

Academic counseling plan for the Master's degree programme in Biomedical Technology / University of Tampere

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1. Academic counseling in the degree programme in Biomedical Technology

Academic counseling at a university is a process based on observing and improving all learning processes taking place, with the goal of enabling the development of individual expertise and professional capability of both students and teachers, and the improvement of the counseling process itself.

The overarching aim of academic counseling is to ensure that students in the degree programme are able to develop into professionals in their field of study, while also learning the academic skills necessary for further development during their career. The approach of the programme is based on treating the student as an expert in training, who is taking independent responsibility of his/her progress. At the same time, we are providing an environment where guidance and support are readily available, and students are encouraged to stay in close contact with the counselors and teachers

In the MDP in Biomedical Technology programme, students will choose one of three different specialization options: bioinformatics, molecular biology and cell technology. The student's educational background may limit the available options. At the beginning of the studies, each student makes a personal study plan (PSP) under the supervision of an assigned counsellor and the specialization option is chosen as part of this process. The first PSP meeting is organized as soon as possible during the orientation period of the programme. In this first meeting, the background level and interests of the student are discussed and a first version of the personal study plan is drafted. Prior learning and skills of the student will be recognized during this process and taken into account in the personal study plan. The main goal in the PSP meetings is to give the student a clear idea of how the programme will proceed towards the MSc degree. The interests of the student can be taken as a starting point in discussions of preferable optional studies to complement the main subject studies. During the PSP discussions, the career plans and goals of the student are of key importance to ensure that the learning processes will support these goals. After the first PSP meetings, the counsellors are available for consultation at request. The students are encouraged to contact the PSP counsellors in all matters related to the progression of their studies.

2. The general schedule of student counseling in the degree programme

The general schedule for the student counseling processes in the two-year MSc programme is shown in Table 1. Within the scheduled framework, individual supplementary counseling is available.

Table 1. A tentative schedule of student counseling in the MSc degree programme. The schedule may be adapted depending on the needs and goals of the student. The main person responsible for a specific part of counselling is shown in **bold** and is the recommended first contact point for the students.

Time	Main content	Responsible
Start of studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Orientation to university studies - Structure of the curriculum - Recognition of prior learning <li style="padding-left: 20px;">- Personal study plan - Selection of specialization option 	Coordinator , Professor, Head of counseling, PSP teacher.
First year spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A closer look at optional studies - Progress in studies 	Professors responsible of specialization options
Second year fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master's thesis work - Finishing the coursework 	Head of programme , PSP teacher, Head of counseling
Second year spring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Career guidance - Graduation-related matters 	Head of programme, head of study affairs, head of counseling
Whenever needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal guidance in individual meetings 	Coordinator , Head of counseling, all teachers, Head of study affairs

3. Roles and responsibilities of different actors in the counseling process

Study counseling is given by both the academic and administrative staff of the program. The division of responsibilities in the counseling process are depicted in Table 2. The main channels for information and guidance are the PSP meetings, course starts, email-lists, and course specific Moodle portals. Some students participate in administrative committees as student representatives and thereby act as means of communication between the staff and the students.

The head of the programme and head of counseling supervise all students and give academic counseling. Practical counseling is given by the professors responsible of different specialization options, all teachers and the program coordinator as well as the head of study affairs. In the thesis stage, each student is assigned a supervisor for his/her thesis and in addition, the professor responsible of the particular specialization option looks over and evaluates all thesis projects. The thesis plan is signed by both the supervisor and the student. The student and the supervisor are expected to agree on the means and frequency of communications; for example, how often and in which format the student shall present the progress of the thesis. Generally, there are weekly meetings to discuss the work at the active stage of thesis writing. Any irregularities in thesis guidance (e.g. change of supervisor, disagreements, prolonged studies) are addressed and solved on a case by case basis.

There are introductory courses organized in the early stage of the studies such as the

Orientation and Study Planning courses. The electronic study systems at UTA are covered as well as information seeking skills organized by the library. There is also a special orientation course for international students organized by the university.

Table 2. Responsibilities in the different forms of counseling in the degree programme. 1 = Coordination / main responsibility of activity and/or development. 2 = Implementation / partial responsibility. 3 = Participation in implementation / support.

	Pedagogical development of the programme			Coordinating the activities of PSP teachers			Counseling the students		
	Development of programme curriculum	Collection and analysis of student feedback	Training for counseling	PSP practices	Meetings and support for PSP teachers	PSP groups	Counseling	Informing personnel and students about counseling	Student tutoring
Dean	2						3		
Head of study affairs	1	3	1-2	3	3		1	1	2
Coordinator	2	3	2	2-3	3		1	1	2
Head of the programme	1	2	2	2			1	2	1
Head of academic counseling	2	1	2	1	1		1-2	1	2
PSP teacher	2	2	2-3	1-2	3		1	1	
Other teacher	2	2		3			2	3	
Student tutor	3	3		3				2	1-3
Other student	3	(3)		(3)				3	3
Campus psychologist			1		3				
Other joint counseling services			3	(3)			2		

4. Monitoring the counseling process

The success and functionality of the counseling process is monitored and developed regularly on different levels using different indicators:

- At student level: Grades, credit units, and course attendance are used as indicators and discussed twice a year during PSP meetings.
- At teacher and advisor level: Grades given for courses and student feedback (oral and numeric from the online form) are discussed after each period by the head of programme, the head of counseling, teachers and the working group for evaluation matters at the unit.
- At study module or course unit level: Grades and feedback (oral and numeric) are discussed after each period by the head of programme, the head of counseling, teachers and the working group for evaluation matters at the unit.
- At programme level: Number of graduates, proportion of students with over 55 ECTS per year, distributions of lower level indicators (grades, course feedback), graduate and employer feedback are discussed twice per year by the head of program and the head of counseling, and at the teaching faculty meetings.

5. References and links

Academic counselling and guidance at the university:

<https://www.uta.fi/opiskelunopas/en/node/46>

Study Planning and Guidance:

<https://www.uta.fi/opiskelunopas/opiskelunopas/en/during-your-studies/academic-counselling-and-guidance>