

UNIVERSITY OF WEST ATTICA

SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND CARE SCIENCES DEPARTMENT
OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

AND

SCHOOL OF ADMINISTRATIVE, ECONOMIC & SOCIAL
SCIENCES DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION AND CARE

INTERDEPARTMENTAL POSTGRADUATE STUDIES
PROGRAM

"EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES THROUGH INNOVATIVE
TECHNOLOGIES AND BIOMEDICAL APPROACHES"

OPERATIONAL REGULATIONS FOR THE INSTITUTION OF
THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR

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1. Introduction – General Provisions

The institution of the "Academic Advisor" of the Interdepartmental Postgraduate Studies Program (IPSP) "Educational Sciences through Innovative Technologies and Biomedical Approaches," harmonized with Article 62 of the Internal Operational Regulations of the University of West Attica (Government Gazette 4621/Issue B'/21.10.2020), aims to provide support and guidance to the postgraduate students of the IPSP on matters related to the progress and successful completion of their postgraduate studies, as well as on career matters.

The role of the academic advisor is undertaken by an instructor or collaborator of the IPSP [member of the Teaching and Research Staff (TRS), or Laboratory Teaching Staff (EDIP), or Special Technical Laboratory Staff (ETEP), External Scientific Collaborators, etc.].

Academic advisors undertake the guidance of newly admitted students and monitor the progress of the postgraduate studies of the students they are assigned to, until the completion of their studies.

The institution operates compulsorily, as the Governing Bodies of the IPSP are convinced that academic advising can significantly contribute to the smooth academic progress and success of the Program's students.

The Secretariat of the IPSP informs the newly admitted students regarding the operation of the institution, as well as the relevant procedures.

2. Allocation of students to academic advisors

The procedure for allocating students to academic advisors is conducted as follows:

- The number of newly admitted students to the IPSP (Interdepartmental Postgraduate Studies Program) is divided by the number of active collaborators and potential academic advisors, in order to determine the number of students to be allocated to each academic advisor.
- A primary goal is for the allocation of students to each academic advisor to be consistent with the relevance of the student's basic degree/specialization to the cognitive subject/specialization of the academic advisor. If such relevance is not apparent, the allocation is made by appointment or by lot.
- The Program Steering Committee (PSC) of the IPSP approves the lists for the allocation of postgraduate students per academic advisor and authorizes the IPSP secretariat to inform the interested parties.
- The academic advisor's details are communicated to the student after the completion of their enrollment in the IPSP and at the commencement of the Study Program's educational activities. The student is encouraged to make immediate contact and communicate with the academic advisor. It is recommended that the first meeting between the academic advisor and the student takes place during the first month of studies in the Program.
- In the event of an academic advisor's absence on educational or other leave, their respective record and advisory duties are temporarily undertaken by another academic advisor, following a proposal by the Director of the IPSP.

3. Procedure

The Academic Advisor ensures the creation of an autonomous section ("course") titled "Academic Advisor" in the IPSP (Interdepartmental Postgraduate Studies Program) course catalogue on the e-class platform (following the corresponding procedure for creating taught courses).

At the commencement of studies in the IPSP, newly admitted postgraduate students are notified, via a message from the IPSP secretariat or through an announcement on the IPSP website and/or in the e-class section of each academic advisor, of the allocation of each student to an academic advisor, as well as a list with the names of the academic advisors and their contact details.

Postgraduate students are encouraged to enroll on the e-class platform page of the academic advisor to whom they are assigned, so that direct communication among all group members is possible and they are able to receive systematic academic and research support, collaboration, and guidance.

At the beginning of the academic obligations for each study cycle, a regular meeting is scheduled between the academic advisor and the students who are members of his/her group. All members of the respective academic advisor's group participate in the initial meeting, which is conducted in person and/or via teleconference and serves an informative purpose regarding the institution of the academic advisor and the support it can provide.

Subsequently, meetings between students and the academic advisor are expected to be scheduled on a case-by-case basis. These meetings are initiated by the students whenever they deem they require support. In emergencies and for particularly serious matters concerning students, a meeting may be initiated by the academic advisor. The content of the discussions is confidential, and the student's personal data is protected by the academic advisor.

4. Duties of Academic Advisors

I. General advisory work

The academic advisor contacts each student they have undertaken at least two (2) times during each semester, at the beginning and at the end of the semester. The time interval between two consecutive meetings cannot be less than one (1) month, except in exceptional cases. The academic advisor advises the student, without their suggestions being mandatory.

II. Special advisory work

The work of the academic advisor is to guide and support students, aiming for the successful attendance and completion of their study program and the removal of obstacles they may encounter during their postgraduate studies. A primary duty of the academic advisor is to suggest the optimal way for postgraduate students to achieve their individual goals. The academic advisor can provide support to the student on matters concerning the connection of professional activity with postgraduate studies. Furthermore, the academic advisor may call a student for a meeting if there is a relevant suggestion from another staff member of the IPSP (Interdepartmental Postgraduate Studies Program) who identifies problems of any nature (e.g., continuous absences, systematically poor performance in exercises, unjustified abandonment of an exercise/activity cycle).

III. Participation in the IPSP complaints/objections examination committee.

The Academic Advisor is appointed, by decision of the Program Steering Committee (PSC), before the start of each Academic Year, as a member of the three-member committee for examining complaints/objections that may be submitted by a student they support, with a term of office that coincides with the following Academic Year.

5. Academic Advisor for students facing impediments

I. General provisions – Categories of students facing impediments

Specifically for the academic support of postgraduate students who, for various reasons, may be hindered from participating equally in the academic activities required by their studies (Students with Disabilities (SwD), students from Vulnerable Social Groups (VSG)), the IPSP (Interdepartmental Postgraduate Studies Program) appoints an instructor or collaborator of the IPSP as the Academic Advisor for students facing impediments, who undertakes supportive actions for students facing obstacles that may stem from:

1. physical/somatic disability or impairment (visual, hearing problems, other serious conditions),
2. developmental/mental disorder (learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorders, mental health conditions),
3. social reasons (Vulnerable Social Groups: LGBTI students, student-parents in single-parent families, imprisoned students, immigrant students).¹

The Academic Advisor for students facing impediments acts as the liaison between the hindered students of the IPSP and (a) all coordinators, instructors, and administrative staff of the Program, and also (b) the services of the University of West Attica with which hindered students interact (Secretariat, Library, Medical Office, ERASMUS Office, etc.).

The Academic Advisor for students facing impediments of the IPSP is supported in his/her work by the Committee and the members of the "PROSVASI" (ACCESS) unit operating at the University of West Attica within the Student Welfare Directorate, which coordinates at the institutional level the services provided to hindered students.

II. Appointment of Academic Advisor for students facing impediments

By decision of the Program Steering Committee (PSC) of the IPSP, at the beginning of each academic year, the Academic Advisor for students facing impediments of the Program, as well as his/her deputy, are appointed for an annual term, and the Program Secretariat is authorized to inform the interested parties.

III. Procedure - Responsibilities

For reasons of protecting sensitive personal data, supporting documents related to impediments (e.g., medical reports, decisions of public bodies, certificates, attestations, etc.) are submitted once to the IPSP Secretariat, preferably concurrently with the initial enrollment application for the Program. The Secretariat informs the Academic Advisor, as well as the coordinators of courses that each hindered student will attend/be examined in, about his/her status, the type of academic support he/she is entitled to based on the submitted documents (such as, e.g., extra examination time, oral examination, sign language interpretation, writing assistant, guide for the blind, etc.), as well as about the possibilities for collaboration, information, and updates from the "PROSVASI" unit regarding the support services provided.

The IPSP Secretariat provides students with informational material regarding the services offered by the University of West Attica (UNIWA) through the "PROSVASI"

unit to hindered students, regarding the Program's Academic Advisor for students facing impediments and his/her deputy, as well as their contact details, encouraging hindered students to contact him/her.

Hindered students are encouraged to contact the Academic Advisor for students facing impediments of the IPSP at least once, preferably at the beginning of their studies, and to provide their minimum necessary details as well as information regarding the type of academic support they need. Communication via email is suggested, by sending an electronic message (e-mail) from the students' institutional account (*@uniwa.gr) to the Academic Advisor for students facing impediments, where hindered students will state their status and the minimum necessary information for their academic support:

1. Full name, Student ID Number, e-mail (*@uniwa.gr), landline or mobile phone number.
2. The problem faced by the student, which is declared by selecting one of the basic categories: Special Educational Needs – Dyslexia, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Motor problems, Hearing impairment or Deafness, Visual Disability, Other serious condition.
3. The special support justified by this problem which the student requests to receive during teaching and/or examinations (formulated in free text based on the written medical opinion held by the SwD).
4. Any other request or observation regarding the academic² support needed by the hindered student.

The Academic Advisor for students facing impediments requests from the IPSP Secretariat, for each hindered student who has contacted him/her, the list of courses declared/attended/to be examined in for the current academic semester. If deemed necessary, he/she informs the coordinators and instructors from the beginning of the semester about their presence and participation in their courses. He/She arranges for solutions to problems of access to teaching spaces and laboratory exercises. He/She confirms to instructors the right of possible accompaniment of a specific SwD by a writing assistant, sign language interpreter, volunteer supporter or guide for the blind, etc., as appropriate. He/She mediates, if necessary, between the hindered student and the Secretariat for the issuance of certificates and/or confirmation of the right to an examination under special conditions.³ He/She mediates between the hindered student and coordinators/instructors regarding special examination arrangements (e.g., in an online test, creation of a separate User Group in e-class for extra examination time, (supplementary) oral examination for those entitled and wishing it, oral and/or written instructions at the beginning of the examination, etc.). Specifically, before examination periods, he/she brings to the attention of all examiners/proposers (whether TRS/EDIP members or contract instructors of any category) Article 37 "Examination Methods for SwD" of the Internal Operational Regulations of UNIWA (Government Gazette 4621/B/21-10-2020), as it applies after any amendments, which includes more detailed instructions per problem category.

6. Complaints management- Replacement of academic advisor

In the event that the academic advising process does not meet the basic support objectives described in the articles of these regulations, due to the fault of the academic advisor, the student is entitled:

- to submit a relevant complaint by completing the electronic submission form available on the IPSP (Interdepartmental Postgraduate Studies Program) website (<https://edutech.uniwa.gr/e-grammateia/ilektroniki-forma-ypovolis-paraponoy-enstasis/>).
- to request, with a justified application to the Program Steering Committee of the IPSP, the replacement of his/her academic advisor. The application is sent to the IPSP secretariat, which ensures its promotion and examination by the Program Steering Committee at the first meeting after the application's submission.

7. Communication Channels

Communication via the e-class platform is considered the most suitable channel for communication between the student and the academic advisor. This way, all the capabilities of the electronic platform are utilized, especially regarding the immediacy and speed of communication (as announcements from the academic advisor are automatically sent to the email of his/her group members), the coordination of actions and activities (through the platform's calendar), as well as the regular interaction of all group members with the academic advisor, and amongst themselves.

Communication can also be conducted via electronic mail, through the institutional email accounts of students and advisors (*@uniwa.gr).

Any queries from a member along with the academic advisor's answer/suggestion may be publicly announced if deemed to concern the other members of the group, while protecting the anonymity of the interested parties.

Meetings with students can be held both individually, with each student separately, and in groups, to discuss matters of common interest, either in person or via teleconference.