

Academic Advice

Principles and Guidelines

Category:	Academic
Last Modified:	October 2012
Review Date:	October 2014
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Introduction:

Academic advice refers specifically to advice about programmes of study and advice about academic regulations and policies. Accurate and timely academic advice is critical to the retention and success of students and to ensuring the timely completion of qualifications. It is also critical to the effectiveness of academic staff. Inaccurate advice or misunderstood advice can lead to problems for students and frustration for staff; it may become grounds for appeals and hardship applications and, in extreme cases, it can provide grounds for litigation.

Academic advice might be given by different staff, at different points in a student's career, and for different purposes. This policy is intended to ensure that wherever possible academic advice related to university regulations and policies is given by those with the relevant expert knowledge.

Definitions:

Academic "advice" implies a recommendation of how a student should act. Advice provides information, but information on its own is not necessarily advice per se.

For the purposes of this policy, "Academic" advice refers to advice about any matter pertaining to the programme of study of an individual student or class of students which is governed by University policies and regulations, including:

- Admission regulations
- General Course and Examination Regulations
- Award regulations
- Course schedules and prescriptions

- Academic policies approved by the Academic Administration Committee, Learning and Teaching Committee, Faculties, Boards of Studies or Academic Board (including such matters as academic appeals; assessment requirements; conduct of examinations, etc)
- Thesis regulations and guidelines (including Intellectual Property policies)
- Scholarships regulations and regulations for prizes.

Official advice is given by a member of staff in their official capacity, e.g., admission advice by the Admissions and Enrolments Manager.

This policy does not include advice about academic career planning, except where this is defined by programme regulations.

“Academic” advice does not include advice relating to fees (except where these are a component of an academic regulation or policy), Studylink entitlements, enrolment (except related to admission requirements), student services and student support, discipline (except where this relates to academic dishonesty), computer use, library use or parking, etc.

Principles and Guidelines:

1. Principles for Academic Advising

- Advice must be ethical, impartial, timely, up-to-date and accurate.
- Wherever practical, records should be kept of advice given to students who are or have been enrolled, documenting the nature of the advice, to whom, by whom and on what date.
- Where possible, students should receive or have access to a copy of any record of advice given.
- Advice should be given directly to the student, not through an intermediary. Advice given to or through a third party is not official University advice.
- The location and identification of the appropriate staff for providing different types of academic advice must be well publicised, to students and to staff.
- Advice should be given only by those with “expert knowledge” about the issue; advice should be limited to the area of expertise of the adviser.
- Academic advice should be available throughout the year, so that it is accessible to students and staff at the time that they need it. It may be provided in person, by telephone, e-mail, fax or by letter.
- There must be clear referral routes to University staff with “expert knowledge” about particular issues, and information about where such staff are located.
- Staff giving advice must keep up-to-date in their knowledge of the academic policies and regulations relevant to the advice they offer; training in academic advising will be provided where appropriate.
- The Academic Quality Assurance Unit and Academic Managers must communicate all changes to University-wide or faculty regulations and policies to those who use these policies and regulations as a basis for academic advice.
- Where changes are proposed that might have an impact on academic policies or regulations (e.g. fee changes), the staff who use the academic policies and regulations must be consulted.

- Responsibility for quality assurance of academic advice rests with the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic). Oversight is delegated to the Manager, Academic Quality Assurance Unit for institutional regulations and policies, including admissions; to the Admissions and Enrolment Manager for admissions advice, to the Student Liaison Manager for pre-entry advice; to relevant Academic Managers for programme advice pertaining to their faculties and to professional degree requirements (e.g. registration); to Heads of Departments/Schools for advice related to courses within their programmes and to “in-house” requirements (e.g. for assessment).

2. Student Responsibilities

- Students have a responsibility to be familiar with the regulations governing the award(s) for which they are enrolled, and the general academic regulations of the University.
- Students should be proactive in seeking advice before making an academic decision (e.g. before enrolment).
- Students should retain a dated record of any academic advice received and by whom it was given.
- Students should be aware that advice given to a third party or received via a third party is not official University advice; official University advice is given directly to the student.
- If a student receives academic advice and acts against that advice then the student is responsible for the consequences of that action.
- If a student fails to disclose relevant information to an advisor which might have an impact on the advice received then that student will bear the consequences of any inappropriate advice.

3. Appeals

Where a student is disadvantaged as a consequence of acting on academic advice taken in good faith, the student may appeal under GCER Regulation O. In such instances all records of academic advice which has been given must be made available to the person or committee hearing the appeal.

4. Guidelines for Academic Advising

Academic advice might be sought by staff, students, potential students, staff from other institutions, or members of the public. The policy applies to all of these groups. The main emphasis, however, is on advice to students or advice to other staff about specific students.

The following guidelines are intended to assist staff in establishing good practice in the provision of academic advice.

4.1 Referral of Enquiries

It is accepted that students or members of the public might approach any staff member with a query relating to an academic matter. However, academic advice is *official advice* only when given directly to the student to whom it pertains.

UCSA, the Contact Centre, Student Services and International and Communications and Development are identified as likely contact points for requests for academic information

regarding matters which are not within their area of expertise. In these instances referrals must be given to appropriate staff who have authority to advise on academic matters.

All University departments and schools, College offices and UCSA will be provided (by the Academic Quality Assurance Unit) with a list of “areas of expertise” for academic advice. This list will be updated when any positions change, will be reviewed annually and should be circulated widely within the University (see Appendix 1).

4.2 Who Gives Official Advice

In accordance with the principle that official advice should be given by those who have “expert knowledge” in the relevant area, various key adviser roles might be identified. A single-page reference list of Key Advisers will be made available for all staff (see Appendix 1).

Note that within the GCER and general academic policy provisions there are sometimes staff with specified responsibilities – for example, for advice about admission *ad eundem*; appeals; assessment or examinations policy; credit transfer; student exchanges. In these cases referrals should be made as appropriate. Academic Managers and the Academic Quality Assurance Unit will hold current lists of those who can assist in specific areas.

4.3 Recording of Advice

Wherever practical, a record should be made of advice given, or referrals made, including the date of the advice or referral and by whom it was given. (Exceptions might be advice given in public situations such as Careers Expos or in schools).

Note: This policy differentiates “advice”, i.e. a recommendation on action, from mere information.

Where advice is given to a student, the record might be made directly on the student’s record on the Student Management System. If it is not possible to make such a record directly, the record should be made in written form and a copy provided to the student. One copy should be kept by the advisor. Copies of advice given by email should also be retained.

Those engaged in giving (academic) advice need to comply with any minimum or maximum periods of retention of records of that advice required by law or policy.

4.4 International Students

The University has specific responsibilities concerning international students, including an obligation to satisfy the Code of Practice for Pastoral Care of International Students. In particular, the Code requires the institution to ensure that international students are maintaining their course requirements and to follow up in the event that a student ceases attendance before course completion.

- If an international student is advised to withdraw from a course, or to change a course, then the student must also be referred to Student Support to discuss any potential visa implications. Student Services and International is responsible for advising students that they comply with their visa conditions with respect to their courses and EFTS requirements.
- Where possible, Student Services and International should also be advised of any international student identified as failing to complete assessment or as being at risk of failure, so that any remedial or pastoral issues can be addressed. Such reports should be made by the Head of Programme or by the College Academic Manager.

4.5 Communication of Key Advisor Roles and Advice Policies

- The Academic Quality Assurance Unit and Academic Managers will be responsible for identifying for staff and students the current incumbents of key academic advisor roles.
- The Academic Quality Assurance Unit, Liaison Team Leader, and Academic Managers will be responsible for advising staff, students and prospective students of the availability of academic advice, particularly at times of the year when students are most likely to require it.
- The Academic Quality Assurance Unit in conjunction with Academic Managers will hold periodic training workshops on academic advising for academic staff and for those likely to be used as contact points.
- The UCSA Welfare and Advocacy Team, is a key contact for students and may also advise students of the availability of academic advice.

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Key Advisors

Version Control Table		
Action	Approval Body	Date Amended
Full Review	Chair, Academic Board	22 July 2009
Full Review	Chair, Academic Board	8 October 2012

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Appendix 1

Issue	Key Advisors
Admission and first year entry.	Liaison staff; Manager, Academic Quality Assurance Unit.
General information about programmes.	Liaison staff, Academic Managers, Student Advisors and College Marketing and Outreach Coordinators; Heads of Departments/Schools; Programme Convenors.
Specific information about individual programmes and courses (including curriculum content; “in-house” policies on academic matters, such as assessment or practical requirements).	Heads of Departments/Schools; Academic staff who teach those courses; Programme Convenors.
Information about awards (degrees, and certificates and diplomas; including information about credit transfer, entry to professional programmes, completion requirements and professional accreditation or registration requirements).	Faculty Deans or Associate Deans and Academic Managers or Student Advisers who have oversight of those awards.
Information related to General Course and Examination Regulations, credit transfer and general academic policies.	Deans or Associate Deans; Academic Managers; Manager, Academic Quality Assurance Unit.
Information about Master’s thesis study.	Faculty Deans or Associate Deans; Dean of Postgraduate Research; Department/School Postgraduate Coordinators.
Information about doctoral thesis study (including supervision, intellectual property issues; examination).	Dean of Postgraduate Research; Chair, Postgraduate Committee; Department/School Postgraduate Coordinators.
Information about university or national scholarships.	Dean of Postgraduate Research; Manager, Records, Examinations, Graduation and Scholarships; Liaison staff (for undergraduate scholarships).
Information about Faculty/College scholarships.	Faculty Deans or Associate Deans; Academic Managers; Pro-Vice-Chancellors; Heads of Departments/Schools or their delegates; Department/School Postgraduate Coordinators; Liaison staff (for undergraduate scholarships).
Information about Department/School scholarships.	Head of Department/School or their delegates; Department/School Postgraduate Coordinators; Liaison staff (for undergraduate scholarships).
Information about eligibility to graduate.	Manager, Records, Examinations, Graduation and Scholarships; Academic Managers; Student Advisors; Deans.

For specific issues not itemised above, contact an Academic Manager or the Manager, Academic Quality Assurance Unit for referral advice.