A. IDENTIFICATION

Position Title: Academic Advisor
Department: Student Engagement and Retention
Position Reports To (Title): Manager, Back on Track Program
Date: July 31, 2017

B. POSITION SUMMARY

The Academic Advisor assists students with the planning of their academic program. This includes consideration of the appropriateness of the selected program for the student, advising on career options, advising on options available when in academic difficulty and referral to resources available through other University departments and the community. The incumbent must be prepared to advise students on the academic requirements of all programs offered at or through Simon Fraser University at all campuses, on University regulations regarding academic performance, withdrawals and appeals. The incumbent also acts as a referral agent to services offered by Student Services departments, including Financial Assistance, Career Services, Counselling Services, Cooperative Education and other departments.

C. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities related to academic advising (70%)

Advises students of the academic requirements of their program of choice by maintaining extensive knowledge of all programs offered by the University to assist students in determining programs that may be of interest to them, suit their talents or lead to their career goal.

Advises students in academic difficulty regarding university regulations on academic standing and continuance, appeal, and readmission procedures; recommends appropriate alternatives to students in academic difficulty, including transfer courses and programs available at B.C. community colleges; and provides referrals to the Health, Counselling and Career Services, if appropriate. This requires maintaining current, in-depth knowledge of pertinent University regulations to ensure students are provided with accurate and consistent information whereby they can make appropriate decisions.

Advises students withdrawing from the University, or specific courses, due to extenuating circumstances with the withdrawal process. Acts on behalf of the student, when appropriate, to facilitate the withdrawal process.

Provides advice using various modes of communication, including in-person, email, telephone, written, instant messaging, etc.

Interprets University policy regarding withdrawals, registration, academic requirements, etc. by maintaining current knowledge on University regulations, procedures and curriculum requirements to ensure accurate and consistent information is provided to students.

Liaises with and coordinates advising services for students with the program advisors at the Burnaby, Surrey and Vancouver campuses. The incumbent works as part of a coordinated team for service provision to Burnaby, Surrey and Vancouver campus students.

Advises students of professional schools and unique programs available at other institutions, which may include general admission requirements to professional programs offered elsewhere. This requires maintaining knowledge of program offerings at other Canadian institutions and those abroad and researching areas of change and growth in post-secondary education to ensure students are well informed about their future academic options and plan their SFU program appropriately.
Keeps abreast of changes and trends in employment opportunities for new graduates. This requires liaising with Cooperative Education, Career Services, and academic departments and maintaining knowledge of reference materials and resources regarding career opportunities to ensure students are well informed about available options and skills required.

Visits colleges and secondary schools in the lower mainland to provide detailed academic information to prospective students, their parents and educational counselors.

Conducts presentations for orientation of new students and group advising sessions.

Answers correspondence received in writing or electronically related to the services offered by the office.

**Responsibilities related to administration of the office (20%)**

Updates and contributes to the writing of policy and procedure manuals.

Coordinates the group advising program, Blueprints, for incoming secondary students. Develops and coordinates advising programs for incoming and continuing students to meet student need. This includes liaison with various departments, coordinating staff, publicity, etc.

Designs and coordinates programs to encourage student retention and progress. This includes coordinating specialized programs for Burnaby, Surrey and Vancouver campuses, Academic Options Day, mailouts to designated student groups, etc. Student Services Academic Advising is responsible for the administration of the Senate Student Specialization paper and the Academic Advisor coordinates programs designed to meet the goals of the document.

Maintains the Degree Audit system.

Develops and maintains a network of contacts and resources in the University to keep up to date on changes relating to all academic programs and to appropriately refer students.

Coordinates Student Services Academic Advising visits to colleges and secondary schools in the lower mainland, in conjunction with the Student Recruitment Office, to provide detailed academic information to prospective students, their parents and educational counselors.

Coordinates the Student Services Academic Advising’s Resource Library. The library maintains information for students on: professional and graduate programs and their admission requirements, graduate and professional school entrance tests, calendar and program information for all universities and colleges in Canada and many in the US.

Works on projects as assigned by the supervisor or the Director.

Answers correspondence related to the services offered by the office.

**Responsibilities related to personnel administration (10%)**

Responsible for the hiring, training and performance evaluation of the part-time Student Advisors. This responsibility is rotated annually between all Academic Advisor positions within the department.

Responsible for the scheduling and coordinating of the Student Advisors including planning the advising schedule, research projects, training workshops and group advising schedule.

**D. DECISION MAKING**

i) Give some typical examples of the most important decisions the incumbent is expected to make in carrying out the duties and responsibilities of the position. To what extent can the incumbent rely on established policies or advice from others in making these decisions?

- The Advisor makes advising decisions requiring a thorough understanding of the academic policies, regulations and how they are applied throughout the University. Sound judgment must be exercised with respect to any decision which may later result in appeal to a higher level of authority and/or adjudication.
The incumbent is required to make logical, accurate and diplomatic decisions. Decisions require sound judgment and often call for significant amount of interpretation. Interactions with students may involve sensitive personal issues and may encompass regulations of administrative and academic departments outside Academic Advising.

University policy must be applied consistently and equitably. Decisions are binding on the University and must be seen to be consistent with other decisions and policies of the University.

The incumbent is often required to make rudimentary assessments of students’ emotional state. Certain cases will require referral to Health and Counselling Services, and Career Services.

The incumbent hires, evaluates and motivates Student Advisors for successful performance of their duties and responsibilities, ensures the performance of individual advisors satisfies required standards, takes appropriate measures to correct deficiencies including termination of employment of an employee if required. With the exception of consulting with the supervisor and/or Director when termination of an employee is being considered, the incumbent makes the hiring decisions for the Student Advisors.

**ii) Give some examples of the types of decisions the incumbent would refer to his/her supervisor.**

- Those decisions which may likely lead to some contact with upper levels of administration at the University because of dissatisfaction by the recipient of the decision.
- Situations that require consultation with more senior levels of administration in the department because of the impact on the operations of other sections.
- Appeals from students for reconsideration.

### E. SUPERVISION EXERCISED

| Number of continuing employees reporting directly to the position: | 0 |
| Total number of continuing employees for whom the position has direct responsibility: | 0 |

**Note:** Supervises temporary staff as required.

### F. SUPERVISION RECEIVED

Works under supervision of the supervisor. Minimal supervision is received on a daily basis. Goals and objectives are set by the supervisor in consultation with incumbent. Performance is measured against stated goals and objectives.

### G. UNUSUAL WORKING CONDITIONS

The incumbent must be prepared for a variety of circumstances to occur from time to time as a result of the personal interviews conducted with students. Sensitive situations call for the use of diplomacy, tact, sensitivity and firmness in the delivery of information and explanations to sometimes disgruntled or distraught students. In servicing the patrons of the office, the interests of the University must be considered with particular emphasis on providing the correct service to avoid the possibility of legal action against the University.

The integration of services provided by Academic Advising and Financial Assistance requires the incumbent to have expertise in both of these areas.

From time to time, the incumbent is required to explain University policies unfavorable to students, as well as explain decisions resulting from the application of University regulations and from committee decisions.

Travel, mostly within the lower mainland, in fall, winter and spring to give presentations to or conduct interviews with prospective students.

Incumbent will be required to travel between and work at the Burnaby, Surrey, and Vancouver campuses.

Incumbent will be required to work flexible hours, including evenings and weekends.

Incumbent may be required to work from home.

Incumbent may be required to work until 18:30 in the absence of the Academic Advisor-Evening.
H. ENTRANCE QUALIFICATIONS

Undergraduate degree and three years of related experience which includes staff supervision and training or an acceptable combination of education, training and experience.

Excellent knowledge of post-secondary regulations and academic requirements.

Excellent analytical and problem solving skills and demonstrated attention to detail.

Ability to exercise mature judgment and initiative.

Good knowledge of the administration of student financial assistance.

Excellent interpersonal and verbal communication skills.

Excellent organizational skills and written communication skills.

Good knowledge with on-line modes of communication and learning.

Ability to arrange transportation to various work locations.