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**Advisory services in the  
student life cycle  
provided by universities**

**HRK Hochschulrektorenkonferenz**

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## **I. Advisory services in the student life cycle provided by universities**

- a. In-house, high-quality advisory services throughout the student life cycle is a profile-forming element for every university.
- b. Advisory services offered by each university are integrated into its internal quality management system and aligned with its quality standards.
- c. The university's advisory services and events are consistently geared to the individual interests of those seeking advice. This guarantees that the entire diversity of subjects at a university is taken into account and thus guarantees this diversity of subjects.
- d. External providers of comparable advisory services must demonstrate the same independence, university-appropriate knowledge and focus on the interests of students. Whether and under what conditions external providers are involved is for the respective university to decide. To this end, universities should define criteria, agree on them contractually with external partners and review them if necessary.

## **II. Advisory services at universities**

The student life cycle begins with informing and advising prospective students, the recruitment, selection and admission of students, continues through the individual stages of study and ends with alumni and their entry into professional life. As institutions geared towards research and teaching, universities are obliged to serve the interests of prospective students, students, researchers and teachers when providing guidance and advice in individual fields.

Over the past 20 years, German universities have invested a great deal in the establishment and continuous development of a comprehensive range of advisory services with centralised student advisory services, subject-specific student advisory services, career services, alumni organisations and other institutions specific to universities in order to provide the target groups of prospective students, students and graduates with a comprehensive range of services from the beginning of their studies until they successfully start their careers. This also includes advice on start-ups, doctorate programmes and academia as a career.

The services provided by the universities' centralised student advisory services, career service facilities and alumni organisations allow universities to fulfil their responsibility towards their target groups.

## **III. Specific advisory tasks**

Supporting prospective students and students in deciding for or against a study programme, in selecting a study programme, in transitioning to higher education, in commencing studies as well as in the course of studies is an integral part of the tasks of universities. The scope of responsibilities of the **student advisory services** includes informing and advising prospective students, general preparations for studying and the different

phases of the course of studies. It includes informing and providing advice about the organisation and conditions of a study programme as well as psychologically sound advice on how to deal with the demands of studying (decision-making, orientation, performance and personal responsibility) and those of student life in a way that is suitable for the individual. Psychological or psychotherapeutic support services are available or arranged for students experiencing crises in their personal lives.

Centralised "general" student advisory services are provided by qualified student advisers. Decentralised subject-specific advisory services are provided by qualified university lecturers or academics (subject counselling).

General student advisory services provide interdisciplinary information, in particular about study options, content, structure and requirements of a study programme. In the event of problems in the chosen study programme, it offers interdisciplinary support in finding solutions and alternatives.

Subject counselling is provided on a decentralised basis by the responsible subjects and supports students by providing subject-related advisory services during their studies and shows ways as well as possibilities of how the chosen study programme can be completed appropriately and without loss of time or whether alternatives should be considered. Student advisory services are provided in person and take into account the individual life situation of those seeking advice.

With the expansion of universities, the differentiation of subjects and the rapidly growing number of applicants with heterogeneous study prerequisites, as well as the promotion of self-directed study, the provision of information and advice regarding a possible change of subject is becoming increasingly important<sup>1</sup>.

**Career services** inform and advise students on their professional orientation and during the transition phase from their studies to their professional or academic career. Career services can also help to improve the practical elements of study programmes by strengthening the exchange between teaching and the world of work and can facilitate networking in this context. As a third element, career services should manage contact between universities and employers and provide contact platforms with companies, such as online job exchanges and events. Referral advice is also provided in individual cases. Career services thus make an indispensable contribution to the employability of students<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See: "Die Studienberatung in den Hochschulen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland" (Student advisory services in universities in the Federal Republic of Germany), Resolution of the 173rd Plenary Session of 4 July 1994.

<sup>2</sup> See: "Career Services," Recommendation of the 11th General Assembly of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) on 22/11/2011.

Universities keep up-to-date information on career prospects for graduates. Career services, often in cooperation with alumni management, maintain contact with numerous alumni as well as with employers who employ alumni of the university. Career services can incorporate this specific career development knowledge as well as opportunities for application experience and career entry across the entire range of subjects at the university into their advisory services and events. On the other hand, the feedback on the alumni's experience can also be used in work with students and the development work of the university.

**Alumni work** has become an important part of German universities. It focuses on the relationship of the university as a whole with its students, members and graduates and combines this with a culture of appreciation and recognition. In this context, alumni activities are not only of direct importance in terms of networking or for the possible acquisition of donations, *they also offer universities* the opportunity to use alumni work as an instrument for study programme and organisational development. This wealth of experience can have a positive impact on the advisory services offered by universities. The involvement of graduates links the universities even more closely with the various sectors of society and promotes exchange with them.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See: "Zur Rolle der Absolventenvereinigungen" (The role of alumni associations), statement of the 183rd Plenary Session of 10 November 1997