Faculty Advisor Handbook

Office of the Provost
Updated August 2025

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Introduction

As faculty at New College, we are guided by the notion that "the best education demands a joint search for learning by exciting teachers and able students" and that "student progress should be based on demonstrated competence and real mastery, not merely the accumulation of credits and grades." Such founding educational principles led to the establishment of the contract system. This system places importance on the relationship between advisor and advisee. Students make choices in dialogue with faculty mentors, who support students in their navigation of the New College experience.

The challenges of advising can be particularly daunting for new faculty. This guide attempts to provide support to those new to the process. Although each student may follow a different path to achieve their educational goals, every student new to New College moves through similar experiences with their advisor: preparing the contract each semester, renegotiating the contract if necessary, and preparing for the ISP period in January. Transfer students not only face the challenges of adjusting to New College, but they must figure out how their previous college-level experiences fit with our system. This document will discuss issues relevant to all new students.

While this document might prove useful from time to time, it can only supplement working with colleagues who have experienced advising at New College firsthand. Talk with Chairs and members of your discipline about approaches they take to guiding students. You will ultimately develop your own style.

In addition, please remember that no advisor has all the answers. Knowing when to refer a student to someone else is part of being a good advisor.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out to Robert Zamsky (x4202, rzamsky@ncf.edu) or Manu Lopez (x4225, mlopezzafra@ncf.edu).

Faculty Resources

In addition to colleagues in other fields who are just an email or phone call away, faculty and students can turn to the following offices and individuals for resources:

The Provost's Office	
David Rohrbacher, Provost	4200
Manu Lopez, Associate Provost	4225
Robert Zamsky, Associate Provost	4202
Academic Division Chairs	
Ryan Buyssens, Humanities	4360
Sandra Gilchrist, Natural Sciences	4370
Barbara Hicks, Social Sciences	4380
Student Success/Student Affairs	
Sydney Sloan, Director of Student Success	4353
Joe Moore, Associate Director of Transition & Family Programs	4864
Testing Services	
Jennifer Meier, Director, Advocacy & Accessible Learning Center	4847
Health Services	4254
Registrar's Office	
Becky Noss, Registrar	4230
Center for Engagement and Opportunity	
Mitch Ruzek, Director	5002

How Faculty Members are Assigned First-Year and Transfer Students

The staff of the Provost's Office matches advisors with advisees based on the student's admissions profile and their conversations with the Academic Coaches prior to arriving on campus. Some students may express interests that make them a clear match for a particular professor. Some provide very little information. Others are interested in fields where the faculty are already carrying large numbers of continuing students, for example psychology and biology, and so are given an advisor outside of their area of interest but one who is teaching a course that the student is interested in taking. An effort is made to ensure that most first year students are assigned an advisor with whom they are expected to take a course. Advisors receive information on their new advisees from the Provost's Office prior to the first meeting during orientation week.

Overview of Academic Coaches

For Incoming Students
Academic Coaches are professional staff in the Office of New Student Programs who support the work of faculty advisors, particularly in support of incoming new students. Academic Coaches work with students from deposit confirmation through the end of their first academic year. In the semester prior to their start (summer for Fall admits, fall for Spring admits), Coaches assist with pre-enrollment tasks such as submitting transcripts, applying for housing, completing immunization forms, and registering for courses online. Although Academic Coaches do not sign contracts with students, they guide students through the registration process to help prepare them for their first meeting with their faculty advisor during Orientation Group Advising. Academic Coaching is available only to incoming first-year and transfer students. Students beyond their first year (2nd, 3rd, 4th year) are not assigned an Academic Coach.

During the Academic Year
Throughout the first year, Academic Coaches remain a key resource for both students and faculty advisors. For students, Coaches offer support with:

- Navigating college processes (e.g., forms, paperwork)
- Developing time management and study skills
- Understanding General Education requirements
- Connecting during MSPR
- Addressing other general concerns

While Academic Coaches do not make course recommendations, they can assist students with understanding and navigating the registration process. All academic advising beyond the first semester is handled by faculty advisors.

How Academic Coaches Support Faculty Advisors
Although Academic Coaches primarily focus on students, they can also be valuable partners to faculty advisors. If you have a first-year advisee who:

- Is struggling with time management or study skills
- Needs help completing college forms or processes
- Has questions related to General Education or graduation requirements

You are encouraged to connect them with their Academic Coach. Academic Coaches are well-versed in both General Education and graduation requirements and can provide individualized support for first-year students.

You can view a student's assigned Academic Coach via Faculty Self Service in the NCF Portal, or the Detailed Student Profile page in SES.

Academic Coaching Staff:
Shannon Brandt: Softball, Women's Soccer, Volleyball, Women's Volleyball, and Women's Swim/Dive sbrandt@ncf.edu. Ext: 4867
Deborah Hobson: Non-Athletes A-K, Men's and Women's Golf, Men's and Women's Cross Country dhobson@ncf.edu. Ext: 4865
Ceci Linton: Non-Athletes L-Z, Men's and Women's Tennis, Women's Lacrosse clinton@ncf.edu. Ext: 4863
Karen Stamp: Men's Basketball, Baseball, Men's Soccer, ESports, Men's Swim/Dive kstamp@ncf.edu. Ext: 4866

Graduation Requirements

Be sure to familiarize yourself with the graduation requirements as they apply to each entering class. Detailed descriptions can be found at https://www.ncf.edu/advising/degree-requirements/ . In general, the graduation requirements are:

- Seven (7) satisfactory semester academic contracts
- Three (3) satisfactory Independent Study Projects (ISPs)
- Satisfactory completion of 31 course units
- Satisfactory completion of the General Education Program. A detailed description can be found at https://catalog.ncf.edu/undergraduate/general-education/
    - The state of Florida requires all college students to complete 36 credit hours of approved general education coursework. This includes state-mandated core courses distributed across five content areas. Students at NCF must take one course (4 credits) from each of four content areas (Communications, Mathematics, Natural Science, Social Science/Civic Literacy) as well as a specially designed Humanities course on Homer's *Odyssey* (2 credits). NCF students round out their general education requirements by selecting an additional four offerings from our distinctive *Enduring Human Questions* (EHQ) seminars (16 credits) and participating in a unique 2 credit course, *Introduction to Techne*. In some cases one of the EHQ courses can be replaced by one of the courses listed in the category of Techne II.

Civic Literacy Requirement

Specifics of the state mandated Civic Literacy requirement depend upon the student's entering cohort.

	Students Included in Cohort	**Civic Literacy Competency Requirement**
Cohort 1	Students first entering the SUS or FCS prior to fall 2018	None
Cohort 2	Students first entering the SUS or FCS in fall 2018 – summer A 2021	Complete a course ***or*** exam
Cohort 3	Students first entering the SUS or FCS in summer B 2021 and thereafter	Complete ***both*** a course ***and exam***

A Civic Literacy Study Guide is available to help students prepare for the exam. It is available here and via both the library and the Provost's Office websites: https://libguides.ncf.edu/civic_literacy

Students in cohorts 2 and 3 satisfy the exam requirement by taking *either* AMH 2010, "American History Survey: Pre-Colonial to 1877," AMH 2020, "U. S. History Since 1877," or POL 2041, "American Government and Civics."

A fuller description of the Civic Literacy Requirement, including requirements for past cohorts, can be found here: https://www.ncf.edu/advising/civic-literacy-resources/.

Preparing the Contract for New First-Year and New Transfer Advisees

There are two steps to the registration process at NCF: on-line course selection, and contract submission.

Course Selection

Incoming students will make a provisional selection of courses in conversation with their academic coach. Those selections are not finalized until they are approved by the faculty advisor and agreed to on the student's contract for the semester.

Ongoing students can begin course selection when registration for the following semester is opened. In order to register for courses, students must receive the PIN from their faculty advisor, which is available under the "Self Service Faculty" Banner tile in the NCF Portal. A detailed description of how to access student PIN numbers is appended to this document.

Any selection of courses is contingent upon discussion with the faculty advisor and is not finalized until the semester's contract is submitted. The contract represents the totality of the student's work for the semester and the criteria necessary for earning a "satisfactory" contract certification. An annotated copy of the contract is appended to this document.

Academic Advising During Orientation Week

Advisors have two formal encounters with their new advisees during orientation week: the group meeting with first-year advisees on Wednesday morning, and the individual meetings on Friday after mini-classes.

First meeting (group):

The group meeting is the first time the students will interact with their faculty advisor. You want to introduce yourself and your approach to academic advising, and to be sure that your new advisees understand and are actively engaged in the registration and contract negotiation process. Some resources and objectives that can be helpful:

- A map of campus
- A mini-class schedule or links to the mini-class schedule
- Access to the Class Schedule
- You may also wish to distribute the syllabi for courses you are teaching that are open to first-year students. It is not required that an advisee take a class from his or her advisor, but many students find it useful since they get to know their advisor better when they also take a class with her or him.
- During this first meeting you should explain the structure and purpose of mini-classes, and what students learn from attending them. Emphasize that all mini-classes are open to all students, and that they will get the most useful information if they ask questions.
    - Good questions for students to ask during mini-classes:

- Are there any prerequisites or required courses that introduce basic skills necessary for more advanced work?
- Will the class size be limited?
- How will you determine which students can enroll?
- Is this a good class for a first-year student?

- Some other helpful advice to provide students at this time:

Explain that tutorials are rarely offered for first-year students. Stress the importance of building relationships with faculty in order to work with them *in the future* as contract and ISP advisors, and tutorial sponsors.

Encourage students to consider the balance of the kind of work they will do in each course. It can be helpful to have a mix of classes that focus on long papers and those that feature final exams.

Second meeting (individual)

By the Friday of orientation week students should have attended mini-classes and have mostly settled on the courses they want to take. They are also likely to have numerous questions. This is the time when you can begin using the contract as a template for conversation. Start by reminding your advisee about the reflection component of the contract, which must be completed before they submit their contract. When dealing with students who are reticent, or who aren't familiar with reflection, you may wish to focus a first conversation specifically on the reflection prompts. Focusing on the details of how their classes and other activities can contribute to their broader goals and interests may help to make the course choice and contract submission process more concrete.

Other issues:

Talk about the fact that students may not get into every class they wish to take. They need to think broadly about what interests them and have a back-up plan if their first choices are unavailable. It's a good idea for a student to attend more than 4 classes in the first week, until they know which classes are available to them.

Recognize that students may need to talk about homesickness, roommate problems, and other issues outside of a faculty member's expertise. If you feel uncomfortable, remember that a number of professional staff on campus can also support students with problems (See page 1-2 for a list of resources).

Contract Negotiation and Signing:

It is useful to schedule one meeting during the first week of classes after students have had a chance to attend classes, to finalize the details of the contract. Your advisee will initiate the Contract. Before you sign the Contract, allow the student an opportunity to articulate his or her goals. Make sure that the criteria for satisfying the contract have been established.

Encourage students to stay in touch through email and visits during office hours (explain these, as not all students will know what "office hours" are, or how they work).

For new students, be sure to meet with them once prior to fall break and once following the break.

Important Dates/Deadlines for Fall 2025:

Fall Classes Begin: Monday, August 18
Contract Submission Deadline: Friday, August 22

Reinstatement; Late Registration/Contract Submission: Final registration adjustments may be made via course add/drop form; may have financial aid implications. Last day for 100% tuition and fees refund is August 29. Contract renegotiations permitted only to adjust criteria due to the addition of any Mod II courses.
Fall Break: October 8-13
ISP Description Forms Due: Friday, November 14
Thanksgiving Break: November 27-28
Fall Classes End: December 5
Final Exam Week: December 8-12
Hurricane Make-up Days (if necessary): December 11-12
Course Designation and Evaluation Deadline: Wednesday, December 17
Contract Certification and Evaluation Deadline: December 18

Certification of the Contract

One measure of a student's progress toward graduation is the number of satisfactorily completed contracts. A minimum of seven contracts are required for graduation from New College.

In order to document the status of each individual contract, the faculty sponsor (or advisor—the terms are interchangeable) will read the evaluations their advisee receives for each academic activity, and complete the online contract certification.

Contracts are certified by faculty advisors at the end of the semester, after all narrative evaluations for academic activities (classes, tutorials, IRP's) have been completed. Contract certifications are entered into the SES (Student Evaluation System) and are due according to the timelines listed in the Academic Calendar. For more information about contract certification, see 6.5.4 of the *Faculty Handbook.*

The Student Evaluation System (SES) contract certification form includes a space for a short narrative that describes the student's work for that semester and suggests directions for improvement or future study, in addition to the designation of "Satisfactory," "Unsatisfactory," or "Incomplete," depending on whether or not the certification criteria have been met.

Preparing for the ISP Project

The ISP is designed to provide students an opportunity to pursue independent research as preparation for work on the thesis. It is also an opportunity for students to study abroad, do an internship, participate in a production, publish a magazine, or do any other of a wide range of engaging activities.

The Provost's Office provides an ISP handbook which is updated every year and distributed in October. This book lists faculty interests in ISPs, types of ISPs that faculty will sponsor outside of their specific disciplines, and also contains a section describing group ISPs designed by faculty with first-year students in mind.

The Provost's Office also hosts an ISP workshop in the fall semeseter, at which students discuss successful ISPs, faculty talk about group ISPs they will offer, and faculty discuss the planning that contributes to a positive ISP experience.

First-year students are required to spend their first ISP on campus unless they receive special permission from the Office of the Provost. In order to request permission, the student needs to submit a written proposal and the advisor should provide a letter of support in advance of the December 1st deadline for submitting ISP forms to the Registrar's Office. Transfer students are exempt from this rule.

Advising and Supporting Student-Athletes

As New College recently launched its intercollegiate athletics program, faculty play a key role in supporting the academic success of our student-athletes — the **Mighty Banyans**. Athletics is new to our campus: the program began in AY 2023–24, and 2024–25 marked our first year competing under the NAIA. Because we are building this program from the ground up, our student-athletes and coaches face unique logistical and scheduling challenges.

At present, we do not have on-campus fields or facilities for many sports, which means our athletes often commute to off-site locations for practice and competition. We have made it clear to Athletics that students should not miss class for practice, but this is not always possible. Practices should be scheduled primarily before 9:00 AM and after 4:00 or 5:00 PM, though some teams still struggle to secure consistent facility space and may need flexibility.

NAIA Eligibility Requirements

Student-athletes must meet certain academic thresholds to maintain eligibility:

- Enroll in at least **12 credit hours per semester**
- Complete **24 credit hours per academic year**

Falling below these minimums can affect their ability to compete, so it's important to be mindful of this when advising on course load and academic progress.

Game Schedules and Class Attendance

At the start of each semester, student-athletes are instructed to bring a copy of their **game and travel schedule** for faculty to review and sign (the **travel letter**). This is not just a formality — it's an opportunity to have a proactive conversation about:

- How many classes can be missed due to competition (we do not have a college-wide policy, but **missing up to 3 class sessions** is generally reasonable; anything beyond that is at your discretion).
- Expectations for how students should handle missed work, including whether assignments, quizzes, or exams must be completed **before or after** the absence.

Setting these expectations early helps avoid confusion and supports both accountability and academic integrity.

Support and Contact Points

If you encounter any concerns — whether about attendance, academic progress, or eligibility — please reach out.

- **Joe Reynolds (joreynolds@ncf.edu)**, Athletics Compliance Officer, can assist with eligibility-related matters.
- **Manuel Lopez (mlopezzafra@ncf.edu)**, Associate Provost and Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR), is also available to support you in navigating any academic issues that involve student-athletes.

Common First-Year Problems that Affect Academic Performance

The following list includes problems that a first-year student might encounter and communicate to an advisor. Suggested solutions are also included.

- Not knowing how to study: Note taking skills, study skills are weak, the student has never faced the challenges that New College presents. *An advisor may be able to address these problems and suggest that the student ask the instructors in their other classes for tips on study skills. Student Success staff and Writing Program staff also provide sessions on study skills.*

- Lack of preparation: poor writing skills, poor quantitative skills. *The student should visit the Writing Resource Center and/or the Academic Resource Center and the Office of Student Success.*

- Not understanding feedback without grades, no sense of how well or poorly they are doing. *The contract sponsor can encourage the student to ask their instructors for feedback, especially if there are areas where their performance needs to improve.*
- Health crises. *Contact the Counseling and Wellness Center or the Office of Student Success & Advocacy.*
- No social network or, conversely, too much socializing. *Contact the Student Support Team through the SST app on the myNCF Gateway.*
- Working at a job too many hours per week. *Contact the Student Support Team.*
- Missing classes and deadlines, poor time management skills. *Contact the Student Support Team.*
- Homesickness, family problems, lack of family support (financial, cultural). Contact the *Student Support Team and Financial Aid.*
- Residence Hall life disrupts academic work. *The student should contact the Associate Dean of Students. The College rule is: two on-campus complaints about loud music end the social event. The student, however, has to register a complaint. If the person is reluctant to call in a complaint for social reasons, they should make an appointment to meet the Associate Dean of Students and they will address the issue in residence halls.*

Testing Services

New College of Florida (NCF) provides Testing Services that support a wide range of exams for students. Course exams are free to NCF students, and a variety of testing options are also available to meet academic needs, including the Civic Literacy Exam. To learn more or to schedule a test, visit the NCF Testing Services webpage. The Testing Center is located in the Hamilton Classrooms, room HLC 5. For assistance, contact the Testing Center at testingcenter@ncf.edu or call 941-487-4844.

Frequently-Asked Questions

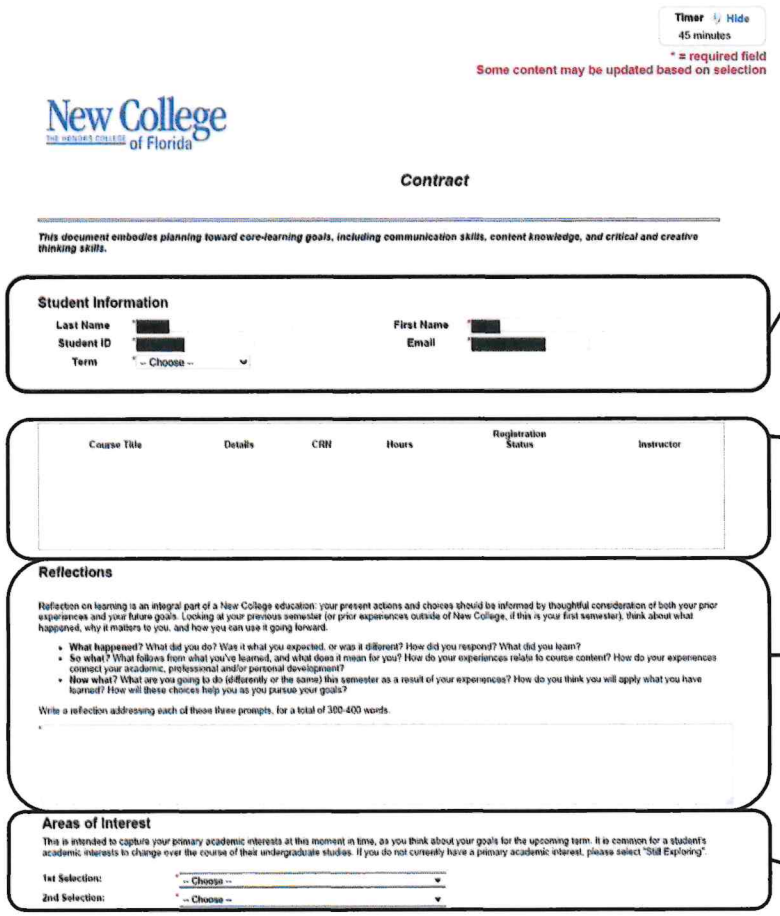
How does a student obtain a new advisor?
When a faculty member signs a contract, they become the advisor to the student. It is not possible for a student to change advisors during a term. They must wait until the next contract. The new contract, signed by a new advisor, serves as official notification to the Registrar that the student has changed advisors. In urgent or unusual circumstances, the student and/or advisor should reach out to the Office of the Provost.

Can a student change advisors between the fall semester and the January ISP period?
No. The faculty contract sponsor during the semester must also sign the "academic sponsor" line of the ISP Description Form for the ISP period that follows the contract, unless a waiver to this rule is petitioned through the Office of the Provost. You might reassure advisees that changing advisors is common, and faculty do not take it personally, but that it is common courtesy to send a former advisor an email heads-up when switching to a new advisor at the beginning of a new term.

What if I am out of town without internet access near a deadline for students to turn in a form that needs my signature?
In cases when the advisor is unavailable, the Division Chair of the contract sponsor may sign student forms. The Provost's Office may also sign forms.

Can a student complete more than the three required ISPs?
If a student pays for a fourth ISP, he or she may register for it.

If a student "unsats" a contract, does he or she lose "credit" for the classes completed satisfactorily as well as the contract?
No. All classes and academic activities that receive a satisfactory evaluation are recorded on the student's official New College of Florida transcript regardless of the success or failure of the contract.



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Some content may be updated based on selection

New College of Florida

Contract

This document embodies planning toward core-learning goals, including communication skills, content knowledge, and critical and creative thinking skills.

Student Information

Last Name * [redacted] First Name * [redacted]
Student ID * [redacted] Email * [redacted]
Term * -- Choose --

Course Title	Details	CRN	Hours	Registration Status	Instructor

Reflections

Reflection on learning is an integral part of a New College education: your present actions and choices should be informed by thoughtful consideration of both your prior experiences and your future goals. Looking at your previous semester (or prior experiences outside of New College, if this is your first semester), think about what happened, why it matters to you, and how you can use it going forward.

- **What happened?** What did you do? Was it what you expected, or was it different? How did you respond? What did you learn?
- **So what?** What follows from what you've learned, and what does it mean for you? How do your experiences relate to course content? How do your experiences connect your academic, professional and/or personal development?
- **Now what?** What are you going to do (differently or the same) this semester as a result of your experiences? How do you think you will apply what you have learned? How will these choices help you as you pursue your goals?

Write a reflection addressing each of these three prompts, for a total of 300-400 words.

*

Areas of Interest

This is intended to capture your primary academic interests at this moment in time, as you think about your goals for the upcoming term. It is common for a student's academic interests to change over the course of their undergraduate studies. If you do not currently have a primary academic interest, please select "Still Exploring".

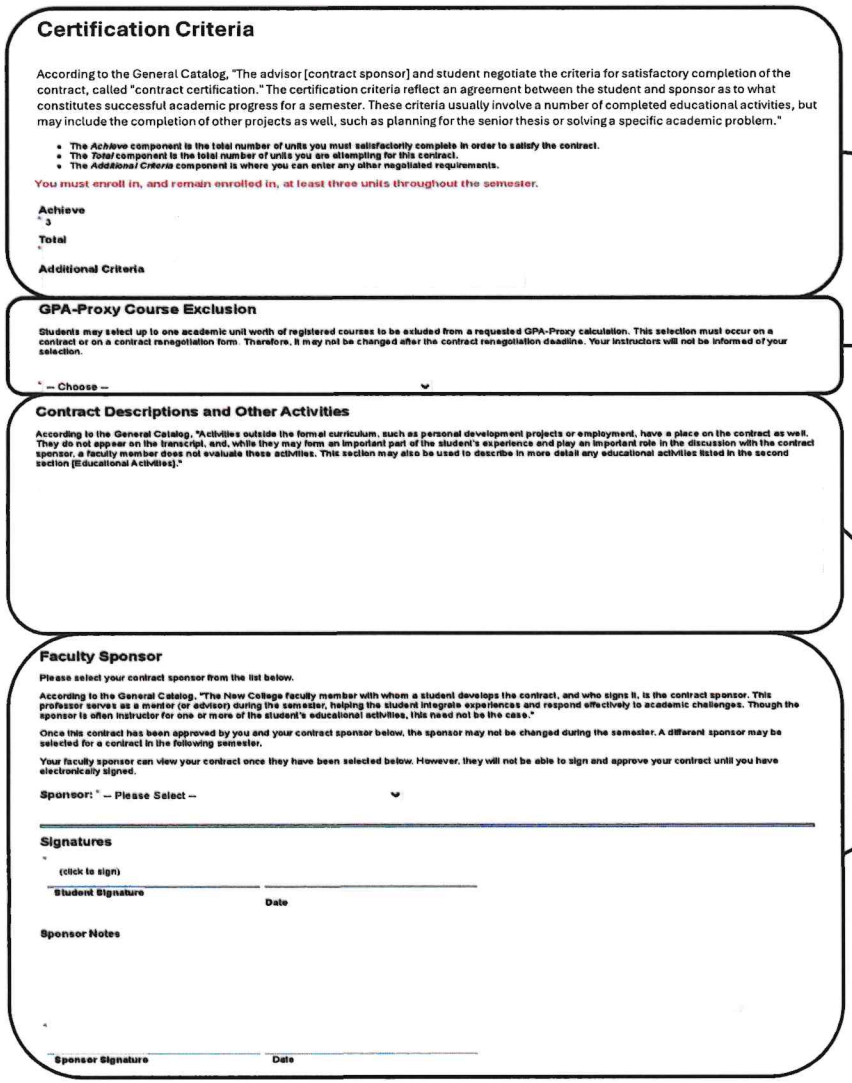
1st Selection: * -- Choose --
2nd Selection: * -- Choose --

This section is auto-populated when the student opens the contract.

Courses that a student has selected in the online registration system will appear in this section. These course selections are provisional until they are approved by the faculty contract sponsor. Be sure to review all courses and tutorials listed here to make sure they are consistent with what has been decided in advising discussions. Tutorials are added by the student using the "Tutorial Proposal Form," as described above.

The "Reflections" section represents an important aspect of the advising conversations students are having with their contract sponsors. The prompts are designed to help students step back from their previous semester, assess it holistically, and think about how that experience feeds into what they do next. The students' reflections are not considered in the evaluation of the contract.

Students will indicate up to two academic fields in which they are especially interested. These choices do not commit the student to a field of study, but they do provide a useful running record of the students' interests and can help the college determine areas of student demand.



This box indicates the criteria agreed to by the student and the contract sponsor. As a minimum, students must maintain enrollment in at least three units (courses or tutorials) and earn satisfactory evaluations in at least three units. "Additional Criteria" can include achievement levels in particular courses or other mutually agreed upon objectives.

Students may select one unit (course or tutorial) to be evaluated on a pass/fail basis each semester. They choose only one, and the selection must be made via either the original contract or a contract renegotiation form prior to the drop/add deadline.

As with the "Reflections" section, this portion of the contract is not a basis of evaluation. Rather, it is a record of advising conversations and provides the student and the advisor for a more complete picture of the student's overall activities. Students might use this box to record how many hours they work outside of school, cocurricular activities, organizations, other time commitments or broader goals and objectives for the semester.

The student will select their contract sponsor from the drop-down menu. Once you have agreed to the terms of the contract, sign and submit. Although courses cannot be added/dropped after the add/drop deadline, the terms of the contract can be changed until the end of the second week of November.