Policy Title:	Academic Advising Policy and Procedure
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Executive Owner:	Vice President for Academic Affairs and Scientific Research
Policy Reviewer & Approval	Quality Assurance and Accreditation, Academic & Institutional Standards Committee
Policy Implementation:	Academic Programmes at AOU HQ and Branches
Compliance Monitoring	Local Deans /Programme Coordinators and Heads of Academic Advising units
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Policy Aim

The aim of this policy is to provide a framework for the provision of academic advice to students. The university acknowledges the need for students to have access to information and advice to support their studies and progress through their programme of study.

Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all students.

Introduction

The Arab Open University recognizes academic advising to be a critical component of the educational experience. Academic advising is designed to provide the necessary tools and information to all students, allowing them to take full responsibility for developing educational and career plans while meeting degree requirements.

Academic advising is available to assist students in learning the skills necessary to be able to make their own choices in the academic environment. The skills include information gathering and processing, critical thinking and decision making.

Successful advising is an on-going activity where students develop a special relationship with an advisor and develop into individuals who take responsibility for their life-long learning.

It is in the policy of AOU that:

1- All students shall be informed of the academic advising process during the initial orientation session at the beginning of each semester.
2- All enrolled students should have an academic advisor.
3- Students must be informed with the name and contact details of their academic advisors.

4- Academic advisors must ensure communicating with their advisees at least once a semester through appropriate means of communication.
5- All students on academic probation need to be advised more than once a semester.
6- Students wishing to withdraw from AOU must be contacted and offered academic advising and should be well informed of all available options.

Goals of Academic Advising

1- To be an ongoing source of advice for students about their academic goals and performance.
2- To be a source of information regarding policies, procedures, and programme requirements, services and educational opportunities available at the university.
3- To assist students in making their own decisions in choosing educational and career objectives according to their interests and abilities.
4- To answer queries raised by students to make them aware of the consequences of their choices.

Responsibilities

A) Responsibility of the Academic Administrative Body

The overall responsibility for advising rests with the Academic administration. The university shall:

1- Establish procedures for academic advisor selection, training, and evaluation; set expectations for supervision; and provide appropriate professional development opportunities.
2- Strive to improve the professional competence and skills of all academic advisors.
3- Make resources available for initial and ongoing training of academic staff responsible for advising.
4- Gather and disseminate information related to academic advising.

5- Provide accurate information in the student guide and other publications that are used by advisors and students
6- Academic advisors must be fully informed about and actively promote all campus support programs. This includes knowing the details of the women's mentoring schemes offered by the university and encouraging student engagement to help meet the institutional goal of achieving at least 10% female student participation.

B) Responsibility of the Programmes

It is the responsibility of the various programmes to:

1- Ensure that advising is available for students when they need it and not just when the university requires it at the beginning of the semester.
2- Make all relevant information available to advisors and students, such as: university rules and regulations, support services available, programme requirements, student guide, etc.
3- Provide trainings and workshops for academic advisors on university rules, regulations and procedures, support services available, programme requirements and to be able to relate students abilities to requirement of their choices.
4- Make suggestions for improvements to the advising procedures.
5- Evaluation of the advising role should be part of the annual performance appraisal of the advisor.
6- Regularly monitor the efficiency of the academic advising and collate the relevant data and statistics.

C) Responsibility of the Advisor

Academic advisors are full time faculty members whose responsibilities include and not limited to academic advising. However, in special circumstances experienced part time staff may participate in the academic advising the academic advisor serves as a counselor of the student s educational experience. The responsibilities of the academic advisor are to:

1- Provide timely and accurate advising on academic and career matters.
2- Make advising readily available to students.
3- Clarify information on academic requirements, policies, and procedures.
4- Assist the students in identifying and pursuing realistic educational goals and objectives and in securing information about career opportunities.

5- Help the students examine course offerings in the programme/ track.
6- Tailor the advising approach to individual students and make referrals appropriate to their abilities, needs and interests.
7- Be responsive to students' discussions goals as they relate to academic and career-related needs.
8- Be sensitive to issues relating to the student's retention while making appropriate referrals when necessary and complete the withdrawal questionnaire after meeting with students who plan to withdraw.
9- Monitor all designated educational transactions (course registration, drop and add, change of track/major, graduation requirement)
10- Monitor the student progress towards satisfactory completion of all degree requirements.
11- Maintain necessary files on advisees for monitoring progress toward advisee's educational goals.
12- Designate and post information on office hours available for advising and contact details
13- Evaluate your own advising role at the end of the semester (in the tutor survey questionnaire).
14- Provide students with the needed support with their personal development planning (PDP).
15- Collect data on prospect graduate destinations (further studies, employment, etc.) during the student's last semester advising meeting.

D) Responsibility of the Student

Students carry a portion of responsibility in the advising process. To contribute to effective advising, students are expected to:

1- Meet with the advisor at least once each semester.
2- Follow through with appropriate action after the advising meeting
3- Be knowledgeable about policies, procedures, and requirements as published.
4- Be prepared to discuss goals as they relate to academic and career-related needs.
5- Accept responsibility for the academic decisions made

6- Check university e-mail/LMS account regularly for any updates from the advisor.
7- Become familiar with the available resources and career services offered
8- Responsibly evaluate the advisor and advising procedure to strengthen the quality of advisement at the end of the semester (through the student survey questionnaire)

Procedure

A) All Students

It is obligatory for all students whether new or continuing to go through academic advising. It is the responsibility of the student to consult with the advisor before course registration each semester.

- Upon enrollment, all new students are assigned to an academic advisor in his/her programme who will follow up on their academic progress. Upon advising, students are given specific information on:
  - The student's programme of choice.
  - The requirements and number of credits required for graduation.
  - The student's choice of courses.
  - The requirements to successfully pass a course.
  - General guidelines on assessment, attendance, and drop and add.
  - Professional and personal development planning questionnaire.
  - Available Resources and electronic systems used.
- Following the student s choice of a specific track within the programme of study, the advisor affirms the selection on the Student Information System (SIS,) and informs SIS team of the updates required if any, to the students academic plan in line with applicable bylaws
- The advisor shall assist the student in course selection to fulfill the degree requirements and academic plan taking into consideration the student s actual academic performance during the semester.
- The academic advisor shall check the academic status, student s transcript, GPA and general information about the student (such as dropped/failed

courses during previous semester, number of registered credits in previous semester, total number of semesters, workload, financial status, etc.) when determining course load
- The advisor should strictly observe the advising plan and the course pre-requisites
- Advisors are expected to make themselves available to meet in person with the advisees at least once per semester
- The advisor and the student are mutually responsible for establishing and maintaining communication throughout the semester and academic journey; Students are encouraged to seek out their advisor anytime they have a question or need assistance in exploring career and educational opportunities.
- The academic advisor shall be able to communicate with the advisees on LMS

B) Students on Academic Probation

A student at the undergraduate level is placed on academic probation at the end of any semester when his cumulative GPA falls below 2.0, and issued an official warning if GPA falls under 2.67 at the postgraduate level. Academic probation/official warning is meant to be an early warning sign that a student is not making satisfactory progress towards graduation and may be subject to dismissal at a future date.

Academic Advisors are notified of the students placed on academic probation. These students are contacted for a meeting with the academic advisor to discuss the consequences of academic probation. Quality advising can help a student assess causes of unsatisfactory performance as well as set strategies for improvement.

C) Students Withdrawing from AOU

Students withdrawing (referred/ retreated) from the semester shall be contacted by the academic advisor before the next semester enrollment date. These students should be offered a meeting with the advisor and should be

well-informed of any available option to change their enrollment. Advisors should keep records of the meeting and the discussion with students (meeting minutes signed by the student).

D) Automated Academic Advising

Continuing students who have been making satisfactory progress in the academic plan previously set by the academic advisor, are offered the possibility of obtaining automated academic advising. The following category of students is considered eligible for automated advising:

1- Level 5 students who have successfully completed between 57-88 credits with a GPA ≥ 3.0 and:

- Who did not withdraw from the previous semester or
- Who did not fail a course in the last semester or
- Who do not have a financial difficulty

2- Level 6 students who have successfully completed 88 credits or more with a GPA ≥ 2.3 and:

- Who did not withdraw from the previous semester or
- Who did not fail a course in the last semester or
- Who do not have a financial difficulty

Guidelines for Automated Academic Advising:

- In automated advising, the advisor should check the academic status, student s transcript, GPA and general information about the student (such as workload, financial status, etc.) when determining course load.
- The advising plan and the course pre-requisites should be strictly observed.
- Before registration, the academic advisor approves the courses which could be registered by the student during a specific semester on the SIS. If the student approves the suggested courses, he/she proceeds to course registration. If the student does not approve of the suggested courses, the

student shall personally meet with the academic advisor to discuss any modification.

E) Change in Academic Advisor

Occasionally circumstances may arise that call for consideration of a change in academic advisor. A student wishing to change academic advisor shall communicate informally with the programme coordinator to check for the reasons for change and for the availability of another academic advisor. The student then submits a formal request to change advisor, the request is to be approved by the programme coordinator to keep advising load on faculty equitable.

Acknowledgement
This policy and procedure were originally designed by AOU Lebanon branch and has since been approved and adopted as an institutional policy for AOU.