Advisory Handbook,

Faculty of Engineering Sciences,

GIK Institute

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1. Background:

Research has shown that academic advising has the highest impact on student/advisee success [1]. It also has a positive impact on retention and success [5- 7]. Furthermore, it is a highly rewarding role both for the academic advisors as well as the students if it is working well [8]. The aim of this process is to help engage students in thoughtful, proactive academic planning, decision making, goal setting, and problem resolution.

2. Definition and outcomes for student advising

Student advising has many dimensions and hence can be defined in several ways. One good definition is as follows [4]:

"Student advising is a dynamic relationship between a student and advisor. At its center is a shared responsibility for a coherent education plan that incorporates personal, social, academic, and career considerations. Advising focuses on helping students identify life goals, acquire skills and attitudes that promote intellectual growth, and become academically successful."

In another place [11], advising has been defined as:

"… Academic advising synthesizes and contextualizes students' educational experiences within the frameworks of their aspirations, abilities, and lives to extend learning beyond campus boundaries and timeframes"

The learning outcomes for students out of the advising process include [4]:

1. Understanding and taking responsibility for their role in the advising relationship
2. Having the ability to read and understand their degree course/credit requirements
3. Understanding how policies and requirements affect their plans
4. Understanding and articulating their specialization and career options based on their interests, skills and abilities
5. Being able to make effective decisions related to both personal life and career.

The learning outcomes for advisors include:

1. Understanding and applying student development and learning theory
2. Using feedback to understand students' needs and to improve their advising practices
3. Staying current on curricula, department, and institute policies

3. Introduction to FES Student Advisory Framework:

The Faculty of Engineering Sciences (FES) at GIK Institute has a students' advisory program in place to help and guide the students in all matters related to their academic progression and personal growth at the institute. Several faculty members from FES are made available to the students for discussions related to both academic and non-academic matters. All the students

are thus advised to meet with their advisors regularly and discuss matters of interest and importance to them.

All the FES students have an advising network that includes:

A. Batch/Academic advisors and coordinators
B. Prep- program advisors (Only for freshmen)
C. Head of Advisory Unit
D. Dean, FES

A. Batch/Academic Advisor and Batch Coordinator

Two faculty members are assigned to each batch/year of students who will be primarily responsible to look after the advisory needs of the students of a particular year/batch. These are designation and roles are described below:

1. **Batch Advisor**
   1. Generally, a relatively more senior/experienced person from the faculty.
   2. Responsible to provide guidance to students on matters related to their academic progression, personal growth, and all related aspects as identified in section 4 of this handbook
   3. Responsible to approve courses registration for individual students on CMS
   4. Responsible to conduct batch advisor meetings in an effective manner, take corresponding actions, and give feedback to students.
2. **Batch Coordinator**
   1. Responsible to provide guidance to students on matters related to their academic progression, personal growth and all related aspects as identified in section 4 of this handbook
   2. Responsible to conduct batch advisor meetings in an effective manner, take corresponding actions, and give feedback to students.

Batch/academic advisor and coordinators for the different batches are given in appendix A.

B. Prep program advisors (only for freshmen)

FES has initiated a special advisory program, known as the 'Prep Program', to help the first-year students settle down in the university. For more details regarding this program please refer to 'Prep program advisory handbook' available in the faculty.

C. Advisory Unit Head

The advisory services offered at FES are headed by the head of the advisory unit at FES. The students can inquire about advisory unit head contact details from their batch advisor or coordinator and are also given below. You may contact the head of the advisory unit in case you are facing any issue regarding the advisory services offered at the faculty. Contact details of the head of the advisory unit are given in Appendix A.

D. Dean of Faculty of Engineering Sciences

The Faculty of Engineering Sciences is headed by a Dean. The students can discuss any issue of importance with the Dean as well, however, it is recommended that they first discuss the issue with their batch advisor, or the head of the advisory unit, before walking up to the Dean's office. The contact details of Dean FES are also given in Appendix A.

4. Scope and nature of student advising

The success of a student advisory program requires clear definition for the nature and scope of the student advising which is understood and agreed upon by all the stakeholders. Advising practices should support the aimed learning outcomes for the students and should be adapted to better meet the learning outcomes. Student advising at FES, GIKI has following dimensions:

A. Cohort/collective batch advising

- done via the batch advisor meetings conducted twice a semester

B. Personalized/One-to-one student advising

- done via one-to-one meetings between the advisor/coordinator and the student/advisee. These meetings should cover the following points:
  1. **Aims and Purposes of Higher Education** – includes advice and consultation regarding the aims of the university, the meaning of higher education, the essence of disciplinary and interdisciplinary study, the reasons for academic requirements, the expected standards of achievement, and the spirit and satisfaction of scholarly work [3].
  2. **Guidance related to curriculum and degree planning** – includes advice related to degree completion requirements, course load and registration policies, pre-requisites/co-requisites, specialization offered and selection, associated administrative procedures etc. Specialization selection should be situated in the broader context of exploration, self-knowledge, goal setting, decision making, and planning for a career, and lifelong learning [4].
  3. **Student Development** - Includes interest in the student's goals and problems, establishment of rapport, development of the student's self-awareness via use of active listening. Promote decision making and independent thinking by assisting students in their exploration of personal, academic and career goals.
  4. **Student Career Planning and Life goals** – advice related to student's career opportunities after degree completion including exploration of life goals, values, abilities, interests, limitations.
  5. **General wellness counseling** – The batch advisors/coordinators will also act as student mentors, and hence try to understand the issues being faced by the student

which may be hindering his/her academic progress. These issues may be related directly to academics or, at times, may be personal in nature but impact both his/her wellness as well as academic progress. Whereas the advisor will do his/her best to guide, it is important that both the advisors and the students recognize that the advisor cannot possibly meet all student needs, especially those which need specialized attention, e.g., mental wellness etc. For such needs, the advisor should refer the student to such specialized services which are offered at the institute, e.g., Students' wellness counselor, hospital etc.

5. Major Activities to be conducted by Batch Advisors/Coordinators

A. Student courses selection and registration

- **When**
  - In the first couple of weeks of each semester
- **How**
  - The students should meet with their academic advisor in the start of the semester to discuss their academic progress and selection of courses accordingly for that semester. The meeting can be initiated by either the student or the academic/batch advisor.
  - The purpose of the meeting is to discuss issues related to the academic and personal growth of the student in a friendly environment. The students struggling with academics need the most attention and care from their advisors.
  - Students/advisees should be encouraged to take ownership of their academic progress and personal growth at the university, set targets, and follow-up on the achievement of the targets. Tips and advice which may help the students should be provided, but the students should be allowed to take their own decisions, e.g., regarding course selections within the prescribed limits, and take responsibility of those decisions. This is part of the learning process for the students.
  - The academic advisor/coordinators would also play the role of mentors and provide a safe environment for the student to discuss other issues which may be hampering their academic progress. However, the advisors should acknowledge that they are not professional counselors and hence should refer to professional resources which may be present in the campus for the wellness of student mental health.
  - The advisors/coordinators and the students should understand well the scheme of study and the pre-requisite courses requirements. Please refer to the prospectus for the concerned batch in this regard.

- Advisors/Coordinators should check by the end of registration time that all the students have registered for their courses as per the registration policy provided by the A&E department.
- CMS coordinator for the faculty should be contacted for issues related to course registration on the CMS. His contact details are given in the appendix A.
- **Applications to be forwarded for special cases**: At times, it is required to forward student applications to the Dean and/or A&E office to get special permissions, e.g., extra load, pre-req waiver etc**. It is important that the application be sent in a formal manner using a standard application letter format [13,14], which should be typewritten suing A4 pages, and duly signed by the applicant as well as the advisor/coordinator.**
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B. Batch Advisor meetings

- **When**
  - Twice a semester, once before and once after the mid-term
- **How**
  - **Inform the students about the importance of this meeting** and their feedback (e.g., used by school, institute and PEC etc.), **confidentiality of information** and their responsibility to **take the process seriously** and provide useful feedback
  - **Provide feedback to the students** regarding actions taken against the issues raised by them in the previous batch advisor meeting.
  - **Take feedback from the students on their courses in a 1-by-1 manner.** The goal being to **seek positive and constructive feedback** to improve the delivery of the courses
  - **Discussion on points specific to the year being advised,** e.g., 1st years (adjustment to university life), 2nd years (selection of streams), 3rd years (internship and FYP selection), 4th years (FYP and career/graduate study options)
  - **Discussion to improve students' understanding of CLOs, PLOs and OBE system**, its importance e.g., degree recognized internationally etc., and the importance of attainment of PLOs and repercussions if not attained.
  - Discussion on **other issues faced by the students (hostel life etc.)**
  - **Encourage students to meet in office** in case someone hesitant to discuss matters in public
  - **Frank discussions and confidentiality of provided information** such that students do not be afraid of repercussions
  - Make sure by giving some time to all the students to **fill in the forms for feedback**
  - **Information obtained should not be shared** with anyone else
  - **Meeting minutes**

> - **In-meeting discussions + written feedback from the students both should be consulted** in writing minutes
> - Personal/abusive remarks should not be included
> - **Emphasis should be on the common remarks** coming from a reasonable number of students
> - Share the meeting minutes with the dean, and have in-person discussion with the dean if need be
- **Action plan for corrective measures (CQI loop)**
  > - **Make and execute an action plan to solve the issues raised by the students** and **provide feedback** regarding action taken against their concerns to the students in the next batch advisor meeting

6. Student – Batch Advisor/Coordinator relationship and responsibilities.

The key to successful academic advisement depends on the ability of the advisor and of the advisee/student to enter a relationship which recognizes the nature of the academic advising process, and stresses that both the advisor and the advisee/student carry responsibilities in the advising process [3,11].

A. Advisor responsibilities:

1. Articulate a personal philosophy of academic advising.
2. Create rapport and build academic advising relationships.
3. Communicate in an inclusive and respectful manner.
4. Plan and conduct successful advising interactions.
5. Promote student understanding of the logic and purpose of the curriculum.
6. Facilitate problem solving, decision-making, meaning making, planning, and goal setting.
7. Engage in on-going assessment and development of the advising practice

B. Student Responsibilities:

1. Check emails regularly and respond in a prompt manner
2. Make himself/herself available for meetings with the advisor/coordinator
3. Discuss matters of academic progress, career development and personal development with his/her advisor in a frank manner.
4. Take ownership of his/her academic progress and personal development and make his/her own decisions along with their action plan and regular assessment considering advice received from the advisors.

In any academic advising program, some students propose actions with which the academic advisor cannot agree. In some cases, advisors are responsible for informing students of the appropriate course of action. Nevertheless, final decisions relative to course scheduling and program planning are made by the students, and they must assume primary responsibility for such decisions, particularly when these are inconsistent with the requirements of the faculty/institute.

7. How the students should contact/meet with their advisors

The students should note that the faculty members (whether academic advisor, prep-program advisor, head advisory unit, or Dean) may have lots of other commitments e.g., teaching, research etc. Thus, the students must consult him/her for setting up time for the meetings. If a meeting call has been sent to the students to their email addresses, they must come for the meeting at the time and venue as prescribed in the email. They can ask their advisor to change the meeting time if it is inconvenient for the students.

If the students want to meet with any of their advisors outside of a prescribed meeting time, it is advisable that they first seek an appointment from the advisor. Meeting time appointments can be sought either directly going to the advisor's room and asking him/her for a suitable day/time to meet, or to send him/her an email for an appointment. Students can always inform their advisor if there is something which needs urgent attention.

It is advisable that the students follow the following hierarchy to discuss any matter/ seek solution to any problem.

1. Prep-program advisor (freshmen only) or batch/Academic advisor/coordinator
2. Head of Advisory Unit
3. Dean FES

8. Useful Information:

- **Important Numbers** (save in mobile, and place on room wall)
  - Academic advisors/coordinators at FES → See appendix A of this handbook
  - GIK Exchange / Helpline (external callers: +92 938 281026, Internal callers: 9)
  - Medical Center (+92 938 281026, Ext. 2434 and 2634)
  - Dean FES - → See appendix A of this handbook
  - Head Advisory Unit → See appendix A of this handbook
  - Student Wellness Counselor (sumira@giki.edu.pk, +92 938 281026, Ext. 2511)
  - Dean Student Affairs (+92-938-271858, Ext: 2543)

For any information related to the advisory matters for the students (queries, suggestions, complaints, commendations etc.), please contact the head of the advisory unit at FES (asad.mahmood@giki.edu.pk)

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Appendix A

Batch advisors and Coordinators for the FES Students

- **Freshmen / 1st year students:**

  1. Prof. Dr. Sirajul Haq - Freshmen Batch Advisor (siraj@giki.edu.pk)
  2. Mr. Shahid Ahmad - Freshmen Batch Coordinator (shahid.ahmad@giki.edu.pk)

- **Sophomores / 2nd year students:**

  1. Dr. Asad Mahmood – Sophomores Batch Advisor (asad.mahmood@giki.edu.pk)
  2. Engr. Sheharyar - Sophomores Batch Coordinator (sheharyar.gik@giki.edu.pk)

- **Juniors / 3rd year students:**

  1. Dr. Tehseen Qasuria– Juniors Batch Advisor (qasuria@giki.edu.pk)
  2. Lecturer Engr. Saqib - Juniors Batch Coordinator (muhammad.saqib@gik.edu.pk)

- **Seniors / 4th year students:**

  1. Dr. Zahir Iqbal– Seniors Batch Advisor (zahir@giki.edu.pk)
  2. Lecturer Engr. Fahad - Seniors Batch Coordinator (fahad.zulfiqar@gik.edu.pk)

Advisory Unit Head:

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Dean FES:

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CMS Coordinator for the Faculty:

Lecturer Engr. Fahad (fahad.zulfiqar@gik.edu.pk)