

“Advising and Orientation”

Outline of project activities supporting first year and prospective students

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“Advising and Orientation“ is part of the university-wide programme “richtig einsteigen.“ which aims at **enhancing student success by focussing activities on the first year experience**. It is financed by the German government (2012 until 2020). Further projects address **mathematical and literal skills, peer learning activities, professionalization of teaching** at the university and data based **analyses of study success**.

Specially designated **academic advisors** for first year and prospective students are available as **contact persons** in the different disciplines. These advisors **take care of all kinds of questions and problems of first year students** concerning their academic life – by dealing with it themselves or connecting students to the appropriate services. In this way, students **find orientation from the very beginning**. The academic advisors also provide **guidance for prospective students** in order to foster an appropriate choice of subject. Furthermore they **communicate insights from their advisory contacts** to responsible faculty members and **create networks where first year issues are discussed**. These activities promote **institutional changes for better study conditions**.

Participating departments: Biology // Chemistry // Educational Science // History // Health Sciences // Linguistics and Literary Studies // Physics // Psychology // Law // Business Administration and Economics

Main project activity: one-on-one advisory contacts

Complementing activities are ...

questions relate e.g. to procedures and organisation, courses of study, change of subject, performance problems

e.g. online „expectation check“, tests used at schools, assessment days at the university

... for prospective students

Self-assessment instruments
Websites for study information
„Choosing a career“-talks

e.g. podcasts, faq, checklists

... for first year students

New or changed concepts for orientation days
Talks and advisory groups
Workshops

e.g. self- and time-management, learning techniques, prepare consultation hours, group work

e.g. career counselling, choice of profiles



Several activities are carried out by the **academic advisors' project team** across departments, supported by a project coordinator. These activities aim at enhancing **qualified academic advising** and add further measures to **improve study conditions**. Hence **sustainability** is focused.

Engage in professional development

Activities are e.g. to work out specialised knowledge and keep it up to date, learn counselling techniques, engage in a reflective culture, be aware of topics related to university policies, cooperate with relevant partners, use supervision.

Set advisory standards and disseminate them to other faculty members with advising function

Advisory standards are e.g. low-threshold services, welcoming and client-centred mind-set, transparency, confidentiality, reliability.

Develop specific advising concepts for the different departments

Contents of concepts are e.g. advisory services provided, information flow and cooperation, quality assurance, developmental goals and strategies.

Evaluation conditions:

- comprised **two semesters** (2014/15), conducted by an external agency (HIS-HE)
- mainly **qualitative data** (documentation system of goals and activities, analyses integrated)
- some **quantitative data** (documentation of demand, short online survey for assessment of advisory contacts, questionnaires for workshops and orientation days)

Evaluation dimensions:

awareness level // demand-orientation and usage // user rating // effectiveness // sustainability

Evaluation outcomes:

Intensive publicity led to a **very high number of contacts** (8600 per year) **with the intended group who almost always gave positive assessment and feedback**. A **structured assessment of needs** served as a basis for planning further project activities. Users stated that the **activities met their needs**.

Effectiveness is concluded by **professional development** in the project: it is in accordance with the „*competency profile for advisors (counsellors) in (higher) education, profession and employment*“ (result of a research financed by the German government).

An **unresolved issue** is the **financing of staff costs** when the government funding runs out at the end of 2020.

For **sustainability** please see activities in the right box above.

