

Caucasus University

Concept of student academic services

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Objective and methodology of the document:

According to the **Work Package 2.6**, Concept of Students' Service Center was developed in the framework of the project "Academic Integrity for Quality Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Institutions in Georgia (Integrity)" financed by the European Commission.

According to the project requirements, following document provides information and recommendations on the academic services of the university and their development which will support students in the achievement of teaching and research objectives following the basic principles of academic integrity.

The following document is based on the study of services offered by Caucasus University, prevailing challenges and the will to use university resources, according to its objectives, for the formation of well-developed students service model. Looking at the best practices of leading European universities taking part in the project was an integral part of this process.

Description of the current situation

Currently, two different structural entities are responsible for the delivery of academic services in the Caucasus University. These two entities are – Schools/faculties (through their educational programs) and the University library.

- ✓ Schools (based on educational programs) **deliver academic services in several ways:**
 - At the **orientation meetings** students get information on existing university regulations (Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity, Framework Agreement and etc.). Students are made aware of the principles of academic integrity from the very first day of the meeting.
 - Students are taught special **courses in "academic writing"** at the first and second stages of educational program. In the framework of this course, students get a fundamental knowledge of the issues related to the academic integrity, types of plagiarism and the means to avoid plagiarism. They also study how to use the similarity detection program (currently university uses the program – Turn-it in) and university data bases. They are also taught different strategies of academic writing and reading.
 - **Students' School Conferences** – at the end of the Autumn semester, schools organize Student's Conference. This is the process, which gives them knowledge of the structure and requirements for presenting research paper. They are able to select a supervisor and submit an independent research paper. This activity stimulates development of independent research skills among students, provides them with an experience and improves their academic skills.
 - **Pre-orientation meetings during the process of working on thesis (BA, MA, PHD)** – these meetings are held with students working on their thesis to make them aware of the main issues of relevant regulation and the basic aspects of thesis writing.

- ✓ **University Library:**
 - Library offers academic electronic bases to everyone (including students). At the library students can see instructions how to use academic bases. In case of need, staff of the library is ready to help students interested in academic research.

- Periodically, library organizes trainings, which are headed by the company providing certain scientific electronic base. These trainings are attended by university's academic staff, especially the lecturers of academic writing and research methods, who share their experience and knowledge with students to integrate the process of using new bases in the academic process.

Recommendations

for the further development of student services in Caucasus University

I. General instruction for relevant structural entities of the university:

- To develop and make accessible information on plagiarism, its detection and relevant structures for students/academic staff.
- Relevant structural entities should provide students the information on these rules and documents on the rolling bases.

II. Library:

1. Individual consultation service at the library:

Individual consultations at the library means that students are able to set up an individual meeting/interview with a librarian (such kind of meetings have different names at different universities: a Reference Librarian, Library help desk etc...). Objective of these meetings is to get additional information on the following issues – how to use library resources; how to collect academic materials on a certain research topic; how to make an assessment of obtained academic materials according to the general criteria.

2. Service on automatic citation / bibliography making.

This training should be oriented on making students aware of certain electronic program on citation management. Training may be held once a year (for the students of different categories) or depending on a need (considering library resources). This may be: Mendeley; Zotero; EndNote; Refworks etc. Training should give students information how to use abovementioned systems in practice by following the principles of academic dignity. Its desirable to make this information accessible on the university/library web-page.

Considering the experience of European partners, we can offer other services as well:

1. "Night at the library" – during exams or pre-defense period (once or twice a year). During these period students will be able to get all the services offered by the library faster. Students may also be able to get consultations from member of academic personal involved examination or thesis defense processes.

2. Tutorials – short video instructions on the services or resources offered by the library. The goal of these tutorials is to help students to collect and process information independently and reduce the high number of students addressing the staff of the library by making information widely accessible for everyone. It's important to ensure the promotion of these services among students (lifters, e-mail, orientation packages).

3. Periodical trainings on using electronic bases

4. Orientation meetings (once a year) – these are the meetings for discussing existing services of the library and providing students with relevant information.

Notes: Introduction of these services should be provided and supported by relevant resources (human and technical). For example: training for the library staff.

III. Improving academic services in the framework of the program (first phase)

Additional services were/are introduced/developed in the framework of certain programs considering certain needs of the program.

During the process of writing their research paper, in the framework of the project students get following services:

- ✓ **Consulting**
- ✓ **Orientation days**
- ✓ **Different master classes and seminars are held** (developing academic writing or public speaking skills)

IV. Establishment of an Academic Center (second phase)

There should be established an Academic Writing Center at the Caucasus University – writing center should have its own staff (director, manager etc.), but it should coordinate all lecturers of academic writing working in the university. Center should work on the development and renovation of syllabi of academic writing, teaching literature, tutorials (presentations or video) and handbooks prepared by the writing center.

Considering the best practice discussed in the framework of the project, center should offer different kind of services to students:

а) Consultations – student should have an opportunity to get individual consultations from the representative/lecturer of the center in case of need during the whole semester. To get this service, student should fill in the registration form, which should be accessible for them (its desirable to set up a new web-page for the center in the framework of the university's web page).

б) Orientation days/master classes/seminars – Number of activities should be planned for the students of different categories. For example, trainings oriented on the development of presentation, public speaking and academic writing skills for BA students. MA and PHD students should be able to get individual feedbacks on the structure the whole research paper or certain chapter. Center should also organize master-classes on academic writing and contemporary research methods.

в) Collegiate program (which will be similar to the Academic Writing Fellow Program of the University of Vienna) - There should be formed and trained a special team of MA or PHD level students, who will provide consultations for other students on different issues of academic writing. This activity can be a part of teaching and assisting component of MA or PHD programs.