

Academic Success

FAQ's, Terms to Know, and Resources for Families

Academic Support Services: UW has a ton of academic support services for your student, from career services and academic advising, to library resources and an on-campus writing-center. Check out the Student Resources page for links to several support services on-campus for your student. Has your student called you with a question and you are not sure when to direct them? Check out the Student Resources page – this is a great place to start!

Breaks: most often these are fall or Thanksgiving break, Christmas break, spring break, and summer. It is important to help your student transition to-and-from campus during these breaks with ease. They may be really tired when they get home, as they have most likely just finished mid-term exams or papers, final exams and/or papers/presentations – it is normal for students to be exhausted after these big assignments. They are excited to be home, but this is also a new transition for them and for you as a parent. Your support during these breaks cannot be emphasized enough – so have a conversation with your student to see what will work best for them during the breaks and how you can make the most of your time together.

Classes/Courses: classes/courses look quite a bit different in college compared to high school. Students are expected to attend class – expectations for participation and attendance are outlined in syllabi that are typically distributed to students the first day of class or within the first week of class. Class schedules can vary, some meet once a week for a few hours, some meet three times a week and some twice a week – it is important for your student to know their schedule and attend class. If they are unable to attend class(es) it is very important that they communicate with the instructor immediately – this is where an established relationship with an instructor can be useful so that a student feels comfortable sending an email to notify an instructor when they are unable to attend class. Again, class attendance is critical to the successful completion of coursework and an overall college degree.

Credit Hours: credit hours usually indicate the number of hours a student will spend in a class per week. Credit for classes completed each semester are awarded based on the credit hour system. Students will typically take 12 to 15 credit hours per semester (which is 4-5 classes based on a 3 credit hour courses).

Department: or an *Academic Department* indicates a division within the university dedicated to a particular academic discipline. Your student will want to familiarize themselves with the contacts and support services within their academic department, as well as the faculty and staff.

Enrollment: Your student is in college – but now they need to sign up for classes! It is encouraged for your student to consider their degree requirements, schedule, course offerings, and any additional commitments when meeting with their advisor to select their classes each semester. Students will want to be proactive in this process and meet with advising prior-to enrollment dates! Check out the [Calendar and Deadlines](#) information on the Registrar page for more information.

FERPA - What is FERPA? FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) protects your student's privacy, once they turn 18 or are enrolled at a college/university their privacy is protected by that institution. Essentially your student has the right to have their information protected and kept private. This may be difficult for some families to navigate as this does not allow you as a parent/family member/guardian to call and inquire about such things as final grades. Again, protection of student privacy is important and essential. We encourage you to have open conversations with your student so you are informed and able to assist them while also respecting their privacy and the duty of the institution to keep their information private. Here are a couple links to explore for additional information: [University of Wyoming, Registrar - FERPA, FERPA](#) and [Parents' Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act: Rights Rewarding Children's Education Records](#). Your student can elect to have information shared with you – simply direct them to complete the “FERPA Release Form” found near the bottom of this page: [Student Forms](#).

Instructors: instructors are individuals at a particular college or university who are tasked with leading classes, facilitating learning, providing grades and feedback on assignments, and submitting final grades for students. This is a very narrow definition – instructors do so much more and are available to assist students through their coursework. It is important to encourage your student to connect with their instructors early and often, as an established relationship can assist them in their learning, help build a resource network and help them to feel more comfortable on campus.

Major/Minor: think of a *Major* as a specific area of study – your student will focus their coursework and efforts within a specific field. For *Minor*, this is a secondary area of focus for your student. Each *Major* and *Minor* has specific credit hour requirements and coursework that must be completed – refer your student to their academic department, advising and the registrar for assistance.

Registrar: the registrar handles academic records at UW. It is a good idea for your student to check with the registrar on degree completion status on a regular basis – they can also consult with advising on this process as well. The registrar checks academic progress and records to confirm status for class standing (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior) and graduation. [Visit the University of Wyoming Registrar page for more information](#). As a parent/guardian/family member you are unable to call and request an academic transcript, grades or graduation status for your student (because of their privacy protected by FERPA) – but you can encourage your student to utilize this office to help them stay on track with their course requirements and graduation status.

Syllabus: a syllabus is like a roadmap for the course. This can also be considered an agreement of expectations of the students, learning objectives (what they will learn), schedule for assignments, attendance policies, office hours for the instructor, and much more. It is important for your student to pay close attention to this syllabus, follow guidance included within the syllabus and always contact their instructor if they have any questions on class assignments or course expectations.

Semester: half of a school year – most commonly: Fall Semester and Spring Semester. The University of Wyoming also offers coursework during the summer – Summer Term/Semester.