Online Advising Note Taking Guidelines

Entering advising notes in online systems play an important part in building a network of support for students by sharing information about student/advisor interactions. However, there are federally governed regulations limiting the type of information that can be included in notes. This document provides general guidelines for student information security and best practices.

Advising notes...

- Help reduce the need to revisit same conversation each visit
- Allow the ability to track whether interaction was through office appointment, phone, email, or other modes of communication
- Provide advisors ability to see history, especially when students move between advisors, majors, schools and service offices.
- Allow advisors to identify patterns of student behavior

Guidelines and Considerations

- Ask yourself before entering… Is there educational need to know?
- Only enter information that will aid you and other advising colleagues in assisting the student progress toward degree completion or career path.
- Reminder that advisors can reach out to other advisors if further information can be helpful.
- All information (private or public) is a part of the official university record. This includes advising notes, paper files, email messages, etc.
- Students and some faculty can see advising notes.
- Other users of the systems may be able to see notes.
- Focus on facts and events.
- Document interactions where student chooses to either follow or reject a recommendation as well as the possible consequences for student rejecting advice.
- Use bulleted, concise statements as opposed to narratives.
- NO HEALTH INFORMATION SHOULD BE ENTERED, EVER. Advising notes are part of the academic record, not a health record.

Quick Reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Shareable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level I Data (FERPA)</td>
<td>Educational Need to Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid</td>
<td>Careful! – See examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility (FERPA)</td>
<td>Careful! – See examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Issue or Concern (HIPAA)</td>
<td>DO NOT SHARE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPS (HIPAA)</td>
<td>DO NOT SHARE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Data Security

In order for you, the advisor, to work effectively, you have access to student educational data and have a legal responsibility to protect all student educational data in your possession. You must take all precautions necessary to protect it.

The contents of the student records in all online advising systems are covered by federal privacy law (FERPA—Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) as well as other federal and state privacy laws. This is Level I class information on KU campus. Treat all information contained in these systems as “confidential” or Level I Information.

Best Practices

- Routinely clear your Downloads folder (usually found at c:\users\<your login>\Downloads) and browser cache.
- Ensure that printed documents are not left out unattended or in a place that is not secure.
- Ensure that you use secure shredding methods to dispose of the papers when you no longer need them (cross-cut shredder or secure shredding bins).
- Do not dispose of confidential documentation in blue bins or trash receptacles.
- Limit detail in email, even if you only use initials/ID number; it is a part of the official university record.
- Be cautious when speaking in public settings.
- Use caution when calling support offices. Do not share specific details with front desk staff as many offices have students answering the phone.
### Include vs. Do Not Include

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE of Information</th>
<th>INCLUDE in the note</th>
<th>DO NOT INCLUDE in the note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A physical health related diagnosis</td>
<td>“I referred the student to the appropriate support services.”</td>
<td>Specific details about diagnosis or treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mental health related diagnosis</td>
<td>“The student disclosed they have a disability and the AAAC has been contacted.”</td>
<td>Specific details about the diagnosis or treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A disability diagnosis</td>
<td>“The student explained they have a disability and receive accommodations through the AAAC.”</td>
<td>“The student has a learning disability and needs a note taker.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A death in the family or significant life event</td>
<td>Significant personal issues impacting academic performance, appropriate referrals made.</td>
<td>“The student’s grandmother died, and they are having a hard time coping.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed a retroactive withdrawal petition</td>
<td>“Student situation potentially meets retroactive withdrawal policy criteria, advised to complete petition.”</td>
<td>Specific details about the student’s situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student is concerned about their financial aid</td>
<td>“I referred the student to Financial Aid.”</td>
<td>Specific details about the student’s financial situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed plan for SAP appeal</td>
<td>“The student and I completed a SAP degree plan.”</td>
<td>“The student and I completed a degree plan for a SAP appeal.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>“The student is taking a leave of absence due to military service.”</td>
<td>Specific details about the medical or personal reasons the student is considering dropping all of their classes or pursuing a leave of absence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical/Personal</td>
<td>“The student disclosed they are considering a leave of absence.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OTHER**
* If in doubt ask the student what they are comfortable with having recorded

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**Resources**
- KU Information Services Data Classification Policy - [http://policy.ku.edu/IT/data-classification-handling](http://policy.ku.edu/IT/data-classification-handling)

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If you find an advising note where you question the usage of the information, contact the University Registrar.

Student Information Systems Advising Team
Undergraduate Studies
Academic Achievement and Access Center
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