

Melbourne Student Advice Model

Student Advice Working Group¹

13 March 2007, updated 13 April 2007

Research Strategy

A HEW 7 Research Officer was seconded for a period of 6 weeks (February 1 to March 14 2007) to assist the Working Group in the development of the Melbourne Student Advice Model. As an accompanying paper shows, the Officer's extensive web and library based search confirmed most accessible student advice literature to be patchy, largely US-based, undergraduate in focus, and minimalist on issues of direct relevance to the Melbourne Model (such as quality assurance and advisor training).

To supplement the literature search, a total of 64 University of Melbourne key stakeholders were consulted by the Research Officer and the Chair of the Student Advice Working Group in the available time: 43 in small groups, and 21 on a 1:1 basis (all consultations written up, with stakeholder identification provided in the accompanying research paper). An additional 7 student advice directors from external Australian universities were consulted, namely Deakin, Monash, RMIT, Swinburne, Griffith, Queensland University of Technology, and Macquarie, supported by institution-specific data searches. The Working Group also drew on a range of recent University of Melbourne documents, including the useful course advice analysis prepared by 2006 Head Start participants, and the Faculty-specific practice audit prepared by Margot Eden and Terrie Healy.

By definition the above process should be regarded as indicative rather than exhaustive, in informing the proposed Melbourne Student Advice Model. Important additional University of Melbourne consultations were held 5 and 7 March, followed by comment from the Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Committee on 8 March. In the next two weeks structured input will also be sought from Academic Board (22 March), as well as the broad range of stakeholders attending the planned Melbourne Student Advice Model Forum (23 March). In preparing this paper, the Working Group further notes the existence of five additional Melbourne Model Workstreams, including a number advising on issues of relevance to student advice provision (for example related to built structures, resource levels and timelines).

Within this complex planning environment the Working Group aimed to define principles and guidelines for the Melbourne Student Advice Model for the next 10 years, recognising this to be an evolving model likely to be refined over time. In doing so the Group strongly affirms the immediate and long term significance of the student advice function, as defined below by the peak US student advisory body.

¹ Lesleyanne Hawthorne, Chair of the Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Group, prepared this policy paper on behalf of the Student Advice Working Group. Tanya Wilding, Research Officer to the Student Advice Working Group, prepared the accompanying research and consultation summary paper. Members of the Student Advice Working Group were as follows in alphabetical order: Professor Lesleyanne Hawthorne (Chair, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences), Mr Paul Fijn (UMPA Student Representative), and Professor Alistair Moffat (Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering). Co-opted Members designed to ensure greater representation from key stakeholders were: Ms Sarah Cornish (Team Leader, Economics and Commerce), Ms Margot Eden (Manager, Academic Programs, Faculty of Science), Professor Patrick Griffin (Faculty of Education), Ms Barbara Hammond (General Manager Careers and Employment), Ms Terrie Healy (Manager, Academic Services, Faculty of Education), Ms Clare Rhoden (Manager, Transition Programs), Assoc. Professor Paul Walker (Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning).

The Melbourne Student Advice Model

'Students succeed at setting goals and making and executing plans to achieve them depending on their knowledge and understanding of themselves, their knowledge of the institutional resources available to them, and their motivation and will to make and accept the consequences of their choices about educational and life opportunities... Advisors succeed at influencing student choices and actions depending on their knowledge of institutional resources and of students' developmental and maturational levels, their sensitivity to students' needs and plans, and their skills in intervention and communication. The richness of institutional resources, including especially the comprehensiveness of curricula offerings and their accessibility for the making and executing of student plans for life and work, influences both student and advisor success.... Approaches to assisting with career choices should emphasize personal responsibility and empowerment to enable independent, purposeful, deliberate, rewarding, and attainable goals.'

'Use of Theory in Academic Advising', D Creamer, in *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook*, Eds V Gordon, W Habley & Associates, Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Company, San Francisco, 2000: 20.

Components		The Melbourne Student Advice Model (MSAM)	
Calibre of student advice (SA) at the University of Melbourne	<p>The delivery of student advice aligned with the Melbourne Model ²(MM) will be without peer in Australian universities in terms of calibre, relevance (breadth and depth), timeliness and convenience. It will represent an exemplary and marketable component of the Melbourne Model, supporting the development of graduates who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academically excellent; • Knowledgeable across disciplines; • Leaders in professions and communities; • Fluent between cultures; and • Active global citizens. <p>The University is fortunate in being able to build on a strong base of pre-existing student advice expertise.</p>		
Student advice context	<p>Within the decade ahead, quality student advice will inform and support the University's transition to the delivery and promotion of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A higher proportion of full-fee degrees; • Six undergraduate New Generation degrees (designed to deliver students an exceptional range of vocational choices and pathways to further study); • An increasingly graduate course focus (expanding Masters, Doctoral and Higher Research options); and • Unprecedented diversity of subject and course design choice 		

² Also the student advice provided to Heritage Program students during the Melbourne Model transitional period.

	(including scope for breadth as well as depth subjects, accelerated study, knowledge transfer, research and e-learning experiences and Australian/international student mobility placements).
Nine student advice principles	<p>Within this context, the University will deliver student advice based on 9 key principles. The Melbourne Student Advice Model will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Address the needs of all student cohorts including those who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prospective and current undergraduate, and prospective postgraduate coursework students; ○ Local and international; ○ Located at Parkville and other sites; ○ New and continuing students; and ○ Enrolled in existing or New Generation (NG) degrees (the latter becoming predominant over time). 2. Develop and implement a Melbourne Student Advice Charter, defining student advice entitlements, standards and service delivery modes. 3. Select/ train professional and academic staff to perform clearly delineated and optimum quality student advice roles; 4. Within this advising process, assist students to develop an educational plan consistent with their life goals and objectives based on accurate information about institutional policies, procedures, resources and programs³. 5. Deliver expert advice throughout the chosen study trajectory, supported by definition of the immediate and long-term merits of breadth as well as depth subject choices, scope for 'best and brightest' degrees (for example Honours), and accelerated study pathways. 6. Provide an exemplary First Year experience, based on world's best practice Orientation and Transition programs available to all enrolled students. 7. Explore knowledge transfer options, including the potential for interaction between the university and non-academic sectors, and completion of Australian as well as international work-to-study internships. 8. Facilitate timely access to specialist services where required, including appropriate language and cultural support, careers and employment, scholarship and financial, disability, indigenous, accommodation, counselling and health, and student advisory services. 9. Supplement one on one personal advice provision with access to purpose-designed high quality web-based information services.
Values informing the Melbourne Student Advice	While the University includes excellent current student advice models, variability in accessibility, consistency, resourcing and

³ The direct source of this principle is 'Current Practices in Academic Advising', W Habley, in *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook*, Eds V Gordon, W Habley & Associates, Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Company, San Francisco, 2000.

<p>Model</p>	<p>transparency of service provision will be addressed to ensure that future student advice is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-centric and caring; • Accountable and transparent; • Well-resourced and distinctively housed; • Documented and retrievable; • Non-partisan (canvassing a range of disciplinary and ultimate career options); • Consistent, timely, comprehensive and based on common rules; and • Supported by ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
<p>Human resources</p>	<p>Melbourne professional and academic staff engaged in the student advice process will be meticulously selected and trained. They will be interpersonally as well as intellectually prepared, and characterised by considerable dedication to the task.</p>
<p>Professional staff student advice role</p>	<p>Professional staff will be the primary providers of student advice at the University of Melbourne, with academic staff roles also central and critically important.</p> <p>Professional SA staff will be impartial, and supported by sound pedagogical theory. They will normally have completed at least one tertiary degree, possess relevant experience, and demonstrate the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding interpersonal skills, including empathy and flexibility (attributes which are difficult to instil via training); • Intelligence, strong organisational ability, and a capacity for lateral thinking and learning; • Strong customer-service orientation; • Commitment to and a detailed understanding of the Melbourne Model, including new ways of teaching, knowledge transfer and learning; and • Capacity to interpret rules and guidelines. <p>In terms of practice, the majority of undergraduate professional student advisors will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-located in a small number of discipline-aligned Student Centres or alternative⁴, each serving some natural catchment of disciplines and campus localities, to be used by ‘traditional’ as well as New Generation students. • Appointed from level HEW 4 to HEW 8, depending on work focus, level of qualifications, personal attributes and experience. • Directed by a HEW 10 staff member, reporting to the Vice

⁴ The Working Group recognises that multiple factors will affect accommodation decisions concerning the location of Tier 1 and 2 student advice – the subject of ongoing deliberation at this time, to be resolved by other Workstream groups.

	<p>Principal and Academic Registrar.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resourced at the ratio of 1 SA staff member to 150-200 EFT students (dependent on the available level of funds⁵). • Recruited from expert current course advice staff, with each Student Centre to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A cluster of discipline-specific student advisors with demonstrable skills of relevance to that base; ○ Additional SA's qualified to advise on the broader range of disciplines/ subject choices students may elect to take (all fields covered); ○ The capacity to cater to different student cohort groups⁶, in addition to referring students (where appropriate) to alternative academic and non-academic sources of advice. <p>A substantial number of postgraduate student advisors are likely to be located in Graduate Schools.</p> <p>Professional staff student advisors will be rewarded by access to enhanced career structures and training opportunities, including incentive/support to complete the University's potential Certificate in Student Advising (delivered by the Centre for Study of Higher Education).</p> <p>They will deliver advice through a unified three tier student advice system, located in spaces that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose-designed; • Accessible to all student cohorts; • Open extended hours; • Warm and welcoming in style; and • Accommodating of a variety of social and learning experiences. <p>The Student Advice service will take account of the potentially uneven student demand.</p> <p>Advisors will be supported in the student advice process by Melbourne's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student System Project; • On-line Degree Planning Tools (available in the new student system); • The new 'How to... and University Life Directories for Students (the Student Directories Project); • The online enquiry system available through the How to... Directory; and • Select additional initiatives being developed in parallel Melbourne Model Workstreams.
--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

⁵ The issue of advisor to student ratios and resourcing levels will be separately addressed April to September 2007 by a purpose designed work group, including Human Resources, Property and Building and TALQAC representation.

⁶ Special needs cohorts will include lateral entry transfer students from external institutions, international students, students with disabilities, indigenous students, rural students etc.

<p>Overall student advice structure</p>	<p>The Melbourne Student Advice Model will be based on three highly networked delivery tiers, with physical locations and supporting organisational structures yet to be decided.</p> <p>Heightened <u>external visibility and promotion</u> will be required for each, to cater to prospective students not yet enrolled at Melbourne (with both web-based and person-to-person modes to be utilised).</p> <p>Exemplary leadership and advocacy will support the Melbourne Student Advice Model, spanning the central University as well as all disciplines and Graduate Schools. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) will lead the program, assisted by the Vice Principal and Academic Registrar.</p>
<p>Tier 1 student advice</p>	<p><u>Tier 1 student advisors will provide an immediate triage service, as follows:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will access their preferred Centre/ location across extended hours (staff rosters catering to part-time and full-time student enrolment options). • SA counter staff will be available without appointment, trained to expertly handle short queries while filtering and referring more complex enquiries (students encouraged to return to the same or an alternative SA officer if their problem/query has not been resolved). • Kiosks will support this counter advice role, reflecting students’ growing preference for e-based and/or distant services. • An ‘Express Lane’ will be provided on-site, to facilitate the provision of brief practical information (eg academic transcript printouts). • Referral of in-depth and/or sensitive student advice queries will be immediately made to co-located Tier 2 officers (as defined below). • Tier 1 staff will be appointed at HEW 4 level. They will possess a comprehensive understanding of the degree programs serviced by that Centre/ location, and a broad understanding of all degree programs. (No student should feel ‘alien’ in a non-cognate area Student Advice Centre). • SA staff will have received detailed training concerning the boundaries of their roles, including when to refer clients to more specialised SA or support service options. • Like Tier 2 and 3 student advisors they will contribute to systematic record-keeping, subject to Melbourne privacy and confidentiality caveats at all times. • Please note that some Tier 1 services may be provided by existing schools and faculties.
<p>Tier 2 student advice</p>	<p><u>Tier 2 student advisors will provide individual consultations (as required) after the preliminary assessment process defined above:</u></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One on one student advice will be delivered by more senior professional SA staff (HEW 5-8), characterised by greater breadth and depth subject training, and supported by significant discipline expertise, such as understanding of future pathways. Advisor locations are yet to be confirmed. • Tier 2 advisors will develop/ maintain excellent links with Departments, Graduate Schools and central units, including with subject coordinators. They will be supported by effective strategies to sustain effective relationships over time as staff move into and out of advisor roles, and to ensure the maintenance of high levels of training and career opportunities. • They will specialise in offering comprehensive academic advice concerning breadth and depth subject choice, knowledge transfer, research and e-learning experiences, volunteer and internship options, and also facilitate access to Tier 3 support. • Designated Tier 2 advisors will provide detailed information and advice to support prospective students in a number of special needs categories including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School-leaver enquiries (seeking information on the attributes and value of Melbourne Model degrees); ○ Lateral transfer enquiries (providing advice on credit transfer and pre-requisite options); and ○ International student/ key stakeholder enquiries⁷ (facilitated by pre-advertising of a dedicated dial-in number as well as email address).⁸ • In addition, Tier 2 student advisors will be trained to adopt a client management approach for students with disabilities, or those at academic or social risk. • In all the above they will be trained to recognise boundaries, and liaise effectively with Student Services, Melbourne Experience Support Programs, and the Student Unions. • Prior to Tier 2 interview completion, advisors will make appointments as required to support seamless transition to the next student advice stage. • Please note that some Tier 2 services may be provided by existing schools and faculties or new graduate schools, whereas some may be offered more centrally. The appropriate balance of centralised versus distributed services is yet to be determined and is likely to differ for undergraduate and postgraduate programs.
Tier 3 student advice	<p><u>Tier 3 advisors will be staff characterised by a strong disciplinary basis, and will differ from the Tier 1 and Tier 2 models by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporating expertly screened, trained and supported academic as well as professional staff. • Location in Graduate Schools or Departments (in the case of

⁷ These enquiries may be from international scholarship bodies, prospective parents, accrediting bodies and employers, as well as students.

⁸ Care will be needed to ensure effective liaison with the admissions area.

	<p>professional staff with regular rotations in/out of Tier 2 roles to maximise knowledge transfer, system connectedness, and facilitate input to Tier 1 and Tier 2 staff training).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of expert in-depth advice concerning subject and course-specific options, catering to prospective as well as enrolled graduate students (recognised as the dominant student advice mode for those in PG degrees). • Effective liaison with subject coordinators and the School of Graduate Research⁹.
<p>Mandatory professional staff advice</p>	<p>The Working Group recommends three mandatory points of contact for students with professional student advice staff, designed to facilitate effective program selection and progression in UG and PG degrees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the start of Year 1; • At the start of Year 2; and • Prior to completion of the second year of study.
<p>Academic staff student advice role</p>	<p>While many student advice functions will be performed by Tier 1 to Tier 3 professional staff, ongoing participation by academic staff advisors represents a crucial component of the Melbourne Student Advice Model, and one both highly valued and sought by students. Such staff will be appropriately trained, rewarded and professionally recognised.</p> <p><u>Mandatory student advice input</u></p> <p>The Working Group recommends that at least two points of academic contact be mandated as a minimum in undergraduate degrees:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By the end of Orientation Week, all commencing students to have the opportunity to attend one or more high-quality discipline-specific presentations, designed to link their study choices with degree and pathway planning. 2. At the mid-point of their undergraduate studies, all students to attend course advice meetings with a Tier 3 academic advisor, designed to discuss potential majors, and canvass in reasonable depth preferred pathway options. <p>To complement these advisor sessions, in September of each year there will be a high profile and celebratory ‘Melbourne Model Pathway’ week, underpinned by senior academic presentations/ workshops showcasing the merits of select majors, in addition to MM graduate programs. This will also allow for the presentation of career pathways (to be supported by input from Careers and Employment). The week will be available to external students with an interest in lateral entry, as well as UG Melbourne students.</p> <p>Comparable academic input will be provided at times and in modes to be defined for all postgraduate and professional course</p>

⁹ This will be the new name of the School of Graduate Studies.

	<p>students.</p> <p><u>Individual academic advice role for all academic staff (ongoing)</u></p> <p>In addition to the above, ongoing academic advice will be available through all undergraduate and postgraduate course years, facilitated where required by Tier 2 and Tier 3 professional staff referrals. Much such academic advice will remain informal.</p> <p>In line with traditional practice, academic staff will also engage in mentoring students, providing detailed discipline-specific and career pathway input.</p> <p>Clear guidance will be provided to academic staff concerning the boundaries of their roles, including how students should access Tier 1 to 3 student advice, or referral to specialist services.</p>
<p>Selection and training of academic student advisors</p>	<p>Academic staff, like professional student advice staff, will be judiciously selected, supported and trained. By definition they will maintain their Graduate School or Departmental discipline-specific base. Academics will be encouraged by the PDF process to maximise their commitment and intellectual engagement to student advice, as well as their capacity to network effectively with professional SA staff.</p>
<p>Training for effective student advice provision</p>	<p>To facilitate the above processes, the University will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and adequately resource academic and professional staff student advice training, as a major institutional priority. • Include input by Student Services and the Melbourne Experience Support Programs into the staff development process, options including introduction to services (contact details and referral processes), effective communication, awareness and customer service training, privacy requirements, and strategies for dealing with students in crisis. • Ensure that training occurs at point of commencement of professional and academic staff student advice roles, supported by ongoing training to update staff. • Annually evaluate the effectiveness of student advice training, from the separate perspectives of professional and academic staff. Quality Assurance metrics may need to be developed. • Provide appropriate incentives for academic participation, as required.
<p>Quality assurance and student advice</p>	<p>Student advice procedures (including staff selection, training and service delivery) will be monitored and evaluated, to facilitate exemplary quality assurance. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Student Advice Schedule will be developed and

	<p>widely circulated, defining timelines/ strategies for student engagement with the advisory system, including access to academic and professional student advice at specific points in time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The needs of identifiable student cohorts will be expertly addressed, including international students, students with disabilities, indigenous students, rural students, lateral entry students, and select other stakeholders requiring course advice (such as scholarship bodies). • Face to face and online student advice processes will be designed to be consistent and complementary. • Appropriate and accessible student advice records will be maintained to facilitate the documentation and accountability of each student’s SA history.
<p>The resource challenge</p>	<p>Finally, resource imperatives must be addressed in introducing the proposed Melbourne Student Advice Model. Exemplary purpose-designed facilities will be required in designated locations. In terms of human resource selection and training, planning must simultaneously address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lead-in time likely to be required for the Melbourne Student Advice Model (given the scale of recruitment as well as initial and ongoing staff training); • The level and type of training required at point of role commencement for both professional and academic staff; • Optimum strategies for up-skilling and quality assurance (in particular for staff rotating in and out of student advice roles); and • The degree to which academic and professional student advisors should be trained apart or together (the latter in order to maximise networking). <p>In the Working Group’s views these issues merit serious attention. They are fundamental to ensuring that an exceptional student advice system is put in place – one capable of effectively promoting and explicating the distinctiveness of the Melbourne Model.</p>
<p>Other challenges</p>	<p>Further work is required to ensure that the Melbourne Student Advice Model:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers a high level of service to sites beyond the Parkville campus; • Is supported by appropriate organisational structures; • <u>Involves adequate numbers of staff at each of Tiers 1, 2 and 3, with an effective mix of centralised and distributed locations;</u> • <u>Is supported, where appropriate, by student peer programs.</u>