

arQus

European University Alliance

Guidelines and recommendations for an inclusive peer tutoring programme in Higher Education Institutions

Inclusive Peer Tutoring (2.9)

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1. Introduction

The student population is heterogeneous. According to current research, the factors that are relevant for access to and success in higher education are gender, age, type of university entrance qualification, parenthood, educational background, migration background, health impairment and disability (physical and psychological), employment alongside studies, and previous vocational training. These dimensions can influence each other and, in some cases, reinforce each other (Bosse/Mergner/Wallis et al. 2019, 60). The university's primary mission is to equip society to face the future by training people to have the new awareness and knowledge necessary for concrete realisation of the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda to promote a value-based, democratic, inclusive, and sustainable growth. In order to give all students the same opportunities regardless of their background, inclusive tutoring programmes are offered by universities, to compensate for differences. This complex challenge involves all the actors in the academic contexts with a commitment to fostering pluralism, interculturalism, solidarity, and inclusive policies focused on inequality and the reduction of barriers, including positive attitudes toward students with vulnerabilities and the possibility for everyone to benefit from a university education (Bunbury, 2020). Although there are legislative provisions and guidance notes in the different European countries about access to higher education for people with disabilities and vulnerabilities, there is no official mandate to promote their social inclusion or support their academic success. Therefore, it is worth emphasising that for students with disabilities or vulnerabilities, access to higher education does not guarantee their retention and success. For this reason, in recent years, several authors argue that new policies focusing on inclusion are needed to ensure the retention and success of students with disabilities and vulnerabilities in higher education (Lister et al., 2021).

Inclusion, unlike placement and integration, focuses on individuals with vulnerabilities and gives value to the context of our living environments to allow everyone to participate actively and have satisfactory living standards (Nota, Mascia and Santilli, in press). Inclusion explicitly considers the right of everyone to receive the attention, flexibility, and adaptations they need. Tajima (2021) states that working for inclusion means ensuring that contexts can guarantee each person, with their unique characteristics, active participation in social and civil life (Nota et al., 2020).

Without specific initiatives and intervention programmes, diversity and vulnerability within the campus can reinforce or increase stereotypes, microaggressions, discrimination, and self-segregation (Shogren et al., 2021). It is therefore important to ensure that the mission, goals, policy and practices of the campus actually support inclusion and diversity, involving all units and departments and the actors who play a role in this process (e.g. management, teaching and administrative staff, students). This requires institutional actions and initiatives, such as the implementation of centres and services for diversity and inclusion, as well as policies to reduce the under-representation of students with disabilities and other vulnerabilities in some departments. In addition, actions and initiatives for students should be promoted as their values, philosophy, and attitudes directly affect the overall atmosphere of the campus. Examples include implementing awareness courses regarding diversity and inclusion, inclusive peer mentoring programme, etc. (Moriña et al., 2020). As far as we are aware, only

a few studies have been conducted to examine the effectiveness of interventions for students. For example, Li, Wu and Ong (2016) proposed a 10-week course for university students, including an extensive range of curriculum components such as introducing knowledge about different types of disabilities, social contact (e.g. meetings with individuals with visual impairments), and disability simulation. The authors found that this course-based intervention programme improved university students' attitudes toward individuals with intellectual disabilities. Shogren and colleagues (2021) propose a model for the development of self-determination that provides theoretical background for autonomy-supportive interventions for young people with disabilities to promote self-directed goal setting, self-regulated learning, and planning for career and vocational outcomes. Corballo and colleagues (2021) developed the training programme "Walking towards social and educational inclusion in the university: design, development and evaluation of a training programme for university faculty" to analyse their ideas and knowledge of disability, the barriers and support encountered in the university by students with disabilities, the rules governing the rights of this student body and the support services and inclusive educational practices. These approaches are analysed before and after the faculty members' participation in a training programme, to determine the extent to which it changes their perceptions. This work is included within the project, as part of a programme which was intended to train faculty members to offer an inclusive educational response to students with disabilities in the university. The training programme on disability and inclusive education was carried out using the Blended Learning (B-Learning) method, which combines face-to-face training with online learning.

European and International Guidelines

In 2005, UNESCO developed its Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All. It is intended to be a tool for revising and formulating plans for inclusive processes. In this document we find a good definition of inclusive education: "Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children." (Guidelines for Inclusion, UNESCO, p. 14, 2005). At the European level, several political commitments to strengthening diversity and inclusiveness in higher education have been made throughout the past few years, starting with the Paris Declaration of EU member states in March 2015 on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education. This is also reflected in the 2015 Yerevan Communiqué and the 2018 Paris Communiqué of the Bologna Process, in an attempt to strengthen the social dimension of higher education introduced as a concept in earlier Communiqués. In the context of EU policies, social inclusion has also gained in importance over the past few years. In 2017 the European Commission took up the topic in its renewed agenda for higher education, and at the same time it became part of the policies to strengthen the social dimension of European

integration through the reinforcement of the European Social Pillar. On the research side, the focus has been on gender equality as it has been one of the priority topics in the framework of the European Research Area for two decades. At the global level, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015 by 193 countries, aiming at ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity by 2030, provide a broader perspective where social welfare plays a key role in the concept of sustainability. Here, there is a close connection between education and the specific goals for reducing inequalities and promoting gender equality through the broader goal of providing quality education for all — and consequently providing decent work. Education is also seen as facilitating health, civic and cultural participation.

The Arqus Alliance

The **Arqus European University Alliance** brings together the universities of Bergen, Granada, Graz, Leipzig, Lyon, Padua and Vilnius. The main ambition of the Alliance is to act jointly as a laboratory for institutional learning from which to move forward in the design, testing and implementation of an innovative model for deep inter-university cooperation.

The Arqus Alliance aims to centre its efforts on **enabling people**: enabling a widely diverse student body and enhancing their learning experience; enabling a similarly diverse staff community and promoting their individual and collective professional development; enabling society at large. It also aims to promote widening access for a diverse student and staff population, facilitating inclusive admission and recruitment policies, and attracting talent from less represented groups. Additionally, the Alliance aims to develop **shared policies for inclusion and diversity for all members of the university community**. One of Arqus core values is the commitment to ensuring and promoting equity and inclusion, and to eliminating barriers of all kinds to accessing higher education, and hence to knowledge and to the opportunities it creates.

Although these values and objectives are cross-cutting and engage all members of the Alliance community, one of the seven Action Lines specifically focuses on inclusion: **Action Line 2, “Widening access, inclusion and diversity”**, chaired by the University of Padua. Action Line 2 includes 13 activities:

1. Preventive early career education
2. Children’s universities
3. Women to STEM
4. Support networks for inclusion
5. Recognition of prior learning
6. Enabling strategies
7. Re-thinking college
8. Seniors’ universities

9. Inclusive peer tutoring

10. Staff development for the diverse and inclusive classroom
11. Fast tracks for gifted students
12. Job market transition for inclusive universities
13. Common Charters for gender equality, inclusion and SDGs

The overall objective of all these activities is to create a more inclusive Alliance and pave the way for future developments in this direction.

In the framework of activity 2.9 the partners developed guidelines for an inclusive peer tutoring programme and for training of the peer tutors.¹

To meet the requirement to set up guidelines for an inclusive peer tutoring programme, it should be accessible to all students with and without vulnerabilities² and at all stages of their studies from entering to graduating from Higher Education (aligned with the student lifecycle). The aim of this inclusive approach is to minimise the potential risks of labelling and stigmatisation. Additionally, the open access ensures the diversity and heterogeneity within the groups which in turn leads to raising awareness for these issues and gives students the opportunity to learn and benefit from each other.

2. Status quo of Inclusive peer tutoring programmes at ARQUS member universities

University of Bergen

The University of Bergen has offered peer tutoring for people with disabilities since August 2020. Students can apply online for the peer tutoring service, which provides one-to-one tutoring as well as group activities. In 2021 all tutors were trained in enhancing the learning environment for people with disabilities and how to provide accessible learning materials with a standardised design. The training consisted of workshops, online training and campaigns

¹ This framework is based on the concept for the tutoring programme at the University of Graz, developed by the Academic and Student Services of the University of Graz and considers the good practices from other partner universities identified in a mapping process and several meetings/workshops.

² Vulnerabilities as identified in the Arqus consortium: students with disabilities (e.g. students with learning disabilities; students with impairing illnesses...), students at risk / asylum seekers / migrants, students with caring responsibilities, women / gender issues, students with disadvantaged socio-economic background, students with disadvantaged educational background (first generation students), gifted students, senior students, students in employment.

regarding diversity awareness and was organised by the new central department, which was implemented in 2021. At the moment there is a coordinator for people with disabilities in every faculty. The University of Bergen has also a network linking all their faculties which includes all employees working with these issues. There will be campaigns to raise the awareness of all employees to the importance of standardised design.

Access to the tutoring

On a national level, all students who need special support have the legal right to receive it. The exception is when the request is not possible for practical reasons or when tutors feel they cannot give proper instruction according to the goals of the subject. At the University of Bergen all students with documentation of their impairment will be offered peer tutoring.

University of Granada

The University of Granada offers a series of support measures for students with disabilities and/or specific educational support needs (SEN) through the Social Intervention Programme for students with disabilities and/or SEN. The support measures are assessed on an individual basis according to the needs of the students who apply for the program.

These include human resources, such as the figure of the SEN coordinator, with one per Faculty or Technical School. The assignment of a tutor for SEN students to support them in their curricular development. And the student collaborator, a classmate enrolled in the same degree, year and group as the student with SEN, offers to carry out support functions for their inclusion in the university community.

Likewise, within the support measures, adaptations can be proposed in the methodology, activities, assessment and teaching-learning strategies of the subjects, without altering the competencies, objectives and basic contents, in order to adapt and adapt them to their disability and/or SEN. In addition, they may have other support and technical aids, such as an adapted transport service or Spanish sign language interpreter, where appropriate, scholarships for students with SEN and collaborating students and other UGR institutional resources.

University of Graz

Peer mentoring for first generation students

In Austria, students with an educationally disadvantaged background are still underrepresented in higher education and are subject to higher drop-out rates in the first year of study. In 2013, the University of Graz set out to improve the support for so-called first-generation students (FGS) by developing a peer mentoring programme for future and first year students who are the first ones in their immediate family to attend university. Two mentors –

who are also FGS and act as role models – are responsible for supporting FGS as they enter the university and move through the critical first year of their studies. The mentees have the opportunity to attend the programme already in their last school year, in preparation for university, and up to the end of the second semester. In the course of this mentoring programme, the mentees can take part in an individually arranged and guided trial study day, where the mentor takes them around the campus. They can visit the university's departments and the libraries of different institutes, and attend a class to get a realistic insight into the study programme they are interested in. In addition, the peer mentors offer individual guidance in person, via e-mail and Skype on topics such as getting started at university, student life, financial support, learning and writing skills, etc. as well as a workshop on similar topics. The aim is to encourage First Generation Students to attend University, stay there and to know and use their strengths. In addition, the project is intended to raise awareness of these topics amongst University staff.

Tutoring programme

The University of Graz also has a tutoring programme which offers first-semester students a chance to get to know like-minded people, and to share experiences about the challenges of starting out at uni. New students meet up regularly in a friendly atmosphere, with trained tutors available for support. The tutors provide tips, advice and information about university life and specific procedures relevant to the respective study programme. As the target group is highly heterogeneous, the qualification process for tutors includes awareness raising. It is also central to pay attention to diversity and heterogeneity when selecting tutors.

Disability Resource Center

Students with health impairments or chronic illnesses are given the best possible support with the practicalities of day-to-day student life. The Disability Resource Centre provides individualised advice and support with anything from finding accommodation and ensuring students can access information, to any necessary adaptation of exams.

University of Padua

The University of Padua provides specific support, also through peer tutoring, to facilitate integration into the university environment for students with vulnerabilities and to increase satisfaction with their studies. The inclusive peer tutors are students from all bachelor's and master's programmes of the university.

The support measures that the inclusive peer tutor should provide are as follows:

- Establish a positive and supportive relationship with students using the service through individualised support that takes account of individual characteristics and strengths, and stimulate a positive attitude toward the disciplines that are the subject of study;

- Encourage the use of effective study management strategies and methods in order to support autonomy and self-regulation and to maximise students' progress and success at university;
- Encourage students to participate in university life (attendance at lectures, seminar activities etc., promoting productive relationships with fellow students, teachers and contact persons for inclusion etc.);
- Use inclusive language and manifest attitudes and behaviours that promote the spread of a culture of inclusion, and highlight potential barriers to participation in university life for people with disabilities.

Inclusive peer tutoring activities also include:

- Communicate any barriers and obstacles that tend to make study difficult for all students and, in particular, to those with disabilities, learning difficulties and other vulnerabilities to the Rector's Delegate for inclusion and disability;
- Conduct their interventions to support study and university participation in the most natural contexts possible (classrooms, study rooms, other contexts typically frequented by students);
- Use of inclusive language in university contexts and beyond to disseminate attitudes and behaviours that foster the spread of an inclusive culture;
- Participation in monitoring the quality of the university regarding inclusion and supervision (two individual supervision meetings and a focus group that will be organised directly by the Rector's Delegate in the field of inclusion and disability).

Peer tutors for inclusion receive a 20-hour training course. As suggested by the socio-cognitive approach, attention is given to promoting self-regulated learning in students with disabilities by using self-regulating strategies, and to study techniques that can help to support students with difficulties in their learning processes (Zimmerman, 2013). Following World Health Organization recommendations, special emphasis is also given to the concepts of inclusion and participation, to potential risks of labelling and prejudices in the interaction with peers with disability (Nota, Ginevra & Soresi, 2015), and to relational styles more effective in “complex” interpersonal situations, such as tutoring. The training is funded by a tutorship service.

Access to the peer tutoring service is reserved for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. In 2018/19 the University had about 90 students with disabilities.

Leipzig University

Leipzig University offers a wide range of services for people with disabilities or special needs.

Consulting service for prospective students and students with disabilities and chronic illnesses

These services are embedded in the general counselling services offered for all students, e.g. by the Central Student Advisory Service, the Student Secretariat, the International Centre and the Academic Education Office (Weiterbildungszentrum). Here it is important to stress the compensation for disadvantages for students with disabilities. The Central Student Advisory Service and the Centre for Teacher Training and School Research offer psychological counselling. Furthermore, the International Centre provides explicit information about funding and support opportunities for a study-relevant stay abroad for disabled students, from exchange semesters to internships abroad during their studies. Specialised contact persons also offer advisory services on the possibilities for realising their wish to study and to study

abroad, taking into account their individual circumstances, e.g. the Senate Commissioner for Students with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses or the Studentenwerk Leipzig (student council that works independently from the University). The Student Council also has specialist expertise in these topics and has established a department for inclusion. Furthermore, it offers a care and information hotline. The Equal Opportunities Officer and the decentralised Equal Opportunities Officers in each faculty of the University of Leipzig offer a first point of contact for both students and employees with disabilities and chronic illnesses, as does the Equal Opportunities Officer of the University Hospital. A particular feature is the psychological advice centre for student teachers at the Centre for Teacher Training and School Research.

Networking

There are regular meetings of the Equal Opportunities Officers of the faculties and the responsible institutions that are involved in the topic of inclusion and diversity. The Commissioner for Students with Disabilities offers networking and workshops to University staff on the topic of compensation for disadvantages.

Peer tutoring

Through the services offered by the Studentenwerk Leipzig, a trainee can be requested to mentor and support students during their studies. The Equal Opportunities Office also offers coaching and peer tutoring for a range of students through their "t.e.a.m. ability". Most of the support is still provided through the decentralised responsible persons in the faculties and in the different institutions, as described in 1. At the faculty level there is also a buddy programme that helps new students (with or without special needs) to settle in at the University.

There are no specific rules for entitlement to access the support services or to be recognised for the "compensation of disadvantages" or "recognition of hardship cases". Students or prospective students need to apply for their studies accordingly; these compensations are mainly for students with long-term disabilities.

University of Lyon

There are different types of pedagogical support, peer tutoring, group tutoring, face-to-face tutoring and coaching at the University of Lyon. Any registered bachelor's student can access the services. Conversations and informal group sessions between students and tutors, along with one-to-one coaching throughout the university year are particularly successful.

Vilnius University

Vilnius University offers the **Mentor's Programme "Kuratorijų programa"**, implemented by the Vilnius University Students' Representation (VU SA). Vilnius University Students' Representation acts as an intermediary between students and staff of the University. Students come to VU SA and ask for help or tips, or initiate new projects and ideas that help our community grow. The University staff also reaches out to VU SA with requests for help from the mentors where there are specific requirements for students (e.g. with disabilities) or questions about students' opinions on various subjects.

The programme provides every student with the opportunity to reach out to an older peer tutor (mentor). The mentor is a role model for good behavioural, functional, adaptive, or social skills in a new university environment and introduces basic academic and social study information. The mentors provide the new students with all the social and academic information that is needed. This makes it easier for new students to feel integrated in their new community at the University. Mentors organise meetings with the new students and advise them regarding their problems and needs. If needed, the mentors also support students with disabilities (to help overcome physical barriers, navigate the environment, etc.).

There is no selection process for the Mentor's Programme - every student has access to the service. Each study programme gets one (or more) mentor(s) assigned and any student can communicate with the mentor. VU SA receives individual emails, messages and requests from students on a range of problems and there is a growing demand for support for students with disabilities.

3. Guidelines and recommendations for setting up an inclusive peer tutoring programme

The transition from school to university is a challenge for both universities and students. Since quick adjustment to social and academic demands and creating a sense of belonging is crucial for successful university transition and retention, bridging the gap between school and university should be a major objective. Groups from underrepresented backgrounds struggle particularly with the adjustment to social and academic demands and are “more likely to disengage, underachieve and withdraw from their higher education studies if they feel unsupported and when their expectations are only partially addressed” (Hayman et al. 2022). Peer support schemes, such as an inclusive peer tutoring programme, can play a central role in helping students to settle into university. Moreover, there is a need for ongoing support during the different phases of the student lifecycle - from recruitment and admission to graduation.

In this section the Arqus Universities illustrate how an inclusive peer tutoring programme can be set up and implemented at higher education institutions. As the needs may vary at each institution due to the student population, a distinction is made between basic tutoring and additional tutoring. This guideline focuses on the training of tutors who provide basic support and gives recommendations for the topic areas of additional support.

Basic tutoring

The exact content of the tutoring may vary depending on the needs of the students at each Arqus University (or other higher education institutions). Nevertheless, there are basic challenges that all students encounter in the course of the student lifecycle and for which they need support. All tutors are prepared for these basic problems and their possible solutions in the course of their training. Furthermore, they are trained to work with heterogeneous vulnerable student groups, in order to do justice to the inclusive approach. The training programme will be explained in point 6. Bosse/Mergner/Wallis et al. (2019, p. 28) identify four dimensions of study requirements that should be broadly met for successful study. Those are personal requirements, organisational requirements, content-related and social requirements. Based on these definitions, the core task of the tutors is to support the students in the following areas:

| Organisational support Requirements of institutional framework conditions | Subject-specific support Requirements in dealing with the subject of study | Personal support Requirements of self- and life organisation | Social support Requirements of social interaction |
|--|--|---|---|
| orientation and familiarisation with the different contexts; support networks; formal guidelines in academic life (from admission to graduation); timetable/courses; examination requirements etc. | academic work/ writing/language; subject-specific questions; study expectations; choice of study; traineeships; job opportunities etc. | autonomous and efficient learning methods; self-organisation/ self-management; resilience; financial questions; housing, health and wellbeing; study-work-family balance etc. | peer relationships; teamwork; networking; adjustment to academic life/ social environment; communication within the academic field (e.g. teachers, academic staff) etc. |

Additional tutoring services

Since the tutoring programme follows an inclusive, diverse approach, the programme should be accessible to all student groups. Only at a second stage will special needs be identified and responded to with additional support services as needed.

Depending on the needs at the respective partner university (or any other higher education institution), additional tutors can be trained for inclusive support services or existing structures can be used and integrated into the tutoring programme. The following specific support services are relevant within Arqus Universities:

- Support for students with disabilities (information and counselling for students with disabilities, adaptation of study material in accessible format, note taking in lectures and courses, support in modified exams etc.)
- Support for female students
- Support for people with caring responsibilities
- Support for international students and/or students at risk
- Support for gifted students
- Support for senior students
- Psychological counselling
- Career counselling

As stated above, this guideline focuses on basic tutoring services and the corresponding training for tutors.

4. Goals

With these guidelines for an inclusive peer tutoring programme the Arqus Universities aim to aid student transition, create an inclusive learning and teaching environment, reduce drop-outs and increase exam activity, and assure academic integration and engagement right from the start. Therefore, the framework follows a holistic and inclusive approach that includes support for all student groups at the Arqus Universities - with and without vulnerabilities.

Moreover, the aim is to raise awareness about diversity and vulnerabilities among university students and staff, pointing out barriers and reducing them as well as creating networks for inclusion.

- Aiding student transition
- Academic integration and engagement
- Creating an inclusive learning and teaching environment
- Reduction of drop-outs
- Increasing exam activity, retention rate, study satisfaction and employability
- Raising awareness about diversity among students and staff
- Raising awareness about the needs of vulnerable students
- Pointing out barriers/obstacles and reduce them
- Creating support networks for inclusion

5. Organisational structure of the programme

To ensure a smooth process within the programme, there should be a clear organisational structure behind it. The Arqus alliance has identified different task areas and responsibilities. It is recommended to have a centralised lead and coordination. Depending on the size of the programme each institution should decide individually on the hourly extent of the respective position.

Project management

The project manager should act as a link to the rector and/or vice rector(s). Moreover, the project manager is responsible for developing the concept, continuous evaluation and reporting.

- Communication with rector and vice rector(s)
- Concept development, evaluation, reporting

Central project coordination

The central coordinator(s) facilitate organisational aspects such as the training for tutors, meetings between tutors and/or coordinators, contracts, certificates etc. In addition, calls are coordinated and managed on a central website via this body. The selection of the tutors is carried out in close cooperation with the decentralised coordinators.

The central project coordination also supports the project manager in monitoring and reporting.

Organisation

- Organisation of the training for tutors
- Organisation of meetings
- Contact point and consultation hours for tutors on general matters
- Involvement in the final selection process
- Contracts, certificates etc. for tutors

Marketing and networking

- Coordination of the calls for tutors
- Public relations
- Coordination of meetings with decentralised coordinators

Evaluation

- Monitoring
- Final report

Coordinator at the respective department/faculty (decentralised)

In close cooperation with the central coordinator(s), it is the responsibility of the coordinator(s) at the respective department/faculty to communicate with and support their tutors. Moreover,

they manage the selection process in cooperation with the central coordinator(s) and match the tutors with the students.

- Contact person for the central project coordinator
- Contact person for the tutors on subject-specific matters
- Selection of tutors
- Matching of tutors and students
- Support for marketing measures and organisational matters

6. Training and responsibilities of tutors

It is expected that the tutors will carry out their tutoring activities for at least one study year (2 semesters). To ensure the commitment of tutors it is recommended to award them ECTS credits for their work, which will be recognised in their study programme. In studies where a tutorial qualification is not directly possible with recognition of ECTS credits, a certificate of tutorial qualification and practice can be an important incentive for students to acquire this additional qualification (Heyner/Hackbarth 2017, 4-7). The Arqus Universities aim to develop a joint Arqus certificate for tutors.

To ensure a high quality of guidance and counselling the tutors receive a comprehensive training programme and an accompanying course. The training programme and the course are compulsory for the award of ECTS credits or other certification from the university. In the following section the recruitment as well as the content of the training programme and the accompanying course is explained and a recommendation is given on the amount of ECTS credits to be awarded.

Recruitment of tutors

The social dimension and the reflection of diversity (see relevant dimensions mentioned in the introduction) amongst the tutors should be a central concern in the selection process. The tutors should also act as role models for (vulnerable) students. The tutors are students from the 3rd semester and higher, while the tutees can participate in the programme at any stage of their studies.

Students should have the following attributes for the job as a tutor:

HARD

- Field competence: knowledge of the university, organisation, typical academic working methods, procedures, communication cultures, etc.
- Study experience of at least 2 semesters and appropriate academic progress
- Basic digital skills
- Good knowledge of English

META

- Willingness to reflect on their own role and their own learning behaviour
- Capacity for context analysis and problem solving skills

SOFT

- Commitment and openness to people and contexts
- Equal and respectful interaction with people
- Reliability
- Teamwork skills
- Independent work skills
- Strong communication skills (written and oral)
- Flexibility (in time and in relation to situations, different people)
- Social and intercultural competence (empathy, ...)

Recruitment is conducted in cooperation between central and decentralised coordination by each university.

Tutor training programme

Tutors who act as "temporary teachers" need to be aware of their role, goals and tasks as well as ability to lead groups, and have basic knowledge in the areas of lecture and presentation techniques and conducting discussions (Kroepke, Heike/Szczyrba, Birgit 2009, 5). In addition, it is essential that they are trained to deal with the counselling concerns of students, both in terms of basic counselling skills and in dealing with responsibilities and their limits (with appropriate information about other support services at the university to which they can refer). Furthermore, they are trained to work with heterogeneous vulnerable student groups, in order to do justice to the inclusive approach.

Based on an understanding of learning that places great importance on experiential learning, the self-reflection of tutors should form the content of a basic module. In addition to dealing with the role, tasks and responsibilities as well as organisational details, there should also be reflection on one's own learning and study biography (keywords: reflection on typical learning strategies, comparison with the requirements/expectations at the university, possible irritations and resulting necessary modifications in learning behaviour). A high degree of self-reflection

in tutor training thus enables a change of perspective and enables the actors to detach themselves from their own acquired and consolidated learning concepts (Jokanovic/Szczyrba 2012, 8). The heterogeneity in both target groups (tutors and tutees) is considered with a bias sensitisation and thus reflection of one's own imprints/socialisation/backgrounds in the basic module and reflected on in depth against the background of one's own attitude in the role as a tutor.

In addition to the concrete training offered in the form of seminars, a joint preparation and follow-up meeting with all participants is recommended (for more details see table below).

The learning objectives of the tutor training are:

- reflect on their own learning and study behaviour,
- learn to lead and moderate heterogeneous groups,
- solve difficult situations with participants or groups,
- prepare and present content for specific target groups,
- get to know and apply formats of peer collaborative support,
- deal with the diversity of the tutees and use inclusive language, i.e. to recognise different needs and to be able to react to them appropriately,
- adopt new perspectives
- be active in an advisory capacity. (Eßer/Kroepke 2019, 55)

In addition to learning psychology and didactic theory, the methodology of the basic seminars should focus on practical exercises, simulations and interactions with appropriate feedback. By inviting reflection, the content is linked to the participants' own prior knowledge and experience. The face-to-face events provide an effective experience of seminar methods, which the tutors can then also use with their tutees. (Kroepke, Heike/Szczyrba, Birgit 2009, 15).

Overview: Tutor training programme

| Format | Content | Realisation |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Kick-off meeting (2 hours)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction/Getting to know each other • Common vision: presentation of (general) study requirements and starting points for tutorials • Networking • Tasks/role clarification • Organisation: rooms/times/communication channels... | <p>Carried out by the central and decentralised coordinators in year 1 and in year 2 partly carried out by tutors from year 1 following the train-the-trainer approach</p> |
| <p>Basic training workshop (2 full days once a year)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role clarification and tasks • Possible role conflicts • Information/contact points etc. and possible contents for tutorials <p>Inclusion, heterogeneity awareness, social competence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bias sensitisation (dealing with heterogeneity in groups, first generation students, migration background, disabilities etc. and self-reflection on one's own situation) • Inclusive language <p>Counselling and accompanying - Basics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication basics • Perception and distortions • Listening empathically • Questioning techniques • Feedback • Resource-oriented and collaborative attitude • Reflection on self-efficacy • Learning collaborative counselling as a method <p>Self- and time-management</p> | <p>Carried out by external trainers in year 1, in year 2 partly carried out by tutors from year 1 following the train-the-trainer approach (could also be carried out by university internal experts on the respective topic)</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basics of working techniques • Time management (goals, planning, priorities) • Personal performance curve • Dealing with complexity: research, filing, reading techniques, forms of learning <p>Moderating group processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process of a group meeting (preparation, structure, methods) • Activation methods • Phases of group processes • Moderation techniques • Dealing with conflict situations | |
| Blended learning contents I | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online-tutorials/MOOCs on study organisation • Online-collection of study-relevant information (study law, university structure etc.) | general materials for tutors provided by the central coordination of the project; available on a web portal |
| Blended learning contents II | Each Arqus University could provide an online-course/input on a specific topic in which it has expertise | Coordinated by contact persons/ coordinators at Arqus universities; available on a web portal |
| Final meeting of all involved 1 per Semester; 2 hours | Reflection on strengths and weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What went well? • What are the "lessons learned"? • What expectations do you have for contact persons? • What are the expectations for tutors? • Collection of ideas for further roll-outs • Evaluation | central and decentralised coordinators; teachers/ lecturers; tutors (depending on the number of people involved, meetings can also |

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| | | take place at faculty level) |
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Accompaniment of the tutors

In addition, the tutors themselves are supported by experts in the field of counselling, didactics and learning techniques and are monitored and supervised. Therefore, a compulsory accompanying course is provided with 25 to 30 contact hours in total for one study year. Experience at the University of Graz shows that it is reasonable to offer the course fortnightly during the semester; note that the course comprises more hours in the winter semester than in the summer semester. If needed, personal counselling/supervision can also be requested by the tutors. The content of the accompaniment is explained in the table below.

Overview: Accompaniment of the tutors

| Format | Content | Realisation |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Accompanying course (part 1 in winter semester, part 2 in summer semester)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of support services at the university and cooperating institutions • Dealing with dimensions of study requirements (concerning content, personal, social and organisational dimensions) • Self-reflection on own learning behaviour, own study goals, own expectations of study programme • Establishment of cooperation among tutors (e.g. learning tandem partners, who also observe each other and give feedback) • Create materials for tutees (e.g. tutorials, "Behaviour in the lecture hall") • Well-founded information on all contents to be discussed in the tutorial (organisation of studies, etc.) • Collaborative advice and consolidation of difficult counselling contents (e.g. tutee wants to change study programme) <p>Further topics</p> | <p>Organised by the central coordination; carried out by university internal teachers/lecturers/trainers with expertise in the topics mentioned</p> |

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|---|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation skills • Exam preparation (learning techniques etc.) • Reflection and feedback • etc. (e.g. using digital media, e-learning...) | |
| Consultation hour of the decentralised coordinator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty-specific recruitment of tutors • Placement/registration of tutors (group allocation) • Help with organisation (rooms etc.) • Faculty-specific questions and support needs | Organised and carried out by decentralised coordinators in respective faculty/department |
| Interaction with teachers/lecturers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing supervision and mentoring as part of the accompanying course | Organised by respective institute/department/faculty |

Recommendation on the amount of ECTS credits

The Arqus Alliance recommends awarding - where possible - up to 7 ECTS credits for a full tutoring activity over one study year. To qualify for this the tutors have to complete the training programme and the accompanying course. The performance record for the accompanying course is achieved through attendance (mandatory attendance course type), reflection (e.g. learning diary), keeping tutorial records, feedback in the group (if necessary mutual observation); this reflection also flows into the competence portfolio as well as peer counselling (especially in the second semester).

Time commitment for tutors

- Training: 2 attendance days as a basic module in the pre-semester phase
- Accompanying course with reflection on the work as a tutor
- Keeping a tutorial log
- Weekly appointments for first-year students in the group (1 to 2 hours on average; i.e. can be more at the beginning of the semester and change to fortnightly intervals during the semester; content is needs-oriented according to students and the field of study)
- Consultation hours for individual counselling
- Support via digital channels: Moodle etc.
- Preparation and follow-up meetings with all participants (coordination central/decentralised/teachers)

A total time commitment of 4 hours/week on average is assumed during the semester.

7. Support for tutees

Especially at the beginning of their studies, but also throughout their entire study career, students need support in various forms in order to integrate academically. Basic, central support needs are as mentioned above subject-specific support, personal support, social support and individual support. These needs apply to all student groups.

In addition, there may be other support needs that vary depending on the university and its student population. It therefore can be reasonable to offer further support options according to the individual needs.

Basic support for tutees

The basic support focuses on challenges that almost all students encounter in the course of their study life. Through their comprehensive training, the tutors are able to provide optimal support to their tutees. Counselling and support are provided both through regular group meetings (max. 20 persons) on specific focus topics and through individual appointments. The following table gives an overview of the format and content of the support offered.

Overview: Basic support

| Format | Content | Realisation |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Group meetings</p> <p>General questions that concern all tutees; meetings can be held on specific focus topics (max. 20 persons)</p> | <p>Subject-specific support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● scientific work/writing ● subject-specific questions ● requirements related to the study program <p>Personal support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● learning support ● self-organisation ● time management ● coping with examination requirements ● financial questions ● housing <p>Social support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● teamwork ● networking ● adjustment to academic life ● communication within the academic field (e.g. teachers, academic staff), academic language <p>Organisational support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● orientation ● formal requirements in academic life ● institutional framework ● requirements for exams ● timetable/courses ● graduation | <p>Tutors at respective department/faculty</p> |
| <p>Individual meetings/consultation hours</p> <p>Individual questions, in-depth consultation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● subject-specific support ● personal support ● social support ● organisational support | <p>Tutors at respective department/faculty</p> |

Additional support for tutees

The additional support focuses on the specific needs that arise depending on the student population at each university. Support can be offered for students with disabilities, students with mental/intellectual impairment, international students or students at risk, students with caring responsibilities etc. In order to meet the support needs, cooperation can be established with existing support services within the university or additional tutors can be trained for the specific purpose.

Overview: Additional support

| Format | Content | Realisation |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Group meetings or individual meetings/consultation hours</p> <p>General questions that concern all tutees; meetings can be held on specific focus topics (max. 20 persons)</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Individual questions, in-depth consultation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support for students with disabilities (information and counselling for students with disabilities, adaptation of study material into accessible format, note taking in lectures and courses, support in modified exams etc.) ● Psychological counselling ● Career counselling ● Support for people with caring responsibilities ● Support for international students and/or students at risk ● etc. | <p>Specially trained tutors; cooperation with existing support services</p> |

8. Future trajectories

The work of this task force was started before Covid-19 and was carried out during the first or second wave; during that period there was a significant increase of negative conditions among university students suggesting that the pandemic may disrupt the progress of many students in completing their degrees – a qualification that offers lifetime health, economic, and social benefits. In Europe, schools and universities were closed for more than half of the school year 2019-2020, with students switching to "integrated digital learning" during the first and second waves. The UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020) estimated that although national closures policies have begun to be revoked in some areas and regions, universities also implemented remote learning after the second wave. As a result of this, as Cao et al. (2020) pointed out, there have been several consequences for university students' academic and social life. For example, universities switched to online lectures/classes, closed libraries, changed communication channels for teachers and administrative support, created new assessment methods, different workloads, and performance levels.

To address the larger societal challenges that students face, in future projects universities could create forums and an inclusive environment that fosters a commitment to diversity and inclusion, also taking account of all the consequences related to the pandemic situations and the development of new vulnerability (Nota et al., 2020). For example, giving students an opportunity to improve their awareness about current events can provide a sense of universality, hope, inspiration for action, and a safe space (Nota et al., 2020). These can be peer-facilitated environments (or mixed with faculty, staff, and students) to create an atmosphere of respect and allow students to process personal and educational challenges.

9. Literature

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