

**YOUR GUIDE
TO ON-TIME
GRADUATION**

The Beacon Advising Handbook



BEACON

**STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES
ROOM 322 (300 BLDG.)**



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How to Use this Guide

The Beacon Advising Handbook contains four major elements:

- Academic Advising
- Developing a Graduation Plan
- 4-yr. College/University
- Careers



Why strive to complete a degree at HCC? You may want to enter the workforce as soon as possible, plan to continue onto baccalaureate and graduate program, or simply to save time and money.

Academic Advising will keep you on track toward this ultimate goal. Every semester, you and your SSS Advisor will monitor your degree plan/core curriculum to ensure that you are completing your requirements, and to keep track of the number of semester hours you are earning toward your degree. The **Graduation Plan** will serve as a map toward graduation.

If you decide that a **4-Yr. Degree** is in your future, SSS offers a myriad of options to expand your educational experiences. On your journey toward graduation, you will begin the process of searching and selecting a **Career** path. This Guide will provide you with helpful tips that you can use during your Freshman and Sophomore year, making your ultimate **Career Goals** a reality.

Planning your progress toward your degree will add depth to your college experience and ensure that you are in control of your education.



The 3 Rs of Advising

Your SSS academic advisor should be one of your first and most frequent stops on campus. You wouldn't begin a road trip without checking a map first, and you shouldn't begin your college career without consulting an advisor. Your SSS advisor can save you time and money by helping you with your individual needs.

Responsibility

- Schedule regular visits with your SSS academic advisor.
- Take ownership of your Academic Advising Plan (AAP) by knowing the requirements of your major.
- Be prepared for your meeting with your SSS advisor by researching available classes.
- Advising is always a two-way road requiring input and clear communication from the student and the SSS advisor.

Resources

- Learn policies, procedures, and requirements pertaining to your chosen field of study.
- Take advantage of the resources offered by SSS and the College as a whole.
- Use academic tools to your advantage such as the College catalog @ www.halifaxcc.edu, talk with faculty and staff, and make use of guides such as this one.
- SSS has adopted HCC g-mail as an official means of communication with students; First time enrollees at HCC are able to access their email account 24 hours after registering for classes and are expected to do so. At minimum, you should check your HCC g-mail weekly.

Relationships

- Foster an environment of open communication with your SSS advisor and with faculty.
- Clarify your values, abilities, interests, and goals and share these with your SSS advisor.
- Build a connection with the SSS staff and use SSS as a homebase.

Exploring Majors

- Look through the online Halifax Community College Catalog at www.halifaxcc.edu/catalog/catalog.htm. Review various majors' requirements and course descriptions.
- Talk to the SSS advisors, career counselors, faculty and friends in various majors. Gather information from a variety of sources.
- Talk with the SSS advisor to discuss majors or occupations you find interesting.
- Explore careers in the HCC Counseling Center or online at www.halifaxcc.edu/studentssupportservices
- Take a class in a field that interests you. Ask faculty and advisors for guidance on which courses offer the best exploration opportunities.
- Schedule “informational interviews” with professionals in the fields that interest you to see the environment and day-to-day activities involved in particular occupations. Ask advisors, career counselors or faculty for contacts and additional information.
- Attend a meeting of a student or professional organization related to a field you are interested in; see how comfortable and interested you are in the subjects discussed and with the people involved.

exploring
majors...



How Policies Affect You

Sometimes, you run into scheduling dilemmas in college. “Should I drop this course or not?” Knowing how to avoid “**roadblocks to graduation**” can save you **TIME** and **MONEY**. You can also refer to the Academic Regulations section of the HCC Catalog at www.halifaxcc.edu for other policies that affect your academic progress.

Withdrawing From Classes

Every time you choose to withdraw from a course, you are one more course away from graduating on time. Consider the following facts if you ever find yourself deliberating about whether or not you should drop a class.

- Every semester has official drop deadlines. If you do not drop by specific deadlines, you will be held financially responsible for repaying pell grant money that was received based on the total hours attempted.
- Withdrawing from courses could affect your ability to renew or receive financial aid and/or scholarships in the future. See more information in the HCC Catalog at www.halifaxcc.edu.

The 67% Rule

Students must earn passing grades in two-thirds (2/3=67%) of attempted credit hours (cumulative).

The 30 Developmental Credits Rule

Students accepted into and enrolled in eligible programs of study may receive financial aid while taking required developmental coursework.

However, inclusion of developmental credit hours in enrollment status will be monitored to not exceed 30 cumulative developmental hours attempted. Once you've attempted 30 developmental hours, financial aid **will not** cover anymore developmental hours.

The 150% Rule

Federal regulations set the maximum time frame in which a student must complete his/her program in 150% of the normal length of the program using the number of credit hours required to earn the academic credential and to compute the 150% rate. An HCC student is not eligible for financial aid when the cumulative number of credit hours attempted is greater than 150%. **For example:** If your program requires you to complete **65** credit hours for completion, you will reach 150% when you have attempted **97.5** credits.

Calculating Your GPA

Your HCC Grade Point Average (GPA) will appear on your official transcript and will reflect only course work taken while enrolled at HCC. Your GPA will exclude any course work transferred from other institutions. You may make an appointment with your SSS Advisor if you have questions.

Calculating your GPA is easy and an essential step in keeping up with your academic progress.

1. List each course you have taken at HCC, the number of credits each class was worth, and the course grades you earned. (Remember: transfer courses will not figure into your HCC GPA).

Course Number	Credits	Grade Earned
ENGL 111	3	F
BIOL 111	4	D
POL 120	3	A
MUS 110	3	B
PED 110	2	A

2. Multiply the number of credits in each course by the number of grade points corresponding with the letter grade. (Grades such as “W” and “F” do not have a grade point value and are not used in calculating GPA).

Grade	# of Grade Points
A	4
B	3
C	2
D	1
F	0

3. Add the credits and the grade points for every course in which a letter grade was received.

Course	Credits	Grade	Grade Points
ENG 111	3	F	0
BIO 111	4	D	4
POL 120	3	A	12
MUS 110	3	B	9
PED 110	2	A	8
Totals	15		33

4. Divide the number of grade points by the number of credits for the semester.

$$\frac{\text{Total Grade Points}}{\text{Total Credits}} = \frac{33}{15} = 2.20 \text{ GPA}$$

Top 10 Transfer Tips

- 1. Complete Your Associate's Degree.** National research shows that community college students who finish their degree program complete the baccalaureate at a much higher rate than those students who transfer with simply a grab bag of credits.
- 2. Shop Around.** Examine all of the options available to you as a transfer student. Examine both public and private four-year institutions to decide what will be the best fit for you. The four-year institution that you had your heart set on in high school might not ultimately be the best choice for the major you want to pursue.
- 3. Plan Ahead.** The earlier you begin to prepare for transfer, the better. Visit your top choices, collect transfer materials, and find out if there are any transfer agreements between where you are and where you want to go. The more information that you have, the easier it will be to make a decision.
- 4. Know What Actually Transfers.** Make sure you are picking courses that are transferable to colleges and universities. There are Websites, tools, and advisors at both community colleges and universities to help you choose wisely. To make sure you are taking the appropriate courses, see your SSS advisor to complete a tracking sheet as early in the semester as possible.
- 5. Don't Be Shy.** Meet regularly with your SSS advisor here at HCC. Keep your advisor informed of your transfer plans, and as transfer approaches, set a time to meet/speak with an advisor at your target institution. If you try to navigate this process without the help of your SSS advisor, you might not be able to maximize your HCC courses.
- 6. Choose a Major.** Pick your major early, and seek advice about the best courses to take to meet requirements. By choosing your major early, you can take the prerequisites that you need for that program at the university. Well-planned course taking will help you finish your transfer program more efficiently, saving you time and money in the long run.
- 7. Get Admitted.** Make sure that you apply to both the institution as well as the program that you want to attend at the institution. If you get admitted to the university, it often does not mean that you are admitted to the specific program that you want to study, like engineering or nursing. Make sure you complete those application materials, too. The deadlines for the university admissions materials and the program admissions materials might be different. **Do your research!**
- 8. Make Them Show You The Money.** Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) if you have not done so already. Call the university admissions office to see if it has scholarships set aside for transfer students—many institutions do. Make sure that you meet all of the deadlines for financial aid. Otherwise, you might miss out on assistance that is available to you.
- 9. Attend Orientation.** You might think that you do not need this because you already are a college student. But navigating the university is different. Take advantage of the opportunities that the universities have created for transfer students. These orientations will help ease the transfer process.
- 10. Stay Focused.** This one is easy to forget. Whether it's your associate's or bachelor's degree we're talking about, finishing on time is not easy. But it can be done if you are focused and work hard. Keep your goal in mind even when you're working in your hardest class, which you don't much like. **It will all pay off.**

Registration Tips

Students must meet with their faculty advisor in their major department prior to registering each semester. You want to be sure that the courses you choose will work toward your intended degree and that they are appropriate for your level of preparation, skill level, and your various obligations. An SSS advisor will also inform you about any updates or changes to academic policies and procedures that may affect you.

1. **ASSET Test/Retesting.** All admitted students are required to take the ASSET test prior to enrolling into classes. The ASSET test determines student placement into developmental or curriculum level courses. ASSET retesting should be done prior to scheduled dates of early and regular registration. This would enable students to see a counselor, set a retest date and study before retesting. The process for retesting is as follows:
 - A. Students may retest any part of the ASSET if they score two (2) points or less from the cutoff score.
2. **Declare Your Major.** If you're "undeclared", meet with an advisor in the department of your choice to see if you meet the requirements to declare your major. For more assistance, see your SSS advisor.
3. If you don't know what to major in yet, don't worry. SSS advisors will lead you through a variety of skill assessments that will assist you in determining where your natural strengths lie.
4. **Pick at least four (4) classes you want to take during the upcoming semester.** Review the current HCC Catalog at www.halifaxcc.edu to see what is required for the major in which you are interested and check for any required departmental prerequisites.
5. **Meet with your SSS advisor and faculty advisor!** Your advisors need to review your proposed schedule to verify you have picked classes that will work for the degree in which you are interested. If everything looks fine, your advisors will approve you to register.
6. **Pick the days and times for your classes.** The online schedule, www.halifaxcc.edu, has information about class days/times and who the instructors are.
7. **Register for your classes.** You can register for all your courses using your HCC Webadvisor account. For assistance, please see your SSS advisor. An official copy of your schedule can be picked up from the cashiers window located in the 300 building.
8. **Update your contact information.** You need to provide your SSS advisor with and college with an updated mailing address, HCC email address, and telephone number each semester for official communications.
9. **Purchase your text books.** Take a copy of your class schedule to the HCC Bookstore and they can help you select the rights books.

Graduation: 4 Steps in 2 Years

1. Make your two-year degree a priority by completing an average of 15-16 hours of course work per semester (not including summer sessions) that will apply toward your degree requirements. Full-time is defined by enrollment in 12 or more hours. Note: The only way to achieve an associate's in two years is to place out of all developmental courses and take at least 15 credit hours per semester.
2. Meet the grade point average and course requirements as defined by your department and financial aid. Some majors will require you to have completed specific coursework and earned a specific GPA prior to being admitted into the program.
3. Work with your SSS Advisor to ensure that you will meet the credit requirements for your program each semester.
4. Want to earn a Bachelor's?
Beginning your first year at HCC, start meeting with SSS Advisors and HCC Counseling Services to receive transfer information and assistance with the process. Participate in College Transfer Student Sessions and college tours.



Customizing Your Graduation Plan

Student Name: _____

Major/Degree: _____

Developmental Courses (if needed)

Course	Semester Comp./Grade	Course	Semester Comp./Grade
Eng 075	/	Mat 050	/
Eng 085	/	Mat 060	/
Eng 095	/	Mat 070	/
	/	Mat 080	/

Yr. One

Fall	Hours	Spring	Hours	Summer	Hours
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Yr. Two

Fall	Hours	Spring	Hours	Summer	Hours
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Freshman Year Checklist

- **Check that all high school transcripts have been received** by HCC's Office of Admissions. Make sure any courses you take at another college or university during your high school years are transferable BEFORE you take them.
- **Review the required core curriculum**, major and minor requirements in the Undergraduate Catalog at www.halifaxcc.edu
- **Register and attend HCC's New Student Orientation.** New Student Orientation is an important first step in your HCC career. Attendance at one of the Orientation programs is required for all freshmen. You will become more familiar with the layout of the college, meet faculty and staff, hear from various departments, and build school pride.
- **Enroll in classes.** Registering for your classes should be part of the early registration process held prior to orientation. During early and standard registration, every incoming Student Support Services' student will have the opportunity to register for their classes with the assistance of a SSS Advisor.
- **Access your HCC e-mail account.** Every student is assigned an HCC email address when they enroll in the institution. The institution will use this account for official communication with you. SSS staff will also use this email address to send information on upcoming events, schedule meetings, and etc.
- **Check in with Financial Aid at www.halifaxcc.edu.** Review procedures for financial aid and scholarship renewal with this important office located in the 300 building.
- **Visit the Student Support Services (Rm. 318, 319, & 322) and Student Government Association (Rm. 317) offices in the 300 building** to explore different ways to get involved on campus and build your resume. You can also visit them online at www.halifaxcc.edu.
- **Meet with your SSS Advisor twice (2) per semester.** To prepare for for your advising appointment: use the Two-year Plan worksheet in this booklet. List the courses you plan to take in the Spring, Summer, and Fall semesters (Be sure to also consider two alternate courses). Then, review your options with your SSS Advisor. Talk with your faculty advisor in the department of your interest. To make an appointment with your SSS Advisor, go to www.halifaxcc.edu and click on the Beacon Lighthouse or stop by offices 318, 319, or 322.

Sophomore Year Checklist

- **Meet with your SSS Advisor.** Stop by the offices 318, 319, or 322 to schedule your first official meeting with your SSS Advisor. Also, update your contact information with your SSS advisor. This will ensure that you will be able to stay abreast of upcoming events and activities. During this first meeting with your advisor your transcript will be reviewed, tracking sheet will be updated, and you will complete the Academic Advancement Plan and Contract for the program. Prepare for your advising appointment by using the 2-Year Plan worksheet in this booklet. List the courses you plan to take in the Spring, Summer, and Fall semesters.
- **Check in with Financial Aid.** Review procedures for financial aid and scholarship renewal in the Financial Aid Office 334 in the 300 Building.
- **College Transfer Student's that are up for GRADUATION in the current year should** meet with their SSS Advisor to research deadlines for potential transfer institutions. Application and financial aid deadlines may vary by institutions. Also, students must stop by the Registrar (Rm. #326) to apply for graduation and ensure that they are indeed graduating.
- **Get Involved!** If you were waiting to get involved in extracurricular activities to see how you did your Freshman year, now is definitely the time to explore all the HCC student organizations and what they have to offer. Remember, college is about the **whole** student, not just attending lectures.
- **Feel confident that you can succeed** in your classes this year knowing all you learned about college your Freshman year. You know HCC and are familiar with its services, so go for it!
- **Continue to check your HCC g-mail account weekly if not daily.**



Getting Involved

Every year is the year when all of your involvement and hard work can come together to provide a strong academic and co-curricular balance. But remember.....don't wait until your last semester to get involved.....by then, it may be too late! **Use this guide for developing your resume!**

Organizations/Experience/Awards:

Positions Held/Internships/Part-time Jobs/Community Service:

Major Responsibilities:

Skills Developed:

Additional Information:

Your Plan for Career Search Success

Your goal during your Freshman year is to learn more about your own personal values, your interests, what motivates you, your talents, strengths and the areas you could improve.

- Research the services available at Counseling Services and Student Support Services.
- Take online career assessment inventories and receive counseling from your SSS Advisor or Counseling department to interpret your results. Career assessments are available online at www.CFNC.org
- Participate in student organizations to develop your leadership skills.
- Attend the Chamber of Commerce Job Fair held at the Becker Village Mall. There will be potential employers in attendance.
- If you are an undecided major, meet with an SSS Advisor to discuss a schedule of classes that will fulfill HCC's core requirements. If you have declared a major, meet with an advisor in your major department to discuss a degree plan.

Notes:

Freshman Year

Your goal during your sophomore year is to gain experience working in a specific job setting and to explore and focus on possible career pathways. Also, you should conduct a successful job search by demonstrating self-confidence, communicating thoughtfully, and displaying your knowledge and skills to potential employers.

- Attend two career seminars like “Resume Writing” and/or “Interview Skills”.
- Register and apply for internships or cooperative education positions.
- Assume at least one leadership position on campus.
- Conduct two “Informational Interviews” with professionals in your area of interest.
- Check with Career Services for information about companies interviewing on campus.
- Talk to recent graduates concerning the employment market in your field.
- Research companies using the SSS and Counseling departments on campus.

Notes:

Sophomore Year

Informational Interviews

What is an “Informational Interview?”

Interested in a specific career field or two? An Informational Interview allows you to discuss the real world career experience with a professional in that field. You can gather information and guidance about the people, environment, and skills involved in your field of interest.

How do I go about identifying potential interviewees?

Your first step should be to identify people you know in career fields that interest you. The most effective method of finding such individuals is through personal referrals like your parents, friends, relatives, professors, and advisors. Ask them to notify these individuals that you will be contacting them at a later date and **make sure you follow through.**

How should I approach the Informational Interview?

Before contacting a referral, do some basic research about the career field. Make clear your reasons for meeting with the interviewee and identify what you hope to gain through the informational interview.

When you contact a professional, identify yourself, tell them that you are **seeking career information and advice**, and ask when would be a good time to meet. Be confident and courteous in your communication. Remember, they are doing you a favor!

When possible, request an **in-person interview**. This arrangement will allow you to see the working environment and compare various work settings if you conduct several interviews.

What do I do during the actual interview?

Dress and act professionally. Establish a positive rapport and demonstrate your interest in the interviewee's comments. If you have not finished the interview within the time period you had requested, thank that person for helping you by saying, “I promised I would only take thirty minutes of your time. I know how busy you are.” Extend the interview time only if the person you are interviewing strongly encourages you to do so.

Feel free to bring the attached form with you to serve as a guide and to use when taking notes. **Be sure to request a business card before leaving.**

How should I follow-up after the interview?

Write a short thank-you note within a day or two after your interview. Keep the interview information on file for the future, this person may be an important job contact for you later.

Informational Interview Questions

NAME OF CONTACT: _____ DATE: _____

TITLE/EMPLOYER: _____ EMAIL: _____

ADDRESS: _____ PHONE: _____

1. How do you spend a typical day or week in this job/organization?
2. How did you obtain this position?
3. What kinds of college degrees/credentials/skills are needed?
4. What kinds of part-time jobs or internships do you think are helpful for entering this field?
5. What types of people do well in your field? What types do not succeed?
6. What are the opportunities for advancement?
7. What are the drawbacks of your job/this organization?
8. What is the entry-level salary range in this field?
9. What is the employment outlook (locally, regionally, and nationally)?
10. Are you active in any professional organizations? Are students invited to attend?
11. What advice can you give me on how to break into this field?
12. Can you suggest anyone else I might contact?