**Guidelines for Academic Counselling**

**Benefits of academic counselling:**

* Students and parents/caregivers might not always have the knowledge necessary to carry out effective educational planning on their own, particularly for degree-level study. AC checks that students’ individual learning pathways are on track for the qualifications they seek.
* Effective AC ensures that students are enrolled in the right courses for their educational and career paths.
* Assists students to identify their areas of difficulty and develop strategies to improve their academic performance.
* Provides individualised information and support regarding coursework expectations, academic prerequisites and learning and study skills**.**
* AC can help motivate students to aim for higher academic performance.
* AC should help to address equity issues because it is individualised, differentiated and responsive to student needs.
* AC can be particularly effective in picking up and motivating the “middle band” students who are not usually noticed for their academic work; it is this “middle band” who have the potential to do well academically (to achieve UE and go on to tertiary education) but who might need clearer goal setting and closer monitoring to achieve their full potential.
* Effective AC ensures that every student (and his or her goals and aspirations) is known to at least one teacher in the school.

**How does it work?**

* A programme of academic counselling ideally has one formal coaching session per term (or at least three a year). At senior level this coaching is ideally one-to-one.
* AC can be conducted in small groups for reasons of peer support or pragmatic reasons like time availability at junior level.
* AC sessions require a formal setting and documentation of long term goals (eg. university or other tertiary education or training) and medium and short-term goals to reach these long-term goals (i.e., NCEA and UE achievement). These goals must be revisited in AC sessions to ensure they still reflect the aspirations of the student.
* Whānau/form/tutor/homeroom teacher does the counselling 4 times a year- once a term, one to one in form time or some other allocated time e.g., assembly or a shortened day.
* Deans conduct the counselling by withdrawing students from class either in small groups or one to one. There are timetabled times to do this.

**Academic counselling is enhanced by:**

* Other informal monitoring and checking processes by the tutor/form teacher and subject teachers.
* Access to a range of wider community connections with relevance for university pathways (e.g., university liaison office type activities) and other career pathway links.
* Mentoring – by peers or supporting organisations from the wider community.

**Skills academic counsellors require:**

* Relationship building skills (with students and parents/whanau). AC is reliant on strong, warm teacher/student relationships. Without good relationships – AC will not work.
* Ability to differentiate for different students needs. It will, as a result, be more equitable in nature.
* Use of culturally appropriate communication strategies.
* Be able to analyse achievement data.
* Be able to provide feed-back and feed-forward.
* Be able to guide students in setting realistic targets/goals.

**Knowledge academic counsellors require:**

* Broad NCEA knowledge – pathways, available subjects, progression, prerequisites.
* Specific NCEA knowledge – achievement standards and credit distribution across a range of courses, credits needed for endorsements.
* School mechanisms and support services re: NCEA.
* UE requirements – for a range of university/tertiary courses.
* A knowledge of the student and their background.

**Documentation academic counsellors should complete:**

* The main points of each counselling session should be documented for ongoing reference in an agreed place - preferably one that is accessible by all staff involved with the student.
* Notification of any short-term goals requiring a learning intervention should be forwarded to the relevant member of staff eg. HOL or class teacher.
* Before the next session, a check should be carried out that this was done and the effects of the intervention noted.

**An academic counselling checklist for each session:**

* Start in a positive way to (re)establish the relationship.
* Set the agenda.
* Check last sessions targets/goals have been achieved - note it in file.
* Share academic data gathered prior to the meeting and note strengths and weaknesses.
* Make a plan to address weaknesses and (re) establish SMART targets/goals for the next session.
* Review the plan.
* Document the session, identifying and dating the next steps for follow up.
* Finish positively.