

# Faculty of Science Academic Advisory System

## Past, Present and Future

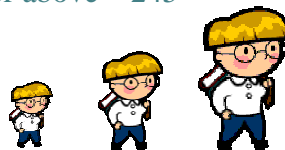
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*Associate Dean (Student Affairs)*  
*Faculty of Science*

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### Faculty Profile

- 2 Schools: Chinese Medicine / Life Sciences
- 4 Departments: Chemistry / Mathematics / Physics / Statistics
- Offering 15 Programmes
- Teaching staff: over 140  
*(including Professors, Teaching Fellows and Senior Lecturers & Lecturers)*
- Supporting staff: over 60  
*(including Technical staff, Faculty / General Office staff, Office assistants, etc....)*
- Undergraduates - 2481
  - Y1 – 1094 / Y2 – 591 / Y3 – 551 / Y4 or above – 245
  - 337 non-Local students
- Postgraduates – 524
  - Including 315 non-Local students



As of 5 Sept 2012

## In the Past.....and some Current Practice

- Undergraduate Academic Advice Coordinators in ALL Programmes
- Staff-Student Consultation Committees
  - Appointed chairman + College coordinators + Others
  - Hosting annual meeting (complaints, suggestions, CTE, etc..)
- UG students with academic problems (i.e. term GPA <1.5)
  - Programme will meet with students; find out problems; and suggest solutions
  - May refer the cases to OSA, if necessary
  - Keep track of the students' progresses and performance
- PG students are taken care of by Supervisors or Division Heads
- Non-local students will be taken care of by LEO. Some programmes may assign particular staff to look after Mainland students.

## Present and Future

- Faculty Committee on Academic Advising
  - Chairman: Assistant Dean (KN Leung)
  - Members
    - 2 representatives from LSCI
    - 5 representatives (BCME, CHEM, MATH, PHYS, STAT)
    - Associate Dean (Student Affairs)
  - Meeting at least twice per academic year (June / January)
  - Recommendations on student waiver cases before they are put to the Faculty Board for consideration



- **Level I Advisors**

- Over 100 / 1:25
- Meeting students at least once a year; taking record of meeting
- Provide advice: course selection, guided study, adaptation to University; and learning strategies.
- Transfer problem cases to Level II Advisors if needed.



- **Level II Advisors**

- 1-3 per programme
- Meeting students with academic problems (probation or extended probation).
- Develop plans to assist the students
- Keep track of progress
- Advise Department / Faculty on student applications for suspension of studies
- Refer serious cases to the appropriate units for attention
- Take record of meetings

## Challenges in Academic Advisory System

- **Implementation**

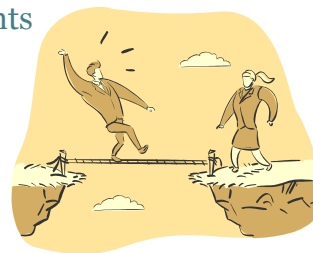
- Scope of scheme (focus)
- Staff participation (team work)
- Students towards academic advising (labeling effects)

- **Communication**

- Diversity of students' background
- Expectations of advisors and students

- **Support and Recognition for Staff**

- Experience and philosophy
- Training
- Load points



## What did we learn?

- General Offices of our Programmes are good channels of communication with students.
- Students find staff in GO are more warm and approachable.
- The longest journey starts with the small first step. Initiation is important. Often times, students in need of assistance will be revealed through friendly chats.
- Students are often shy to speak out, and do not always turn to other for help and support.
- Some common problems:
  - **Adaptation to University life**
  - **Time management – too much involvement**
  - **Financial problems**
  - **Family problems**
  - **Inter-personal relationship**
  - **Conflicts with supervisor**
  - **Language problems**



## Pastoral care for postgraduate students

1. Each department / programme in the Faculty has a well-established Staff-Student Consultation Committee.
2. Committee holds regular meetings with undergraduate and postgraduate students (PG).
3. PG could communicate face-to-face with professors, and share their feelings and learning experiences, discuss matters related to their academic performance, and give feedback to the department / programme.
4. Professors have their inputs on various matters. The PGs' concerns and matters would be channeled back to the department / programme for follow-up actions.
5. As for individual academic / non-academic problems, PG could seek help and support from their supervisor or the Division Head.

6. Each PG are being looked after by his / her supervisor and members of the thesis committee (in some departments / programmes).
7. Students could also approach the Division Head, Chair of Department or and Programme on matters that could not be resolved with their supervisors.
8. In our Faculty, we recognize that the training of PG is part of teaching. In most of our departments / programmes, teaching load will be assigned to teaching staff with PG under his/her supervision.
9. In general, Division heads and postgraduate student advisors in our Faculty follow existing standard designs in assisting postgraduate students and exercise great care in supervising the students.

#### **Ways for improvement**

1. Publicize available resources and supports to PG in students' handbook and departmental webpage. Teachers should also be informed about available resources so that they could be more helpful when providing counseling to students.
2. Link the PG to the College system. Provide college affiliations to students so that they could have a better sense of belonging and get to know more friends with different backgrounds.
3. Organizing PG society in the Departmental or the Faculty level. So far, a few departments within the Faculty have established PG Societies.
4. Organize more activities (outdoor activities such as biking, hiking, cooking contest, culture show, and indoor activities such as debates and seminars) to enhance interactions among PG and promote team spirit.
5. Organize an annual Research Day. PG may be nominated to give oral presentations, and hence promotes a sense of achievement. The event also aims at enhancing interactions among students and teachers.

6. Organize lunch gatherings between supervisor and students help strengthen teacher-student personal relation. Setting a budget for such a practice will be useful.
7. Focus on common problems among postgraduate students and (perhaps) students from Mainland in particular, the Units should organize seminars: time management, adaptation to HK living and learning environment, social issues, handling of stresses ...
8. Enhance communication between PG and professors. Useful to have PG representatives in Department / Faculty Board.
9. Work with OSA to organize workshops and seminars on student counseling for teachers.
10. Enhance PG orientation at Departmental or Faculty level at the beginning of the academic year.
11. University should recognize the importance of leisure activities and sport facilities for PG. Could they also have access to sport facilities in the Colleges?
12. Setup a PG hotline for those seeking assistance.

**“ They don’t CARE how much you do;  
They want to know how much you CARE.”**

**Thank You**

**Acknowledgement:** This set of ppt slides was prepared by the staff in the Science Faculty Office.