Academic Advising IT Steering Group
Terms of Reference
Last updated 28th November 2023

Background

A key action of the Student-centred Educational Experience theme identified in the Education & Student Success Strategy is to embed academic advising into the academic experience of all UCD taught students. In March 2021, with the approval of the Academic Council Executive Committee (ACEC), the Registrar Professor Mark Rogers established an Academic Advising Working Group under the chair of Professor Marie Clarke, Dean of Undergraduate Studies to inform university wide policy on academic advising.

As part of that programme of work, a definition, objectives and principles of academic advising for UCD were developed and subsequently approved by the Academic Council Executive Committee in May 2022 (see appendices). Requirements for an IT system to support academic advising processes were produced and submitted as a Business Request in April 2022. This request was consolidated into the Programme for Operations and Services Transformation in November 2022. Procurement for some elements, including academic advising, was halted in May 2023. Over summer 2023 a review of internal systems was carried out to establish what could be repurposed to support academic advising within specific time and resource constraints. It was not possible to implement a sufficiently comprehensive solution within those constraints, therefore it was decided to look to the market for procurement of an appropriate software solution.

Objective

The Academic Advising IT Steering Group is being established to pilot an academic advising software solution with six pilot schools, operating from the beginning of the 2024-25 academic year. The solution must align with the approved definition, objectives and principles of academic advising.

Functions

1. **Needs Assessment**

   1.1. Map the academic advising business process with the pilot schools
   1.2. Ensure that the software requirements from the pilot schools are captured and prioritised

2. Discovery Process

2.1. Research and identify academic advising software solutions

2.2. Benchmark with similar universities

2.3. Review and shortlist solutions

2.4. Establish the most appropriate solution-type for UCD

3. Matching Mechanism

Develop a mechanism for matching undergraduate student to advisors which:

3.1. Matches undergraduate students to advisors automatically

3.2. Demonstrates the resource implications of the mechanism in relation to faculty-student ratio

3.3. Will work for the pilot schools

3.4. Will work for the rest of the University by extension for undergraduate programmes

3.5. Will work for the duration of a programme

3.6. Aligns with the framework of advising

4. Procurement

4.1. If a tender process is required, ensure the University requirements in relation to academic advising are captured within the Requests For Proposals (RFP) ahead of commencing the tender process

4.2. Ensure there is in depth engagement and analysis of the vendors meeting the requirements agreed by the steering group.

4.3. Choose the solution that best meets the requirements of the University in relation to academic advising for the pilot schools

4.4. Ensure that due diligence is carried out in relation to legal, data protection, security and accessibility requirements.

5. Integration of Software Solution

Assist and oversee the integration of the software solution including:

5.1. Any in-house development work which may be necessary to work with the software solution

5.2. Testing of the software solution

5.3. Training on the software solution

6. Operation of Software Solution

6.1. Support users

6.2. Maintain a log of issues

7. Evaluation

    7.1. Evaluate the software solution.

Reporting

The Academic Advising IT Steering Group will report to the Academic Advising Working Group.

Composition

- Chair & Project Manager
- Technical Lead
- Educational Technology Representative
- Pilot School Leads
- Student Representative(s)
- Registry Representative

Conduct of Business

- The Steering Group will meet as required for the duration of the project.
- Meetings will be considered quorate when a third of its members are present, one of whom must be the chair.
- Meetings will be convened by the chair and the agenda and meeting papers will be circulated by email in advance of the meetings.
- Additional meetings with shorter notice periods may be required for vendor review
- Decision by electronic consultation may be facilitated in exceptional circumstances.

Members of the Academic Advising IT Steering Group

Name	Role	College	School/Unit	More Information
Judith Archbold	Senior Project Manager	Academic Affairs	UCD Teaching and Learning	Chair of the of the IT Steering Group and Project Manager

Caroline Barrett		Academic Affairs	UCD Registry - Administrative Services	
Michael Connolly	Associate Professor	College of Health and Agricultural Sciences	School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems	Pilot School Lead
tbc	Projects Assistant	Academic Affairs	UCD Teaching and Learning	Administration for the Steering Group
Tia Cullen	College Officer		Health Science	SU
Kelly Fitzgerald	Head of School	College of Arts & Humanities	School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore	Pilot School Lead
Nuria Garcia Ordiales	School Manager	College of Science	School of Mathematics and Statistics	
Cliona Kelly	Associate Professor	College of Social Sciences & Law	School of Law	Pilot School Lead
Aisling Maloney	College Officer		Law	SU
Louise McHugh	School Head of Teaching and Learning	College of Social Sciences & Law	School of Psychology	Pilot School Lead
Jennifer Murphy	Director, College of Social Sciences & Law Office	College of Social Sciences & Law		
Niamh O'Sullivan	Associate Professor	College of Science	School of Biomolecular and Biomedical Science	Pilot School Lead
Maria McDonald	Head of Enterprise Application Services	Academic Affairs	IT Services - Enterprise Application Services	IT Project Manager
Anita Radini	Assistant Professor	College of Social Sciences & Law	School of Archaeology	Pilot School Lead
Ryan Teevan	Head of Educational Technology Services	IT Services	Educational Technology Services	

Appendices

1. **Definition of Academic Advising**

Academic advising is part of the educational experience, where students are supported by faculty in making appropriate choices from a wide range of opportunities towards achieving realistic academic and professional goals.

2. **Objectives of Academic Advising**

1. To evaluate personal interests and abilities leading to the creation of realistic academic and professional goals.
2. To develop an educational plan that leads to the timely completion of educational goals.
3. To develop the critical thinking and independent decision-making skills to make and accept responsibility for academic decisions.
4. To understand the most appropriate choices to make in order to achieve goals (module or major choices)
5. To know what the most appropriate research opportunities are to support their educational and professional goals
6. To know what the most appropriate internship, study abroad and or co and extra-curricular opportunities are to support educational and professional goals

3. **Summary of Principles of Academic Advising**

CULTURE	STUDENT AGENCY	COHERENCE
• Individual students' academic needs and interests are central to the advising process. • The growth of all students is valued equally. • Students have a safe space in which to have developmental conversations with faculty. • Students and advisors work in a respectful partnership. • Academic advising is embedded in university systems.	• Students play an active role in the academic advising process. • Through academic advising students are empowered to become increasingly responsible and autonomous.	• Academic and professional staff work together to ensure a holistic experience for students.
HIGH QUALITY	**CUSTOMISED LOCALLY**	**FACULTY SUPPORTED**
• Objective • Consistent • Relevant and timely • Clear roles and standards	• The provision of academic advising will be shaped locally, reflecting the needs of the discipline and other local factors such as faculty-student ratios.	• Faculty are supported (training, resources, clear boundaries for what is academic and what is pastoral, referral system, advisor peer network) • Transparent • Recognised in the Faculty Development Framework • Part of workload model for faculty • Advising is distributed across genders