

Student Advising Policy

Definitions: (NB. These are working definitions that may be changed to ensure consistency with terminology employed in the Student System).

Academic Advisers: academic staff with designated responsibility for decisions relating to judgements on academic policy and discipline-specific matters.

Graduate Attributes: a set of five attributes engendered by academic and enrichment opportunities that all students have the opportunity to acquire

Graduate Schools: designated offices where discipline-based cohorts of predominantly graduate coursework students can obtain advice and support

Student Adviser Network: a monthly professional development opportunity for Student Advisers organised by the Student Advice Program

Specialist Advisers: senior professional staff based in Student Centres and Graduate Schools with management and discretionary powers relating to course and student administration.

Student Advice Program: a suite of professional development programs offered by the Vice Principal and Academic Registrar's unit for staff engaged in providing advice to students

Student Advisers: professional staff based in Student Centres and Graduate Schools with primary responsibility for advising students with respect to enrolments, majors, enrichment opportunities and administrative matters.

Student Centres: designated offices where discipline-based cohorts of predominantly undergraduate students can obtain advice and support

Student System: the new enrolment management system which will replace Merlin, currently under development in Student Management Services

International benchmarks for Student Advising

According to UNESCO, Student Advising (referred to as “academic advising”) fulfils the following purposes:

1. To assist students in developing educational plans that are consistent with their life goals.
2. To provide students with accurate information about academic progression and degree requirements.
3. To assist students in understanding academic policies and procedures.
4. To help students access campus resources that will enhance their ability to be academically successful.
5. To assist students in overcoming educational and personal problems.
6. To identify systemic and personal conditions that may impede student academic achievement and developing appropriate interventions.
7. To review and use available data about students academic and educational needs, performance, aspirations and problems.
8. To increase student retention by providing a personal contact that students often need and request, thereby connecting them to the institution.

In addition, the UNESCO document identifies the following activities as critical elements of Student Advising:

1. Assisting students with decision-making and career direction.
 2. Helping students understand and comply with institutional requirements.
 3. Providing clear and accurate information regarding institutional policies, procedures and programmes.
 4. Assisting students in the selection of courses and other educational experiences (e.g. internships, study abroad).
 5. Referring students to appropriate resources, on and off campus.
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6. Evaluating student progress towards established goals.
7. Collecting and distributing data regarding student needs, preferences and performance for use in refining or revising institutional/agency decisions, policies and procedures.
8. Interpreting various interest/ability inventories that provide students with information related to their career choices.¹
9. Utilizing a variety of supplemental systems such as online computer programmes to deliver advising information.

The University of Melbourne is supportive of the UNESCO recommendations and of enabling best practice in student advisory services through provision of the following:

- **Policy:** a University-wide Student Advising policy which outlines student-centric philosophy and practice and that clearly sets out the aims of the Student Advice Program.
- **Structure:** a tiered organisational model for the delivery of effective advising including Enquiries Officers, Student Advisers, Specialist Advisers, and Academic Advisers.
- **Support:** appropriate information, resources, and electronic systems to work effectively with students such as the Student Advising website, the monthly Student Adviser Network and the new Student System.
- **Professional development:** comprehensive training and ongoing programs for all student-facing staff delivered by the Student Advice Program.
- **Delivery:** cohort-specific strategies to accommodate the particular advising needs of each Student Centre and Graduate School, as determined by Student Centre and Graduate School Managers, supported by the Vice Principal and Academic Registrar in her capacity as Student Centre Coordinator.
- **Student life cycle:** encouraging all students at the University to consult with a Student Adviser at least once during the course of their studies.
- **Assessment and evaluation:** ongoing comprehensive assessment to measure the effectiveness of Student Advising, including student and staff satisfaction, followed by evaluation. The Student Advice Program provides bi-annual reports to the Academic Board via the Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Committee (TALQAC) in addition to the monitoring undertaken by the Melbourne Experience Advisory Group, led by the Provost.

¹ Student advising in relation to careers is broad in nature and refers to generally understood outcomes from particular disciplines and majors.

Statute: 11.2 Enrolment – General Provisions

Policy: All Coursework students, including students in complementary and Community Access Programs. Prospective students and Extension Program students are also notionally included.

This policy defines the goals and purposes of the University of Melbourne’s Student Advising program.

It is based on the Student Centre model set out by the Melbourne Student Services Model as defined by Boston Consulting in June 2007 available at http://growingesteem.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/86650/UniPlan2008.pdf . It also consolidates the principles outlined in the Melbourne Student Advice Model paper compiled by the Student Advice Working Group in March 2007 available at <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/abp/talqac/pdf/msam.pdf> .

This policy is relevant to most other student-facing policies, which include statements relating to the role of the Student Adviser in interpreting and implementing policy.

The University's Student Advising program has a student-centric approach which places priority on the provision of timely and accurate advice to students and seamless, appropriate referral to Academic Enrichment, Wellbeing and Student Management Services as well as other student support services.

As such, Student Advisers function as the interface between the University and its students, helping the latter to understand their educational options and assisting them in navigating the institution’s educational environment.

In this environment, Student Advisers have a role to play in the educational process. Student Advising is considered an educative process that assists students in planning, acquiring and assessing their own learning, and guides them through the institution’s educational and enrichment opportunities.

Importantly, Student Advisers have an important role in ensuring Graduate Attributes by:

- helping students identify ways to achieve their academic goals;
- supporting students’ autonomy in decision making; and
- encouraging students to take advantage of enrichment opportunities.

Student Advisers are also a critical resource for academic staff regarding student matters and referral to other expert services. Student Advisers provide key support for academic staff in implementing academic policy and improving procedures relating to student support.

The policy is based on the University’s Student Expectations and Responsibilities policy available at <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/policy/expectations/expectations.html> . In addition, the following expectations apply to the advising process:

- Acquiring the information needed to assume final responsibility for their own class timetables, course planning, breadth selection and the successful completion of all degree requirements.
 - Maintaining appropriate communication channels so that they can be contacted by the University in relation to their academic progress or wellbeing
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- Actively seeking the academic and career information needed to meet educational goals and personal development aspirations.
 - Investigating opportunities for academic enrichment and personal engagement with the University and broader community.
 - Considering a broad range of breadth options (in New Generation undergraduate degrees) and research opportunities to ensure academic challenge and personal growth.
 - Becoming knowledgeable about the relevant policies, procedures, and rules of the University as a whole and the academic program in particular.
 - Being prepared with accurate information and relevant materials when contacting a Student Adviser.
 - Following through on recommended referrals.
 - Consulting with a Student Adviser as required to decide subjects, check progress towards graduation, and explore the suitability of other educational opportunities provided by the University.
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Procedure and Practice: All Coursework students

1. Responsibility for Student Advising

Oversight of the University of Melbourne's Student Advising program rests with the Vice Principal and Academic Registrar, within the Office of the Provost.

Student Advisers are principally responsible for the provision of advice to students in Student Centres and Graduate Schools. Student Advisers are staff responsible for assisting students with course and subject planning as well as providing information on enrichment and mobility programs. In some settings, they are known as course advisers; however, they are responsible for more than providing information about course structures and majors. Student Advisers report to Student Centre and Graduate School Managers.

A significant number of student-facing staff in Student Centres and Graduate Schools are critical to the student advising process. Their involvement in student advising has been conceptualised by a three tiered-model that represents the range of knowledge and levels of responsibility relating to decisions relevant to students' engagement and progress.

Tier	Staff	Knowledge range	Level of responsibility
1	<i>Enquiries Officers</i> , i.e. front line staff	Broad e.g. general information about enrolment and subject selection, delivery of transactional services, knowledge of wellbeing and enrichment services	Provide initial information and referral
2	<i>Student Advisers</i> , i.e. professional staff as defined above	Medium e.g. detailed course and subject planning with individual students, integrated advice regarding enrichment and mobility programs	Provide in-depth information and referral only in complex situations
3	<i>Specialist Advisers</i> , i.e. senior Student Advisers, Team Leaders and Student Centre Managers and <i>Academic Advisers</i> , i.e. academic staff such as Associate Deans, Course Coordinators, Year Level Coordinators Specialist advisers may also include staff from areas such as Careers and Employment and Academic Skills	Specialised e.g. upholding University policy and developing local guidelines, fielding escalated or complex enquiries	Final decision-making capacity and discretionary powers

Academic policy authorised by the University of Melbourne Academic Board sets out policy, procedures and protocols relating to delegation and discretion. Course-related issues are to be referred to Deans and custodial Deans. Academic Board Policy and discipline issues are to be referred to the Vice Principal and Academic Registrar.

Student Advisers may be consulted about the circumstances that fall outside their domain of responsibility, and consult Specialist Advisers in their Student Centre or Graduate School in the first instance. Specialist Advisers and Academic Advisers have authority to grant exceptions and recommend appropriate referral where required.

Complementary advice is available for students within specialist services such as the Academic Skills Unit, Careers and Employment, International Student Services, and Advocacy Services in the Student Union and Postgraduate Association.

The Vice Principal and Academic Registrar provides a support and coordination role for Student Centre and Graduate School Managers in improving the delivery of their advising programs in accordance with the criteria for effective advising listed below. The Vice Principal and Academic Registrar is therefore responsible for clear articulation of the vision for student advising at the University of Melbourne and measurement of its delivery. Assessment of the quality of the University's advising program is undertaken through consultation with students and staff through surveys and other feedback. Results and recommendations for improvement are reported to the Provost via the Melbourne Experience Advisory Group for evaluation and action.

Student Advising is supported by the Student Advice Program team, which works under broad direction from the Vice Principal and Academic Registrar, and in consultation with Student Centre, Graduate School and Service Unit Managers represented on the Student Services Network.

2. *Shared responsibilities of Advisers and students*

Student Advisers and students share responsibility for making the advising relationship and process succeed. By encouraging students to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, Student Advisers assume an educational role. The Student Adviser will provide each student with: the information needed to assist in planning their chosen program of study; an outline of breadth², enrichment and future study options; and referrals to other specialised resources. All commencing undergraduate students will receive advice during the first semester of their studies at the University of Melbourne.

3. *Individual responsibilities of Student Advisers*

- Help the student to understand the nature of the University's requirements for academic programs and to understand the expected standards of achievement and success in certain areas of study. The Student Adviser also seeks to understand each student's particular concerns affecting academic progress.
- Support the student by providing up-to-date information on University procedures and assistance with understanding the purposes of those procedures.

² For New Generation undergraduate and Bachelor of Engineering students who commenced in 2008 or later

- Discuss the educational and career objectives of the student. The Student Adviser helps the student to understand breadth options³, pathways to graduate study, research opportunities, knowledge transfer, internships and placements, global mobility programs, scholarship availability, enrichment opportunities and other academic experiences provided by the University.
- Help the student to plan a course of study by providing information about majors, breadth and the adjustment of course loads. The Student Adviser will inform the students about the prerequisites for subsequent courses. Detailed advice relating to subject curriculum and assessment is the responsibility of Academic Advisers.
- Refer students to other resources and services where appropriate, taking care to facilitate the referral through appropriate liaison with the unit the student is being referred to
- Document interactions as appropriate.
- Participate in professional development programs provided by the Student Advice Program to build on skills, keep informed, workshop issues, and maintain strong networks with other Student Advisers and key services.

4. Appeals

Students concerned about decisions made in respect to this policy should consult the Student Grievance Policy for information about how to lodge a grievance.

³ For New Generation undergraduate and Bachelor of Engineering students who commenced in 2008 or later

Resources

Melander, E. R. *Advising as Educating: A Framework for Organizing Advising Systems* NACADA Journal Vol 25 (2) Fall 2005 pp. 84-91

Penn State Faculty Senate Policy 32-00 *Advising Policy* www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/32-00.html

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2002). *The role of student affairs and services in higher education: A practical manual for developing, implementing and assessing student affairs programmes and services*. Paris, pp 25-26.
