

First-Year Success Guide

A guide addressing the changes and challenges during your first-year studies

2019-2020

WHAT INFORMATION CAN I FIND HERE?

- Welcome from the Academic Advising office
- Difference between high school and university
- Academic dictionary
- Tips for academic success
- What to do if you are struggling
- Services
- University email communication
- Academic honesty
- Important dates

Message from the Dean

Welcome to Ontario Tech University and the Faculty of Science! We are pleased that you have chosen to join us. As you may know, we offer a variety of undergraduate majors, minors and specializations in six core disciplines: Applied and Industrial Mathematics, Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Computer Science, Forensic Science, and Physics. We also offer co-operative education programs and practical business training through our Science and Management degrees. Your first-year studies will introduce you to many of our core disciplines, and as you continue in your studies, you will concentrate on your discipline of choice. Our award-winning teachers and researchers are eager to introduce you to their fields. Our academic advisors can assist you with course selection and customizing your program. Your journey here will challenge and enlighten you, and you will develop a network of colleagues and friends that will advance your career long after you have left the university.

Best wishes,

Greg Crawford, PhD
Dean, Faculty of Science



First-Year Success Guide

Contact us

Please contact the Academic Advising team with any questions or concerns related to student life, whether it is academic or personal. You are welcome to email or drop in to see us.

Academic Advising office

science.advising@uoit.ca
905.721.8668 ext. 3118

Office hours:

Drop in Monday to Friday*
9:30 a.m. to noon (Drop-in) and
1 to 3:30 p.m. (By appointment)

*Closed every Wednesday afternoon.

Your Academic Advising Team:

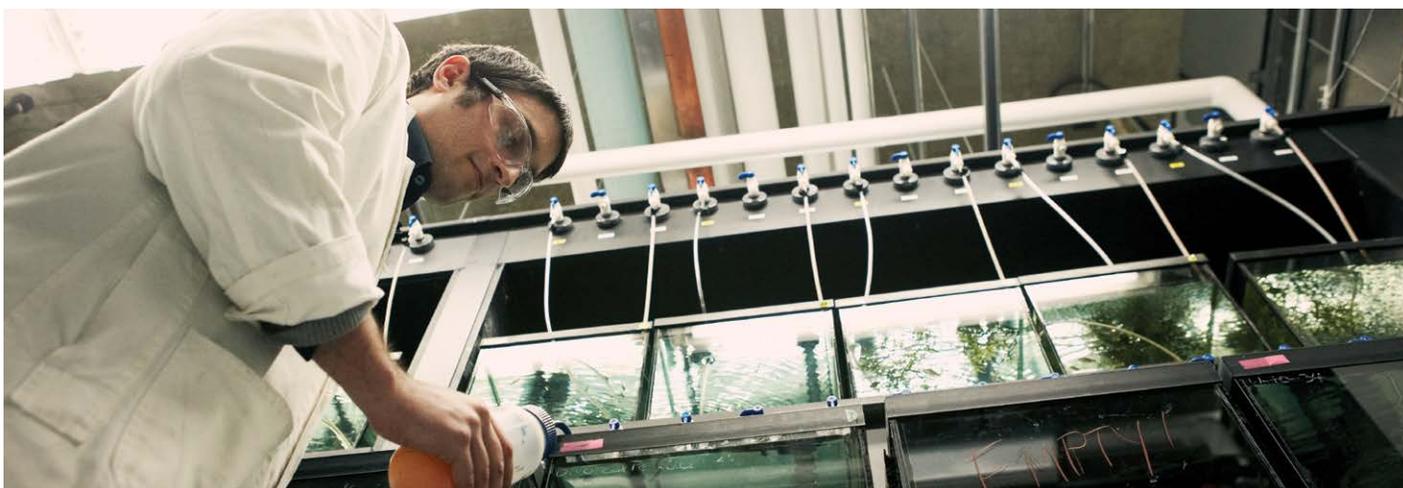
- **Emily Laverty**
Senior Academic Advisor
(Chemistry, Forensic
Science and Physics)
- **Christine Mason**
Senior Academic Advisor
(Biological Science)
- **Shelly Windsor**
Senior Academic Advisor
(Applied and Industrial Math,
and Computer Science)

Welcome!

We are so excited that you have decided to join our Faculty and we look forward to meeting you. The Academic Advising team is your main point of contact in the Faculty. We can provide you with support and assistance related to all facets of university life.

Our office will:

- Address questions and concerns related to all aspects of student life.
- Help you establish realistic educational goals and future planning.
- Assist in the selection of appropriate classes (especially if you miss or fail a course).
- Assess and discuss your academic progress and standing.
- Help you address academic difficulties.
- Discuss and evaluate your study habits and skills.
- Provide tips for academic success.
- Interpret academic policies and procedures.
- Discuss issues that affect your academic performance.
- Connect you with campus services.
- Provide advice regarding withdrawals or adding/dropping courses.
- Keep information discussed in advising sessions confidential.
- Provide guidance for successful progression towards graduation.



How is university different from high school?

- You are now an adult learner; it is your responsibility to take initiative that will support your education.
- Self-motivation becomes critical in university as professors do not follow up to ensure you have completed assignments or kept on top of your readings.
- Class attendance is not mandatory, but it is essential for your success.
- Classes are much bigger than in high school (up to 500 students), but class sizes will become progressively smaller again in upper-year courses.
- You will do more work outside of class than you do in class. Time in class is spent listening to lectures, discussing and note taking.
- Time management is key! You may have a hectic schedule while trying to maintain a part-time job and/or commute. Use your time on campus wisely. Balance is important!
- Final grades can be based on two or three assignments or exams, so it is important to give 100 per cent in everything you do.
- Group work comes up in almost every class, so you will have to get used to it. No one likes a slacker, so make sure you contribute equally!
- University allows you to choose your own academic focus and to take courses that truly interest you.
- University provides access to more knowledge and it allows you to expand your mind. Your past beliefs and ways of thinking will be challenged.



First-Year Success Guide

Academic dictionary

Academic calendar

An academic calendar is released for each academic year. It describes in detail important information that pertains to your studies. You must follow the program map information that was released in the Academic Calendar for **your year of entry**. For example, if you begin first year in September 2019 you will follow the program requirements listed in the 2019-2020 Academic Calendar for the duration of your degree. The Academic Calendar is available at [here](#).

Course syllabus or outline

A syllabus is a summary document designed to communicate all the important information about a specific course. The answers to many questions about a course will be found in the syllabus, including instructor information, course topics and learning objectives, learning resources, important policies, grading and evaluation information, and important dates and deadlines for the course. It is important to read and be familiar with your course syllabus.

Teaching assistant (TA)

Along with a course instructor, many of your courses will have Teaching assistants (TAs). TAs may assist the course instructor with a variety of instructional responsibilities. They may be leading your lab or tutorial section, invigilating your exams, or grading your course work. TAs can be another academic resource for questions about course material; check your course syllabus for more information.

Office hours

Course instructors, and TAs, will often have posted office hours listed in the course syllabus. Office hours are specific times when the course instructor or TA is available to answer questions about course material. It is important to attend office hours throughout the semester, whenever you need help or have questions, and not wait until just before a test or exam. Be sure to go prepared to office hours with specific questions or topics needing clarification.

Grading system

We use a letter grading system (not numerical grades), which is new to many students. Each letter grade has grade points associated with it (see Academic Calendar for the full table). You must receive a letter grade of D or higher to be granted a credit in a course. Keep in mind however, that while a D grade is a pass, it still has a negative impact on your academic standing.

Grade point average (GPA)

A semester GPA is the weighted average of the final course grades in one semester. Cumulative GPA (CGPA) is the weighted average of the final course grades in all courses completed for your program.

Academic standing

Your academic standing is based on your CGPA. A CGPA of 2.0 or above is considered to be 'Clear Standing'. If your GPA falls below a 2.0 CGPA either academic probation or suspension may follow (refer to the Academic Calendar for more information).



Services

There are many campus services available to you. Visit the links below for more information.

Student Awards and Financial Aid

OSAP and Student Awards

SIRC Building
905.721.3190 option 5
uoitfinancialaid@uoit.ca
for financial aid inquiries
uoitstudentawards@uoit.ca
for student awards inquiries

Office of the Registrar

Course add/drop, questions regarding payment/financial holds, etc.

SIRC Building
905.721.3190
connect@uoit.ca

Athletics and Recreation

Athletics and Recreation is a multifaceted department, focusing on competitive sport for varsity athletes as well as general health, fitness and community for all students.

Career Centre

Career counselling, internships and co-op, job postings, career tools, career exploration, mock interviews, resumé and cover letter suggestions, and job search tips.

U5 Building
905.721.8668 ext. 3824
careercentre@uoit.ca

Tips for academic success!

It is crucial that you start off on the right foot if you want to get the most out of your education. If you follow the five simple tips below, you will be amazed by your results!

- **Attend class regularly and be an active participant** - Class attendance directly relates to your success. However, attendance alone is not enough; you must be engaged in the learning process by participating, taking notes and being an active listener.
- **Know your course syllabus** - Know the course objectives, the grading scheme and the expectations. Be mindful of assignment due dates and lab and test dates. Put them in your calendar right away with reminders to help you remember.
- **Manage your time wisely and plan ahead** - Time management is critical to success in university. Create a schedule for yourself that includes study time as well as personal time. Use an online planner. Set goals for yourself and follow through on them.
- **Keep on top of your class readings and assignments** - Stay on top of things. Your tasks will seem less daunting if you tackle a bit each day. Read the chapters that correspond to lecture material prior to, or immediately after, the lecture. This will reinforce the material and help ingrain it in your memory.
- **Seek help when needed** - If there is something you don't understand, seek help immediately before the problem snowballs. Your professors and teaching assistants (TAs) are there to help you—so don't be afraid to reach out to them for help!



First-Year Success Guide

Services

Indigenous Education and Cultural Services

Offers cultural workshops, ceremonies, events and programming to educate Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty, staff and the broader community about Indigenous culture.

Baagwating Indigenous Student Centre
151 Athol Street East
Downtown Oshawa
indigenous@uoit.ca

International Education

Support services for international students and those seeking global exchange opportunities.

U5 Building
international@uoit.ca

Student Accessibility Services

Support services for students with disabilities.

U5 Building
905.721.3266
studentaccessibility@uoit.ca

Student Engagement and Equity

Supports students' positive transition into university and their ongoing success and engagement on campus, through various learning and leadership programs

U5 Building
askme@uoit.ca

Student Learning Centre

Peer tutoring, Math and Physics help, PASS sessions, learning strategy workshops, study skills specialists, academic subject specialists.

U5 Building
studentlearning@uoit.ca
905.721.8668 ext. 6578

Student Mental Health Services

If you experience challenges caused by personal or emotional difficulties, you can seek support and assistance through Student Mental Health Services.

U5 Building
905.721.3392
studentlifeline@uoit.ca

I'm struggling... what should I do?

- **Seek help immediately from your professors or teaching assistants (TAs)** - It is imperative that you understand course content and expectations, so speak to your professors and/or TAs to fill in the gaps in your understanding.
- **Visit the academic advising office** - Whether academic or personal—affecting your ability to maintain your academics, then your Academic Advising team may be able to help. Academic advisors can help you develop, modify and maintain a plan for academic success.
- **Re-evaluate your study habits and skills** - Poor grades are not necessarily indicative of academic ability but are often a sign of ineffective or poorly developed study habits/skills. Through the Student Learning Centre, you can identify and develop effective study habits.
- **Reduce your course load** - Students who reduce their course load by even one course often see significant improvements in all of their course grades. It is not necessary to always take a full, 100 per cent, course load. Many students take three or four courses in a semester because that is the level at which they can optimally perform. It is important to speak with your Academic Advisor prior to making any changes to your course load.



Learning devices

Use your laptop, tablet or other learning device appropriately:

Students are often distracted by their learning devices (Social media, etc.) and as a result they miss a great deal of vital information from the lectures. It is crucial that you avoid this pitfall in order to be successful.

Laptop use tips:

- Use your laptop to take notes in class—this will help to keep you on task.
- If you find you cannot avoid the distraction, close your laptop and take notes by hand.
- Try to refrain from using social media while you are in class.
- Sit near the front—this will help you be more attentive.

Enjoy your laptop, tablet or other learning device and explore the benefits of this learning environment (just remember to do so in the appropriate settings).

Let's get down to business

University email

Each student is assigned an official university email account. Check your university email account on a regular basis. Vital information is communicated through this account, including: registration information, details of academic standing, important information from your academic advisor, and much more.

Communication and etiquette

It is important to realize how your style of communication can impact how others respond to you. Therefore, it is crucial to be clear and professional when communicating with faculty, staff and other students through email and Blackboard. Consider these basic guidelines:

- **Greetings and send-offs** – Use professional language and address emails formally (e.g. Hello Professor,). Be sure to include your name and student number in your sign-off.
- **Tone** - Watch the tone of your communication. In writing, tone can often be misinterpreted. You want to come across as respectful, friendly, and approachable. To avoid sounding curt or demanding avoid using aggressive language or ALL CAPS!
- **Spelling and grammar** - It is important to use correct spelling, proper grammar, punctuation and capitalization. You are more likely to get the appropriate response if your email is easy to read and understand.
- **Abbreviations or Internet slang** - This does not present a professional image. Faculty and staff members may not easily interpret the abbreviations or Internet slang that you commonly use to communicate with your friends.
- **Be concise** - Get to the point of your email as quickly as possible, but don't leave out any important information or details. If you have ongoing communication always include the email history. Do not assume individuals will remember the details of your situation.



First-Year Success Guide

Important: academic honesty

Academic honesty and integrity are of utmost importance in university. Academic misconduct is a very serious offence and it takes many forms. It is important that you understand what academic misconduct entails in order to avoid it (see the Academic Calendar). Plagiarism is the most common form of academic misconduct and it is deemed by the academic calendar as “the act of presenting the ideas, words, or other intellectual property of another as one’s own. The use of other people’s work must be properly acknowledged and referenced in all written material.”

If you are deemed to have committed academic misconduct, the penalties are quite severe and could jeopardize your academic career. Therefore, if you have questions or concerns regarding academic misconduct, please contact your teaching assistant, professor, academic advisor or the Student Learning Centre.

Important dates for 2019–2020

The Academic Schedule is published each year in the Academic Calendar. This schedule lists the important dates and deadlines for year including, but not limited to, the start and end of lectures, registration periods, course withdrawal deadlines, study breaks, and final exam periods. It is your responsibility to be aware of these dates/deadlines and to adhere to them.

To view your Academic Calendar, [click here](#).



For an alternative format of this information, contact marketing@uoit.ca.