



Quality Assurance Code of Practice

Academic Advising

1	Purpose and Scope	1
2	Principles	2
3	Procedure	2
4	Recording, Monitoring and Review.....	4
5	Sources of Advice and Further Guidance.....	5
6	Appendices (Senior and Academic Advisor role profiles)	5

This document is primarily intended for:

Heads of Academic Departments
Senior Academic Advisors
Academic Advisors
Directors of Teaching
Directors of Studies
Students

Queries:

First point of contact: Assistant Registrars in the Faculty/School.

Technical/specialist contact: Student Support and Safeguarding

1 Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 This QA statement sets out the principles of the University's Academic Advising System.
- 1.2 The Academic Advising System has two core purposes:
 - to support taught students' academic and professional development and success through a personalised point of contact within their academic department throughout the student journey
 - to facilitate the transition of students into the academic community and their academic studies and support students to take responsibility for developing the skills necessary to achieve their desired outcomes while at Bath.
- 1.3 The re-induction of students returning from a period of placement, study abroad or suspension of study as provided by the Department/School/partner organisation should also be appropriately linked into the Academic Advising System. For re-induction, see [QA38 Induction of Students](#).
- 1.4 The statement applies to all undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate taught (PGT) courses of study leading to an award of the University of Bath. For licensed and validated courses, delivered at a partner organisation, an Academic Advising Policy, agreed with the University, must be in place. These QA33 procedures may be varied under the terms of a Partnership Agreement where a course of study is delivered as a franchised collaborative initiative with a partner organisation.
- 1.5 For principles and processes relating to the University's Academic Advising System for apprenticeship courses, refer to [QA33\(A\)](#).

2 Principles

- 2.1 Students should have an established personal contact within the Department, School or partner organisation.
- 2.2 Heads of Departments/School/partner organisations are responsible for ensuring the establishment and implementation of the Academic Advising System in accordance with this Code of Practice statement and ensuring that each taught student is assigned an Academic Advisor.

3 Procedure

- 3.1 All taught students will be assigned an Academic Advisor who is a member of academic staff (as listed in the Education and Research Job Family as approved by Senate in October 2008, with specified exceptions). However, assistance, advice and support may additionally be provided through other sources such as Faculty/School Student Engagement Managers/Student Experience Officers/Student Support Officers/Placements Officers, placement and work-based tutors and project/ dissertation supervisors.
- 3.2 Academic Advisors are responsible for offering information and guidance to their students on how to function effectively in the University environment, and for referring students to the appropriate sources of academic, employability or welfare advice when necessary. Academic Advisors should uphold and reflect the core purposes of the Academic Advising System as set out in paragraph 1.2 and should be informed of the range of central and departmental support services such that they can signpost or refer their students as appropriate to their needs, including when personal challenges impact negatively on their student experience.
- 3.3 Departments' Directors of Studies or Senior Academic Advisors should notify students if their Academic Advisor will be absent for an extended period (e.g., due to health reasons or sabbatical) and provide an appropriate replacement Academic Advisor for the duration of the absence.
- 3.4 For students studying on distance learning courses, online courses, and/or at a partner organisation, support may be provided by staff other than an Academic Advisor. The support may also be provided through an alternative model to that outlined in this document providing that the standards of support are ensured, and that these are communicated to students.
- 3.5 Academic Advisors are required to arrange to meet with their students at least three times during the student's first semester on a course and will offer at least one tutorial per semester at other times (including one in the summer for PGT students). This is a minimum requirement, and Academic Advisors may increase the number of meetings as appropriate to reflect contextual aspects such as a student's return from placement, study abroad, suspense, health/disability, personal circumstances, or repeat year. Academic Advisors may also increase the number of meetings dependent on the structure of the course (e.g., PGT courses). Although for on-campus students, face-to-face meetings are preferable, other means of communication such as email, telephone or video calls can be utilised if the student is absent (e.g., on placement) or if this improves engagement. Students are responsible for attending meetings with Academic Advisors, and for communicating with their Advisor if for any reason they are unable to attend. Academic Advisors should communicate to students that if they fail to attend meetings, they may not know them well enough to provide any more than a confirmation of their student status and duration of studies for future reference requests.

- 3.6 While meetings may be held in small group format, Academic Advisors will be required to explicitly offer all students the opportunity to meet individually at least once a semester.
- 3.7 When possible, Directors of Studies should not also act as Academic Advisors. However, in departments where this is unavoidable, care should be taken to ensure they have a manageable student load (as determined by the Head of Department with support from the Senior Academic Advisor) that ensures the same opportunities for group and individual meetings as afforded to other undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. Additionally, a second named arbitrator and Advisor should be available for these students should the need arise.
- 3.8 Departments/School/partner organisations will provide an appropriate mechanism for students to request a change of Academic Advisor if they feel that this is desirable. Such requests are usually communicated through the relevant Director of Studies or equivalent.
- 3.9 Departments/School/partner organisations will pay particular attention to the Academic Advising arrangements for students under the age of 18. Departments/School/partner organisations should refer to the University's policy on [admission and support for students under the age of 18](#) and seek advice from Student Support Staff Advice via 01225 384321 / 4321@bath.ac.uk to ensure that the appropriate measures are in place.
- 3.10 Academic Advisors (or another nominated member of staff) will continue to provide support to students during their placement. Rather than physical meetings, this support may be provided through alternative means of communication.
- 3.11 Academic Advisors should proactively work to ensure they are familiar with the support that is available to staff and students across the diverse student body from central support services (as shown on the [Student Support advice for staff](#) and [Academic Advising Guidance](#) web pages) and the requirements of the Department/School/partner organisation's Academic Advising System. Where an Advisor feels that professional support is required, advice should be sought through the Staff Advice line (ext. 4321 or 4321@bath.ac.uk) and/or the student should be referred to alternative sources of specialist support via the Student Support Centre in 4 West.
- 3.12 The Academic Advisor role forms one part of a wider support and advice network provided by the University for students. This network includes but is not limited to; the Director of Studies, Unit conveners, Student Experience/Support Officers, Placements Officers, Advisors/practitioners from Student Support & Safeguarding, Careers, & Skills, and Security/ResLife colleagues. Academic Advisors should explain to students how their role forms part of this network, as well as the boundaries of their role and confidentiality, as early as possible to help build trust and understanding. While meetings between advisor and student are confidential there will be the need to make referrals to relevant colleagues throughout the student journey which will include sharing information on a need-to-know basis. This is so the student can receive the most appropriate advice and support. Notes of meetings should be stored confidentially on SAMIS, to ensure continuity of support, if staff change roles. Guidance on confidentiality protocols is available on the [Guidance for Academic Advisors webpage](#) and can be sought from the Student Support and Safeguarding Advice line (ext. 4321).
- 3.13 The Senior Academic Advisor will ensure that the Academic Advising System is well communicated to students and staff and that expectations are supported by the Head of Department/School/partner organisation. A statement setting out the intentions of the Departmental/School/partner organisation's System, and how it is operated, will be made

available to all staff and students to whom it applies. This will be a succinct summary of the principles laid out in this QA33 document, and should include:

- the expectations of staff (for example, levels of engagement with students and recording of meetings)
- the expectations of students (for example, the expectation of attendance at meetings)
- the process for requesting a change of Academic Advisor.

- 3.14 Senior Academic Advisors should ensure that group meetings are scheduled to address relevant and timely academic and professional development projects. This should include circulation to Academic Advisors of a list of relevant discussion topics in advance of meetings to ensure consistency of information and support across the course/Department.
- 3.15 The Senior Academic Advisors' Forum will provide support and advice to Senior Academic Advisors and facilitate communication between Senior Academic Advisors and central support services (for example, Student Support & Safeguarding, Employability & Skills, and SU Advice). The Forum will also provide the opportunity for Senior Academic Advisors to share good practice and to facilitate the ongoing development of the Academic Advising System and associated resources. Senior Academic Advisors are expected to attend the Forum and in the event they cannot, should send someone in their place, ensuring every Department has a representative at the meeting and is kept informed of developments in student support.
- 3.16 Departments/School/partner organisations will ensure that staff receive appropriate information and training to support their role as Academic Advisors. This should be included in the University's induction of new academic staff.
- 3.17 Departments/School/partner organisations will ensure that the time commitment of staff as Senior or Academic Advisors is reflected in their workload model. In doing this, Departments/School/partner organisations will seek to balance the loading on individual members of staff and the staff-to-student ratio within the Department/School/partner organisation.
- 3.18 Heads of Department/School are responsible for assigning the role of Senior Academic Advisor to a member (or members) of academic staff (as listed in the Education and Research Job Family as approved by Senate in October 2008), and with the support of the Senior Academic Advisor are responsible for monitoring compliance with QA33 in the Department/School.

4 Recording, Monitoring and Review

- 4.1 Academic Advisors are required to keep a record of meetings with students. SAMIS Student Notes is the recommended recording system; however, Heads of Departments and Senior Academic Advisors can choose an alternative method, in exceptional circumstances, provided the notes are accessible to the appropriate individuals. This ensures continuity of support if staff change roles. Academic Advisors will also record non-attendance at meetings, noting where a student exhibits a tendency for non-attendance or any other issues of concern in relation to individual students, and informing and liaising with the Director of Studies and/or Senior Academic Advisor as appropriate. If an Academic Advisor has made several attempts to contact a student without any response, they should liaise with the Director of Studies to investigate further in case the unplanned absence is concerning or longer than two weeks. The Director of Studies may need to instigate step 1 of the [Missing Student Procedure](#).
- 4.2 Monitoring of Academic Advising will be carried out at least semesterly, to (i) ensure the necessary support is put in place for students, and (ii) monitor compliance with the expectations

set out in this statement. Heads of Department and Senior Academic Advisors will identify and implement the most appropriate monitoring systems for practice within their Department for these two purposes. Senior Academic Advisors, on behalf of the Head of Department, will oversee the monitoring process.

- 4.3 The Senior Academic Advisors will annually review the Academic Advising System within the Department/School in order to enhance its effectiveness as a student support mechanism. This should include seeking staff and student feedback through appropriate channels such as Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC), survey data, and Departmental meetings. The Academic Advising System will be considered annually by the SSLC. Department/School LTQCs will consider an annual report from the Senior Academic Advisor(s), on behalf of the Head of Department, to support the identification of good practice, success, and areas for improvement in relation to the Academic Advising System.
- 4.4 An elected Senior Academic Advisor is responsible for chairing the Senior Academic Advisors' Forum, and for facilitating the effective communication of information between Senior Academic Advisors and central support services.
- 4.5 The Senior Academic Advisor Forum will review Academic Advising, including Departmental monitoring systems, and propose actions for improvement based on the outcomes. The sharing of good practice from Departments who receive positive student and staff feedback (through surveys, via SSLCs etc.) will be encouraged and disseminated through the Forum minutes and webpages.
- 4.6 Education, Quality & Standards Committee will stipulate suitable mechanisms for institutional oversight and monitoring of the Academic Advising system, as appropriate.

5 Sources of Advice and Further Guidance

- [Student Support Advice for Staff](#)
- [Academic Advising Guidance](#)
- [Senior Academic Advisors](#)
- University's [Policy on Admission and Support for Students under the age of 18](#)
- University's Policy on [Data Protection](#)

6 Appendices

- Appendix 1: Academic Advisor role profile
- Appendix 2: Senior Academic Advisor role profile

Statement Details		
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