

**Revised guidelines for academic advising system under the  
4-year undergraduate degree structure at PolyU**

(Proposed changes to LTC paper LTC/42/A4 are highlighted in green)

## Department-based academic advising

### Aims of academic advising

1. Academic advising at PolyU aims to help students to make informed and intelligent academic decisions/choices about their study at PolyU that suit their intellectual, professional and personal goals. It is instrumental to promoting student success, and plays a vital role in students' holistic development at PolyU. The specific objectives are:
  - To build up an early connection between the students and their home departments, and to promote their sense of affiliation to the department and the University,
  - To provide students with accurate information about the academic regulations and requirements regarding their Major/programme, and the General University Requirements (GUR),
  - To assist students to explore their interests, abilities and values on academic pursuits, and formulate appropriate intellectual, professional and personal goals,
  - To provide advice and guidance to students that enables them to develop and pursue a study plan for their 4 years of study appropriate for meeting their professional and personal goals at PolyU,
  - To connect students to resources, opportunities and support within and outside the University to enhance their educational experiences and success.
  
2. All departments are required to suitably enhance their existing academic advising and processes to achieve the aims stated above. Different departments may develop slightly different academic advising systems, provided that they are consistent with the following broad principles and guidelines:
  - a. All FT undergraduate students (including those admitted to Articulation Programmes or Senior Year places) will be assigned to one FT staff at academic/teaching/clinical/Instructor/Professor of Practice grade (or equivalent) or above from his/her Major department who will act as his/her Academic Advisor<sup>1</sup> throughout his/her course of study at PolyU. This FT staff should normally have at least two years of teaching experience in undergraduate programmes at PolyU. Under special circumstances, engagement of Academic Advisor other than the above mentioned grades and/or without the required teaching experience would need to seek prior approval from AVP(UP) with strong

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<sup>1</sup> The exact title can vary in different departments, provided that the staff members concerned undertake all the responsibilities of an academic advisor and operates within the broad principles and guidelines as described in this paper.

- b. justifications. In addition, 50% of the assigned Academic Advisors in an academic year must be Professorial colleagues [including Lecturers (or equivalent grades) or above]. Special approval from AVP(UP) is needed if this required percentage is lower than 50%. The recommended maximum ratio of Academic Advisor to student advisees is 1:30. Special approval from AVP(UP) is needed if the ratio is higher than 1:30.
- c. At least 50% of Academic Advisors within each Faculty/Department/School in an academic year should complete the 3-hour e-learning course "Theory and Practice of Academic Advising" (previously titled "Introduction to Academic Advising") to learn about the basic concepts of academic advising, including its values, goals, theories and practice. New recruits are required to take the e-learning course on "Theory and Practice of Academic Advising" as well as to attend the 2-hour "Introduction of Academic Advising Training Workshop". For new recruits with prior experience in academic advising of undergraduate students, this requirement may be waived.
- d. The main responsibilities of the Academic Advisor include:
- Building rapport with the students. serving as a bridge that connects them to the department,
  - Being accessible and available to students, and responding to their questions and concerns,
  - Helping student to consider and clarify their intellectual, professional and personal goals,
  - Helping students to develop an appropriate study plan and assisting in their selection of appropriate courses in their major study and GUR so as to achieve their identified goals and holistic development,
  - Helping students to understand academic regulations and requirements,
  - Identifying students with special learning needs or early signs of learning problems, and referring/encouraging them to seek help or support.
- e. Academic Advisors are expected to keep in contact with their student advisees regularly (e.g., via emails or other means), and to have at least one face-to-face meeting with them, either individually or in small groups **two times per year (preferably one in Semester 1 and one in Semester 2)**. Advising via electronic means (such as Skype for Business, ZOOM or Teams) with strict observance of the principle of confidentiality as a form of formal academic advising meetings is also recognized which should be reported in the Academic Advising (AA) Report. **In particular, with University's commitment to support students with special educational needs and/or special talents, Academic Advisors should meet all of these students at least two times during an academic year (preferably one in Semester 1 and one in Semester 2)**. Student advisees are expected to consult their respective Advisors on their study plan before subject registration. **Furthermore, Academic Advisors are required to have proper records of their meetings with student advisees using the checklist recommended by Office of Undergraduate Studies (OUS).**
- f. In order that Academic Advisors can undertake their responsibilities effectively, they should be given access to the records of their student advisees via the AR Student Record System (SRS). Faculties/Departments/Schools are required to use SRS as the primary system to assign Academic Advisors to students and keep the records up-to-date. **Faculties/Departments/Schools should also assign Programme Leaders/experienced academic staff to be the Academic Advisors of students with special educational needs**

and/or special talents.

- g. For Broad Discipline-admitted<sup>2</sup> students, an academic advisor will be initially assigned by the Faculty/Broad Discipline for the first and second years. A “permanent” Academic Advisor will be assigned by the department concerned once the student declares his/her Major in the second year. An Academic Advisor is normally be given workload credits for their work in academic advising and/or proper recognition for their work. Faculties/Departments/Schools need to establish the policy of workload or alternative form of recognition which should be captured by KPIs. Workload credits should take into account of relevant factors such as the number of students assigned, the advising need of the students, the frequency of meetings and other advising related activities. For example, the workload of an Academic Advisor with 20 advisees assigned may be counted as 13 to 26 contacts hours of teaching and/or administrative duty equivalent depending on the factors mentioned above. **In this connection, Faculties/Departments/Schools are recommended to include the quality of academic advising service as one of the KPIs for teachers.**
3. To provide overall coordination of academic advising within a department, the Departmental Undergraduate Programme Committee should be given the additional responsibilities of:
    - Coordinating the planning and implementation of academic advising within the department,
    - Providing support to colleagues involved in academic advising, and
    - Ensuring that student advising at the departmental level is carried out in a quality manner.
  4. Departments should set up their own internal QA mechanisms to monitor the quality of academic advising, and report the results and associated improvement plans/actions in the annual programme review report.
  5. Each Faculty/Department/School should assign a non-academic staff (preferably at the EO level or above) to take up the role of an “Undergraduate Secretary”. This person should have the necessary knowledge to advise students on all issues related to academic requirements and regulations related to all academic programmes offered by the department as well as the GUR. The person should be readily available to students to answer any questions related to the curriculum. For Faculties with Broad Discipline admissions, an Undergraduate Secretary should be also appointed at the Faculty level to advise Broad Discipline-admitted<sup>2</sup> students on those issues.
  6. The resource implication for setting up the academic advising system and its budget implication will be addressed by the DP Office after careful consultation with the department.

### **Support to and quality assurance of academic advising at the institutional level**

7. The Office of Undergraduate Studies (OUS) will support academic advising at the departments and assure the quality of academic advising with the following responsibilities:

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<sup>2</sup> All Broad Discipline Programmes have been suspended for admission with effect from 2020/21.

- Providing updated information on GUR to staff and students,
- Working with the CoGUR to on the coordination and management of GUR offerings, ensuring that students can fulfill their GUR requirements in a timely manner,
- Complementing academic advising service at the Faculties/Departments/Schools by Undergraduate Studies Support Officers (USSOs):
  - a. Provide information on GUR to staff and students;
  - b. Handle enquiries on GUR from students and staff;
  - c. Conduct GUR completion check and follow up with students;
  - d. Provide training or briefing sessions to Academic Advisors on student advising and GUR advising;
  - e. Provide consultation service to Academic Advisors on student advising (e.g. students' study plan on GUR, and GUR subject selection for SEN students); and
  - f. Support the coordination and quality assurance of academic advising.
- Overall coordination and quality assurance of academic advising at PolyU. In order to identify specific area for effective and efficient follow-up actions, OUS would provide guidelines to Faculties/Departments/Schools on their internal QA mechanism for academic advising and standardize the reports to be collected from Faculties/Departments/Schools.

### **Responsibilities of student advisees in academic advising**

8. Effective academic advising requires an active participation of student advisees in the processes. It is important that students understand it is their responsibilities to:
  - Understand the academic regulations and requirements of their chosen Major/programme, as well as the GUR requirements,
  - Actively obtain information, and seek out advisors and resources on a regular basis and as needed,
  - Take the final responsibility for making decisions and choices regarding their academic study based on the information and advice given.

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