

CHEM Student Guidance and Coaching & academic advising

Updated on September 21st 2017 – updates marked in red

Master's Programme level

Definition and concepts

Study guidance in universities can take many forms and it can be given as individual guidance, small group meetings or different kinds of discussion and information occasions. It can include thesis supervision, or it can be more formal support during the whole study time. Guidance can be written or face-to-face. Themes for guidance can vary and be, for example, orientation to studies, integrating to academic environment, study processes or study skills. (Levander, Kaivola & Nevgi 2003, 171 – 202.)

Student guidance and coaching describes the entity of student guidance functions in Aalto School of Chemical Engineering. Student guidance and coaching takes many forms and actions in Aalto CHEM, for example academic advising, info sessions, workshops, individual guidance, peer support and learning services.

Aalto School of Chemical Engineering uses the concept **Academic Advising** when referring to tutoring of students by teachers. The concept Academic Advising describes the focus of tutoring functions, and is a more defined goal than just tutoring. The main goal of academic advising is to **provide guidance to students for developing and achieving meaningful educational, professional and personal goals**. Academic advising lasts for the whole duration of the completion of a Master's Degree (two years).

The goals of Academic Advising in Aalto CHEM

- To help students to get to know and engage with their study environment and academic community and study programme.
- To facilitate the interaction between students and academic staff.
- To support the fluent progress of studies.
- To give guidance to students for making one's study plan, to motivate students in their studies
- To make students feel that the school, programme and the staff are interested in and care about every student
- To give advice and guidance on career planning

It should be noted, that part of the Master students have studied their Bachelor's Degree at Aalto CHEM and some start at Aalto CHEM at the Master's level. This means that the need for academic advising may vary considerably. In addition, the needs for academic advising are different for international students compared to Finnish students.

The forms and actors of student guidance and coaching

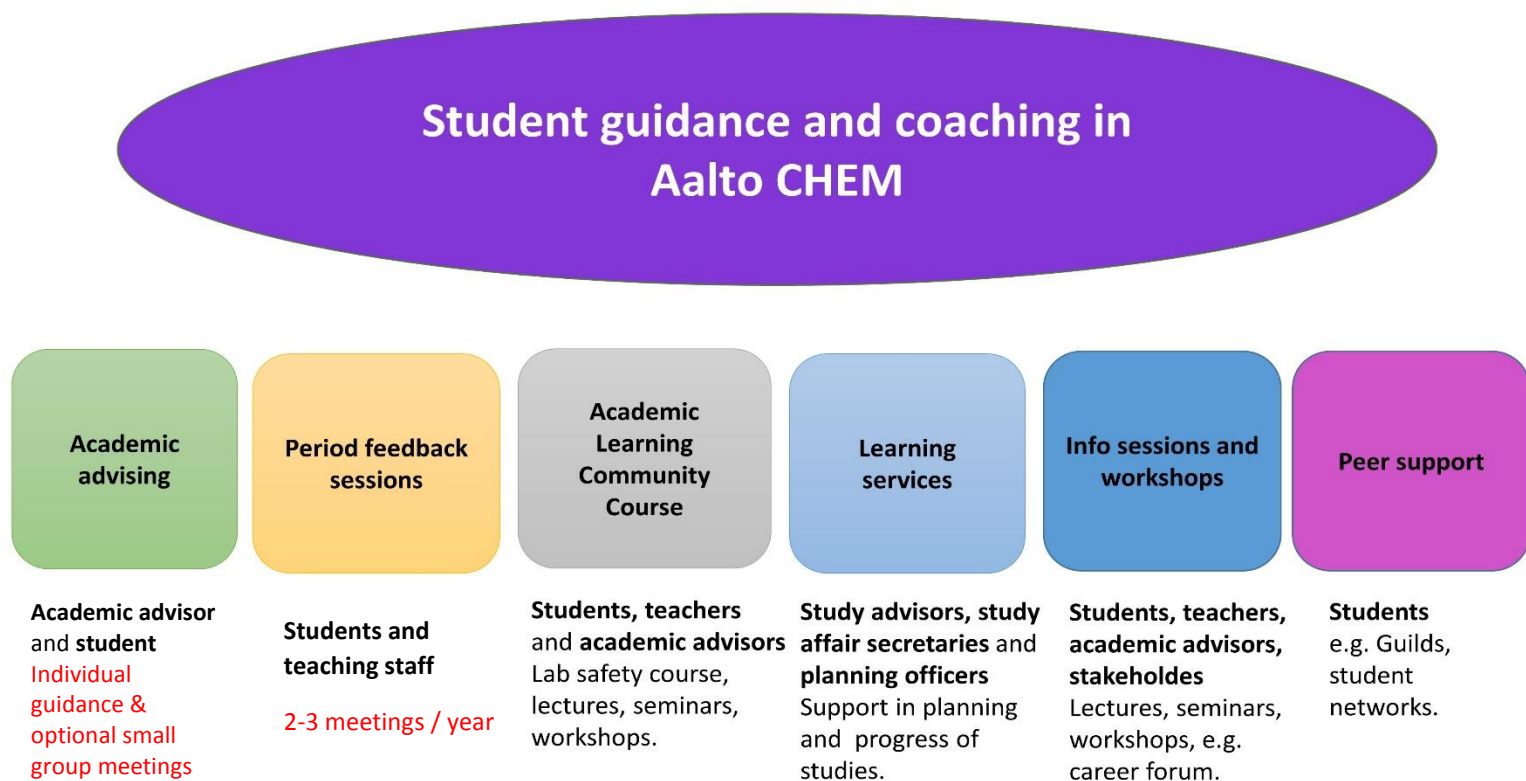


Figure 1. Different forms of student guidance and coaching in Aalto CHEM School.

The responsibilities of an advisor and advisee during advisory process



Advisor responsibilities:

- Being knowledgeable of, and communicating, the requirements of the academic program in which he/she advises.
- Monitoring students' progress toward degree completion.
- Being available to meet with students.
- Referring students to appropriate University resources.
- Proactively involving students in the academic and career planning process, self-reflection, and the exploration of options and resources.



Advisee Responsibilities:

- Engaging in activities to stay informed of issues that affect student success.
- Understanding the importance of academic advising.
- Actively seeking out information relating one's studies on a regular basis.
- Keeping their assigned advisor informed regarding academic issues and challenges.
- Scheduling, preparing for, and keeping advising appointments.
- Knowing and understanding the requirements of his/her individual degree programs.
- Taking final responsibility for making their own decisions according to the best information and advice available.

Figure 2. The responsibilities of and advisor and an advisee.

Academic advising in practice

Master's programme

Academic advising – the outline

- ✓ From the beginning of their studies, students have an assigned academic advisor.
- ✓ Academic advisors follow their advisees until graduation.
- ✓ Every student belongs to an academic advising group (approx. 5 students).
- ✓ Academic advisors may be professors, lecturers or academic staff.
- ✓ Academic advising consists of one individual meeting per semester.
- ✓ The academic advisor does a study progress follow-up for each student once per semester (starting from the 1st spring semester). The study progress follow-up can be combined with the individual meeting.
- ✓ The individual meetings are an obligatory part of the Academic Learning Community course (during the first year).
- ✓ For each individual meeting there are certain topics to be discussed (see below).
- ✓ Academic advisor can organize also optional small group meetings.
- ✓ The first small group meeting is usually organized during the orientation week.

Academic advising during the 1st year



Figure 3. An outline for yearly student guidance and coaching activities for first year students in Aalto CHEM.

At the beginning of the studies the academic advisor meets his/her academic advising group (during the orientation week). This meeting introduces the group members to each other, informs the students about **the goals and purpose of academic advising**, different forms, and actions of student guidance and coaching at Aalto CHEM and supporting students in starting their studies. At the beginning of the first year, the students create their Personal Study Plans (OodiHOPS) and the academic advisors support the students in this process.

The academic advisor arranges **one individual meeting per semester**. The advisor contacts each advisee in order to arrange the meeting (if a student does not reply after one reminder to the meeting invitation the advisor can ask a study advisor, kandi-neuvojat-chem@list.aalto.fi to contact the student). There are cue cards to help the academic advisors with the meetings. The topics that need to be covered during each individual meeting are listed in the cue cards. During the first year, the individual meetings can be related to:

- General well-being
- Personal Study Plan (OodiHOPS)
- study progress

- plans for studies (60 credits / per year)
- elective courses
- major specific courses
- career plans
- summer job / professional training
- master's thesis topic

The topics for discussion are described in more detail in the academic advisor's cue cards.

During the first year, the two individual meetings are an **obligatory part of the Academic Learning Community (ALC) course** and are scheduled within the course. The ALC course complements the guidance and coaching offered via academic advising. It includes laboratory safety course, lectures, seminars and workshops.

The academic advisor does also a **study progress follow-up** for each student once per semester (starting from the 1st spring semester). The reports for study progress follow-up are available in February and in August and are delivered to the academic advisors by planning officers (Learning Services). The follow-up is done before the individual meetings so that the advisor is able to give feedback to each student, also positive feedback to those who have progressed well, during the meeting. If a student hasn't proceeded with his/her studies as expected the academic advisor discusses with the student in order to find out the reasons for the delay and to find solutions and help for the student.

After the individual meetings, **the advisor sends an email to a study advisor** (kandi-neuvojat-chem@list.aalto.fi) stating who he/she has met and who did not show up to the meeting. The advisor also tells the study advisor if there are some issues or need for special support with a student or if there were some problems or questions where the advisor did not know how to answer. The advisor agrees upon the transmission of the information concerning the student together with the student.

The academic advisors can organize also **optional small group meetings** during the academic year. Optional small group meetings can take various forms, for example meetings can be within own group, between different academic advising groups (e.g. some or all the small groups of one major meet) and/or between different majors (e.g. two majors' academic advising small groups meet). There is a budget of 10 € / student and advisor for the group meetings. The expenses are claimed with M2 system as expense claim, project: 901000/T19901, send to (via M2): Arja Tuohino-Chance.

The small group meetings may be integrated also to **period feedback sessions of the major**. Major specific feedback sessions take place during the second and fifth period. All the major students and teaching personnel are welcome to the feedback sessions to discuss and give feedback about the major, both in general level and in course level – what has worked well and what needs to be changed. The course feedback can be given for the courses from previous period as well as for the ongoing courses. In addition, the feedback session and small group meetings alongside, facilitate the formation of sense of community (“we are the students of this major”).

Academic advising during the 2nd year



Figure 4. An outline for yearly student guidance and coaching activities for second year students in Aalto CHEM.

The second year of the academic advising has a similar structure as the first year with the exception that the individual meetings are not tied to the ALC courses schedule. However, there must be one individual meeting per semester and, in addition to that, optional small group meetings can be arranged.

In addition, second year students can participate to different seminars and workshops organized in the school yearly, such as Master's Thesis seminars and career forum.

Major specific Master's Thesis seminars are also part of academic advising during the 2nd year of master level studies and these are open to anyone interested to participate. Master's Thesis seminars are events in which the students graduating present their Master's Thesis (as compulsory part of Master's Thesis). Participating in these seminars is also useful for other than graduating students, for example helping them to ponder on a subject for their Master's Thesis and familiarizing themselves with the practices of doing Master's Thesis. The Masters major are encouraged to book a regular time from the weekly schedule for these seminars for example 2 h session once a month (e.g. the first Mondays of every month between 9 – 11). This is good to discuss and agree together with the school's study coordinator when the official course and exam schedule is planned during spring term. A student can also present thesis work in the seminars

before the thesis is completely ready and thus gain new insights and ideas for the thesis before finalizing it. This will at the same time distribute the seminar times more evenly than having students participate in the seminar only after the work is finalized.

References:

Levander, L. Kaivola, T., & Nevgi, A. (2003). Opiskelijan ohjaaminen. In S. Lindblom-Ylänne & A. Nevgi (Eds.), *Yliopisto- ja korkeakouluopettajan käsikirja*. Helsinki: WSOY, 171 – 202.