manual for Advisors

#### Introduction

Students often struggle to integrate or synthesize the variety of learning experiences that LAS both offers and demands. Since many of the goals of a liberal education are long-term—cultivating critical thinking, transferable skills, reflective sophistication, adaptability, etc.—the intermediate steps and outcomes can seem disconnected, haphazard, or arbitrary.

This tool is intended to help students, in dialogue with their Academic Advisor, to make sense of their studies as a whole up to that point in time. It encourages both students and advisors to move away from the transcript toward a more holistic view of what students have been doing, how it makes sense now, and how it can be plausibly related to the future.

The tool is a collaborative exercise between a student and their advisor. It gives students a way to prepare for an advising session, takes advantage of advisors' experience beyond their expertise, and maximizes the benefit through follow-up. The entire exercise should be “fun” in the sense that it activates creative thinking on both sides while sharing a task.

The tool can be used with students at any level who need help in making sense of what they have accomplished, where they wish to go, and why they are studying LAS.

#### Learning Goals

The tool activates an engaging and collaborative advising session. Routinized completion of the tasks is not the point—instead the tool is just a way to structure a productive interaction.

By helping to structure an advising meeting the tool strives to:

- enhance student confidence and realistic self-assessment by making accomplishments and strengths explicit and visible.
- cultivate student ability to explain their studies to themselves and to others.
- help students develop criteria for assessing their own progress.
- take advantage of academic staff strengths in critical analysis of complex information (the student's input).
- create a record, a “snapshot” of student progress that can be used as a reference for later advising.

#### Part 1: Before the Advising Meeting

The student digitally fills in their 5-10 most important learning experiences. These could be:

- Courses—the most inspiring, challenging, valuable or otherwise significant coursework thus far
- Internships, practical projects, theater groups, sports, clubs, political engagements or other extracurricular activities that have been learning experiences
- Research experiences (Supervised Independent Study, Bachelor Thesis, lab experiences, etc.)

| Explanation   |   |
|---|---|
| Identifying “learning experiences” forces students to make explicit the range of complex inputs they have to process. | Selecting the “most important” ones is a first step in students' actively processing their experiences. |

## Part 2: During the Advising Meeting

By hand, student and advisor draw lines, highlight, circle, and generally play around with grouping and relating the learning experiences the student has listed. Then advisor and student together fill in the following three bubbles through discussion:

- Themes, Questions, Problems
  - What overarching themes emerge from considering the student's selection of learning experiences? Can the advisor see patterns that are invisible to the student?
  - What academic, research, or intellectual questions are preoccupying and motivating the student right now?
  - What intellectual, social-political, or other kind of intractable problems can be identified as an ongoing interest for the student?
- Skills, Methods, Knowledge
  - What academic skills has the student already developed? Are there any weaknesses or areas for improvement?
  - What methods have they practiced? Does the student over- or under-estimate their preparation for more advanced academic work?
  - How has the students expanded their knowledge-base through study? Does the student over- or under-estimate their level of knowledge relative to their peers or others in their field?
- Goals, Aspirations, Purposes
  - Do any short- and medium-term goals emerge as necessary or desirable based on where the student is at in their studies? How can the student take action to pursue these?
  - Does the student have any longer-term aspirations for which their studies are preparing them? Can the advisor help the student to formulate plausible aspirations?
  - Is the student actively trying to solidify their hopes and desires into a confident sense of purpose? How have the student's initial motivations to study been transformed by study?

| Explanation  |  |
|--|--|
| Regardless of their background, academic staff tend to be good at analyzing and re-synthesizing complex bodies of information. | In an LAS context, the "logic of the curriculum" is something that has to be produced by each student. This is a cognitive undertaking that knowledgeable and critical academics can help with. <sup>1</sup> |

## Part 3: After the Advising Meeting

The student digitally fills in Part 2 and then follows up in Part 3 by writing a short story of their education (100-300 words). The student emails/uploads the completed "My LAS Studies" to the Advisor to keep as a record for future meetings.

- Advisors can look for narrative plausibility: do the elements hold together in a causal, contingent, or logical chain?
- Advisors can look for narrative fidelity: does the story fit into a recognizable plot structure? How will the story end if it continues? Is the student making choices that will head them toward a tragic outcome? Is the student on an adventure?

| Explanation   |  |
|---|--|
| Practice in narrating one's studies is good preparation for, e.g., letters of motivation. | Recent research in advising suggests that story-telling is a common way in which both students and advisors process learning experiences. <sup>2</sup> |

<sup>1</sup> Marc Lowenstein, "Academic advising and the 'logic' of the curriculum" in *The Mentor* 2:2 (2000, April 14), <http://www.psu.edu/dus/mentor> and "If Advising is Teaching, What Do Advisors Teach?" in *NACADA Journal* 25:2 (2005): 65-73.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Hagen, *The Power of Story: Narrative Theory in Academic Advising* (NACADA, 2018).