



Factsheet



Designing and Implementing a qualification program for academic advisors leading to a (inter)nationally recognized certificate

Why is there a need for a qualification program?

Until recently, many universities in the Netherlands gave academic advising a low status. But times are changing; more and more, people realize that academic advising makes a significant, positive contribution to study skills and study success, assists students in making suitable career choices and to start well prepared for the job market.

Academic advisors advise current and prospective students on educational issues, study and career planning and personal development. They also decide about and co-ordinate the provision of advising and support services within an educational program. It is a rewarding job, but also a demanding job, requiring a lot of effort and competences.

In the Netherlands the advising profession is made up of members from diverse backgrounds. Actually, everyone (with an academic background) could become an advisor, no formal training or development program is required.

It is our belief that to maximize the benefits students receive from academic advising, universities should make sure that academic advising is done by advisors who are (provable) competent, work in a professional way and embrace continuous learning and development.

For this reason, the University of Twente, together with the National Association for Academic Advisors (LVSA), developed a qualification program for academic advisors working within faculties.

What does this program look like?

The qualification program (with a duration of maximal two years) is based on six competences every academic advisor needs to demonstrate. These competences can be supplemented by personal learning and development goals. Each participant conducts a personal learning route and will develop the competences in his/her own work situation. Every participant gets a personal coach for the duration of the program. The development of the participants is facilitated by self-study activities, courses and peer group sessions. Participants construct a portfolio with evidence, validations and reflections as proof of the required competences. The portfolio will reflect their professionalism and competences and will show that the academic advisor is able to:

- relate to individuals through the use of basic communication, advising and problem-solving skills, with respect to students' study skills, study progress and planning and personal goals and issues;
- assist students in making suitable career choices (choices concerning whether to stay of leave, the selection of courses, taking up an honors program, their future study and career opportunities etc.);
- provide relevant information for students (using media and by giving presentations) about institutional policies, procedures, resources, programs, services etc.;
- monitor student progress and signal bottlenecks and issues in the educational program or organization and advise the board about these issues;
- to position academic advising within and as part of the educational organization and to plan and evaluate their own work;
- reflect on his/her own performance and achievements and finding ways for continuous improvement and development.

What will happen next?

February 2013 the University of Twente has started a pilot with 13 participants. On May 16th an information meeting was held in Utrecht to inform other universities about this pilot. Many universities were represented and showed their interest for developing and starting a similar program in their own institute. Together with the LVSA and other universities, we will work on further development of the program, nationwide implementation and mutual recognition of the certificate. Thereby making sure that academic advising gets the status it deserves.

Initiators:

University of Twente
Landelijke Vereniging van
Studieadviseurs (LVSA)

Project leaders:

Marieke Hofman (chairman Forum for Academic Advisors UT, academic advisor for Technical Medicine)
Helma Vlas (educational advisor and trainer, Student & Education Service Centre)

Coordination of the pilot:

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Others involved:

- Forum for Academic Advisors UT
- Student & Education Service Centre
- Programme Team for the new BSc educational model TOM
- University Committee for Education
- LVSA; skills trainer André Baars
- coaches from Human Resources and Educational Service
- UT faculties and participants

Timetable:

Design and development:
Jan. 2011 – Jan. 2013
Pilot: starting Feb. 2013
Continuing development (evaluation and adjustment) & dissemination: continuously, starting Jan. 2013

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