



Tempus



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"Development of university counseling and advisory services"

Strategic development of counselling and advisory services at the University of Zagreb



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Strategy outline

(V. Vizek Vidović)

Part 1. Introduction

Background

Key issues: massification, accountability, QA, Bologna process, new demands for teaching and learning, individual developmental perspective, psychosocial adjustment and well-being

Benchmarking – examples of good practice (EU & US)

Common points: diversity of services, mixed organizational model with central coordination and financing, professionalism of service delivery, wide & free access to all, QA mechanisms in place

Legal provisions, need and resources assessment

Methodology: content analysis, surveys, focus groups

SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis

Strengths

- Establishment of the first central support service at university level
- Positive experience with counselling service at the faculty level
- Wide use of IT communication with students
- Counseling and advisory experts among academic staff
- Expertness program development monitoring and evaluation and conducting policy oriented research
- Experiences and activities of student unions and organizations
- QA mechanisms at the institutional level
- High motivation of core group experts to further develop student support services

SWOT analysis (cont.)

Weaknesses

- Lack of strategic approach to the development institutional infrastructure
- Lack of institutional research
- Limited human resources and financial resources
- Inadequate location and space restrictions
- Lack of proper logistics and technical support
- Lack of adequate quality assurance mechanisms
- Lack of specific staff development programs for counsellors and academic staff involved in student support

SWOT analysis (cont.)

Opportunities

- Positive attitude of university and faculty management as well as of students and other stakeholders toward the development student support service
- Possibility to learn from the examples of best practice
- Emphasis on excellence on teaching and learning in university external and internal environment
- International and national networking and cooperation
- Possibility to get initial financial external funding by EU and/or national stakeholders
- Development of new campus with great space potential

SWOT analysis (cont.)

Threats

- Only declarative support to the implementation of the strategy
- Lack of national general strategy for higher education
- Students' lack of interest for using services
- Lack of motivation of academic staff to get involved in the support activities due to the overload
- Lack of proper communication with and between stakeholders
- Low priority in allocating special funds in national budget for support services
- Lack of experts and referral institutions in external environment

Institutional vision and mission

- University of Zagreb as the oldest, largest and the strongest regional institution in terms of the excellence in the research and teaching, should be also recognized as the leading institution in the provision of the high quality student support services as one of the key components of the institutional quality culture.
- The mission of the University of Zagreb is to support all students in achieving their academic goals as well as to enhance their learning potentials by provision of the high quality student support services in order to meet students' diverse needs.

Institutional priorities in development of the student support services

- 1) Development of psychological counseling service for students with adjustment and emotional problems and with specific learning difficulties
- 2) Development of study guidance and academic consultancy with special focus on the first year students
- 3) Development of the advisory support and practical assistance for the students with physical, sensory and learning disabilities and with chronic disease disabilities

Common principles for student support services

- Access for all students free of charge
- Confidentiality and right to choose
- Professionalism in service delivery and ethical conduct
- Respect for individual diversity
- Scientifically grounded interventions
- Embeddedness in institutional quality culture
- Empowerment of students to help themselves and peers
- Evidence based approach to strategic planning
- Cooperation and networking of services

Goal 1. Development of the psychological counselling service *(N. Jokić Begić i G. Lugomer Armano)*

Purpose:

- To provide high quality counseling on emotional problems, mental health and behaviour issues, developmental difficulties in relation to the learning experience and learning environment

Type of addressed difficulties:

- Dealing with the wide range of psychological difficulties – personal, relational, academic

Intervention approach:

- Eclectic approach and flexible use of various types of therapeutic interventions best suited for specific problem (cognitive-behavioral therapy, client-centered therapy, gestalt therapy, integrative psychotherapy, systemic therapy, solution focused brief therapy)

Goal 1. (cont.)

Methods used:

- Individual/couples counseling; educational, developmental and treatment groups; brief crisis intervention

Organization and management:

- Organized as central service with branches at several locations with high concentration of students (new campuses, large dormitories)
- Managed by vice-rector for studies and quality assurance, advisory expert board, head of the unit

Resources:

- Financial/material resources secured by university and projects
- Human resources: full - time and part - time staff with counselling licence

Goal 1. (cont)

Expected outcomes:

- perceived usefulness/satisfaction iwth services
- diminsed level of symptoms after intervention,
- improved academic results after treatment

Sustainability: secured by university funding

Quality assurance:

- definition of standards of good practice and quality indicators
- internal and external evaluation of services
- staff support (supervision) and staff development - (training)
- use of benchmarking and networking

Goal 2. Development of academic guidance and support services

Purpose:

- enhancement of self-regulated learning and academic self-efficacy
- support in realization of academic potentials and high achievements
- diminishment of academic failure and drop-out risk

Types of services:

- to provide guidance in choosing program options,
- to monitor progress of the first year students
- to offer study skill training and remedial tutoring
- to offer consultancy for students with learning difficulties

Intervention approach:

- based on social constructivism using models of self-regulated, experiential and cooperative learning

Goal 2 (cont.)

Methods:

- individual mentoring and tutoring
- facilitation of individual or group studies
- workshops/courses on various “learning to learn” issues
- IT information support

Organization and management

- mentoring and tutoring (focus on the 1st year students) - department level
- remedial study, academic guidance - faculty level
- study skills training provided by central service - university level
- support for students with learning difficulties provided by central service - university level

Goal 2. (cont)

Resources:

- financial/material resources secured by units and university
- human resources: academic staff and graduate students with specific training, professional counseling and rehabilitation experts

Expected outcomes:

- excellency in learning, acquisition of advanced study skills, lower rates of prolonged study period, lower rates of drop-outs

Sustainability:

based on departmental, faculty and university resources

Quality assurance

- development of standards and indicators
- implementation of internal and external evaluation of services
- staff development and supervision of professionals and academic staff
- use of benchmarking and networking

Goal 3. Development of support for students with disabilities

(L. Kiš-Glavaš i M. Zubak)

Purpose:

- giving support to students with wide range of difficulties such as motor impairments, sight and hearing impairment, chronic diseases and learning disabilities in their adaptation and complete social integration into the academic community, in order to assure equal opportunities for all students at the U. of Zagreb.

Types of support:

- removing physical barriers, literature adjustments, sign language interpreter, adapted teaching materials and testing, flexible dates for assignments and daily activities, or advisement for any other problem connected to students' disability which could obstruct students' studying performance and progress.

Goal 3. (cont.)

Methodology:

- IT information packages and written materials for disabled students,
- information materials for academic staff and other students for raising awareness of specific needs of disabled students
- individual advisement and academic consultancy for disabled students
- Practical support regarding adjustments in learning resources, transport

Organization and management

- The Office for Students with Disabilities is set up as centralized unit with support of decentralized units – coordinators for students with disabilities at all 33 organizational units. Coordinators are members of academic staff.
- Management and decision-making is made by university Committee for Students with Disabilities whose work is coordinated by the Vice-rector for Teaching and Quality Assurance

Resources

- financial/material resources are provided by university, ministry, donors
- human resources – increased number of qualified special educators, IT technical staff and administrative staff

Goal 3. (cont)

Expected outcomes:

- increasing number of students with disabilities at the University of Zagreb, shorter average time of their studying, increasing number of graduates, and more successful studying.

Sustainability:

- based university and faculty funding and donations

Quality assurance:

- development of standards and indicators
- continuous self-evaluation and periodical external evaluation
- benchmarking and networking
- staff development programs

Development of action plans

Action plans will cover 3-year periods and will be developed separately for each goal.

Common issues:

- **the first year** : emphasis on legislation and securing financial and human resources, development of performance standards and quality indicators mechanisms, preparation of new programs
- **the second year**: emphasis on organization of new and reorganization of existing services, staff training, try out period for new programs, preparation of information materials
- **the third year**: implementation of full range of new services, self-evaluation and external evaluation of service delivery, preparation of new strategic plan

Thank you for your attention!

**Comments and suggestions are
welcome!**