**University of Sussex**

**Academic Advising Policy for Taught Students**

**1. Introduction**

The University’s Academic Advising system is intended to deliver an equitable service to all taught students.

Academic advising is an integrated part of the student experience rather than a bolt-on activity or a service that is used only when things go wrong. The role of the academic advisor is distinct in its holistic focus on the student and overall academic progress, personal and career development through timely discussions about progress, the provision of academic support and guidance or referral to appropriate specialist professional services as necessary.

The role of the Director of Student Experience (DoSE) includes oversight of the effectiveness of academic advising in a School and a focus on personal development for students.

**2. Principles**

The University’s Academic Advising system is based on the following principles:

* All students registered on undergraduate courses are allocated a member of teaching faculty from the ‘owning’ School, to be the named Academic Advisor. Where possible, this arrangement will last the duration of the course.
* The Academic Advisor is responsible for inviting advisees to, and maintaining timely records of, attendance and content of any scheduled individual or group meetings designated as Academic Advising sessions.
* Academic Advising sessions are distinctive, providing an holistic focus on student academic progress and engagement. The aim is to help and encourage the student, throughout the course, to actively identify and access support for improving academic skills and to contribute to, and reflect on, personal development and career plans.
* Students who experience barriers to study, requiring referral and/or intervention, may raise these issues with the Academic Advisor in these sessions. Any referrals made to specialist services, during such discussions may become the basis for agreed plans of action to ensure support needs are identified and progress is monitored.
* Students are entitled to request a reference from their Academic Advisor. Attendance at Academic Advising sessions will normally be required for such a reference to be any more than a broad factual statement of documented progress on the course.

**3. Minimum requirements for academic advising**

The following table represents the institutional minimum standard for undergraduate academic advising:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| First year students | | Second year students | | Third year students | |
| Week 0/1 | Group academic advising meeting | TB1 Week 3/4 | 1-2-1 meeting to reflect on goals for year 2 | TB1 Week 4/5 | 1-2-1 meeting to reflect on goals for year 3 |
| Week 2/3 | 1-2-1 meeting to set goals | TB2 Week 3/4 | 1-2-1 meeting to discuss progress | TB2 Week 4/5 | 1-2-1 meeting to discuss progress |
| Week 6/8 | Further Group academic advising meeting |
| February / March | Follow up 1-2-1s to reflect on progress as appropriate |

The schedule is a minimum standard for advising, although Schools are free to arrange sessions in addition to this schedule. The precise weeks for these sessions have some flexibility to cater for differences in Schools’ teaching and intake patterns.

Sessions must be booked and using the events booking functionality on Sussex Direct to ensure that sessions appear in timetables for staff and students. Attendance or non-attendance at these sessions must also be recorded. Responsibility for booking and recording sessions remains with the individual School.

**4. Academic advising allocation**

All faculty will participate in academic advising. Academic advising should not be undertaken by Doctoral Teaching Assistants or Associate Tutors. A cap of 25 academic advisees per member of staff should be introduced.

School systems for allocating academic advisors should ensure that:

* students are allocated an advisor with subject knowledge relevant to the degree title
* students remain with the same advisor for the duration of their studies, except where this is not possible, for example owing to sabbatical
* students can request a change of academic advisor

**5. Process** **to support delivery of Academic Advising Activities**

* In order to ensure there is a parity of student experience in Schools, whilst allowing for acceptable levels of diversity in delivering Academic Advising sessions, resources and training for the Advisors are available online through Study Direct.
* Information includes: links to specialist support services and referral processes; pro-formas for the academic advising sessions and guidance on best practice for individual and group activities. The resources will be updated and expanded, as required to maintain best practice, and may be aligned to a general resource bank for teaching staff on matters related to inclusive teaching.
* The Director of Student Experience (DoSE) in the School is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the Academic Advising system. Staff and students will be encouraged to comment on aspects of good practice and make suggestions for improvements at an annual review. This might form part of the School meeting, or at another appropriate forum or using a different channel of communication.
* The DoSEs hold regular meetings for discussion and exchange of ‘best practice’. Should they identify any systemic or quality assurance issues these will be taken to the Student Engagement Sub Committee for consideration.

**5. Policy oversight**

Oversight of the policy on academic advising lies with the University Teaching and Learning Committee and will be maintained by the Academic Development Quality Enhancement (ADQE) Office. Responsibility for the operation of the academic advising policy rests with the School.