

## Academic Advice Principles and Guidelines

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<b>Approval Authority</b>	Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Academic Registrar, Head of Academic Services Group – Office of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

### 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, 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 regulations and policies, including:

- [University Regulations \(University Regulations website\)](#)

- [Academic policies \(University Policy Library website\)](#) (including such matters as academic appeals; assessment requirements; conduct of examinations; intellectual property policy, etc.)
- Course schedules and prescriptions
- Scholarships regulations and regulations for prizes.
- It 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.

**Official advice** - given by a member of staff in their official capacity, e.g. admission advice given by the Student Services Innovation Manager.

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

## Principles

### 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. Ideally such notes should be captured in the Student Management System, including the name or role of the advisor and date of the meeting or advice given.
- 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, email, 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 Services Group and the deans must communicate all changes to University-wide or College-level 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 Academic Registrar for institutional regulations and policies, including admissions; to the Student Services Innovation Manager for admissions advice; to the Manager of the Liaison Service for pre-entry advice; to the relevant deans and their delegates for advice on qualifications in their College, including professional 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).

### **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.

### **Appeals**

Where a student is disadvantaged as a consequence of acting on academic advice taken in good faith, the student may appeal under the [Academic Appeals and Grievance Regulations \(University Regulations website\)](#). In such instances all records of academic advice which has been given must be made available to the person or committee hearing the appeal.

### **Guidelines for Academic Advising**

Academic advice might be sought by staff, students, potential students, staff from other institutions, or members of the public. This document 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.

## 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.

The University of Canterbury Students' Association (UCSA), the Contact Centre, Student Services, Student Support, the International Relationships Office, and Communications and Engagement 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.

The Academic Services Group will provide all University departments and schools, College offices and the UCSA 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](#) ).

## 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](#)).

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

## 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 document 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 (SMS) including the name or role of the advisor and date of the meeting or advice given. 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. For further information, staff should refer to the [Records Management Policy \(PDF, 183KB\)](#)

#### **4. International Students**

The University has specific responsibilities concerning international students, including an obligation to satisfy the [Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students \(NZQA website\)](#) (the Code).

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 are responsible for advising students that they comply with their visa conditions with respect to their courses and workload requirements.
- Where possible, Student Services 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 relevant dean or their delegate.

#### **5. Communication of Key Advisor Roles and Advice Policies**

- The Academic Registrar and the deans and their delegates will be responsible for identifying for staff and students the current incumbents of key academic advisor roles.
- The Academic Registrar, the Student Services Innovation Manager, the Manager of the Liaison Service, and the deans and their delegates 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 Services Group, in conjunction with the deans and their delegates, will hold periodic training workshops on academic advising for academic staff and for those likely to be used as contact points.
- The UCSA's Welfare and Advocacy Team, is a key contact for students and may also advise students of the availability of academic advice.

## **Related Documents and Information**

**UC Regulations**

- [Academic Appeals and Grievance Regulations \(University Regulations website\)](#)
- [Qualification Regulations \(University Regulations website\)](#)

**UC Policy Library**

- [Records Management Policy \(PDF, 183KB\)](#)

**External**

- [Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students \(NZQA website\)](#)

**UC website and Intranet**

- [University Regulations \(University Regulations website\)](#)
- [UC Policy Library \(University Policy Library website\)](#)

**Appendix**

- [Appendix – Key Advisors](#)

<b>Document History and Version Control Table</b>			
<b>Version</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Approval Authority</b>	<b>Action Date</b>
<i>For document history and versioning prior to 2013 contact <a href="mailto:ucpolicy@canterbury.ac.nz">ucpolicy@canterbury.ac.nz</a></i>			
1.00	Conversion into new document format	Policy Unit	Sep 2013
1.01	AVC(A) changed to DVC(A) in line with current title changes.	Policy Unit	Oct 2013
1.02	A/A changed from Chair, Academic Board to DVC(A&I).	Policy Unit	Mar 2014
1.03	Hyperlinks updated	Policy Unit	Jun 2014
2.00	General formatting	Policy Unit	Jun 2014
2.01	Review date pushed out	Policy Unit	Sep 2014
3.00	Scheduled review by Contact Officer.	Policy Unit	Apr 2015
3.01	Contact Officer details updated.	Policy Unit	Jun 2015
3.02	'Faculty' references removed to reflect College-Faculty merger; scheduled review date moved to June 2017 to align with regulations review.	DVC(A)	Jun 2016
4.00	Scheduled review, minor changes to reflect revised Regulations	AVC(A)	April 2018

## Appendix

Issue	Key Advisors
Admission and first year entry.	Liaison staff; Student Services Innovation Manager; Academic Registrar.
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).	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; Academic Registrar.
Information about Master’s thesis study.	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; Department/School Postgraduate Coordinators.
Information about university or national scholarships.	Dean of Postgraduate Research; Student Services Innovation Manager; Liaison staff (for undergraduate scholarships).
Information about College scholarships.	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.	Senior Officer, Records, Examinations, Graduation and Scholarships; Academic Managers; Student Advisors; Deans; Academic Registrar.

**For specific issues not itemised above, contact an Academic Manager or the Head, Academic Services Group for referral advice.**