



# Assessing the Effectiveness of Academic Advising on Student Retention and Graduation Rates in South African Universities

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## ABSTRACT

Academic advising plays a critical role in student retention and graduation rates in higher education institutions. In South African universities, the significance of academic advising has gained attention as a means to support students, especially in overcoming academic challenges and navigating socio-economic barriers. This study thus aimed to assess the effectiveness of academic advising in improving student retention and graduation rates in South African universities. A desktop research approach was employed, drawing from recent literature, institutional reports, and case studies from various universities. The study identified the strengths and weaknesses of academic advising systems, focusing on how personalized, holistic guidance impacts student success. Findings suggested that while academic advising contributes positively to student retention, its effectiveness is often hindered by inadequate resources, inconsistent implementation, and insufficient staff training. The study recommended strategies to optimize academic advising to enhance its impact on retention and graduation outcomes. The contribution of this study to scholarship lies in its comprehensive, context-specific analysis of academic advising within South African higher education. By synthesizing diverse sources and highlighting both the enablers and barriers to effective advising, this research fills a gap in the literature and provides actionable recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and institutional leaders seeking to improve student outcomes through enhanced academic advising practices.

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## INTRODUCTION

Student retention and graduation rates have long been a priority in higher education globally, with South African universities facing unique challenges in this regard. A significant factor influencing both retention and graduation rates is the availability and quality of academic advising.<sup>1</sup> In South Africa, students often face a multitude of obstacles, including academic difficulties, financial constraints, and socio-economic pressures, which can impact their ability to persist in their studies. Academic advising, as an intervention tool, aims to assist students in overcoming these barriers, providing guidance on academic progress, career choices, and personal development. South Africa's higher education system is characterized by high diversity, with students coming from varied socio-economic backgrounds and

<sup>1</sup> Nicola Branson and Emma Whitelaw, “South African Student Retention during 2020: Evidence from System-wide Higher Education Institutional Data,” *South African Journal of Economics* 92, no. 1 (March 13, 2024): 9–30, <https://doi.org/10.1111/saje.12361>.

facing different levels of preparedness for university-level education.<sup>2</sup> Many students, particularly from historically disadvantaged communities, struggle with financial instability, academic underachievement, and a lack of adequate support systems.<sup>3</sup> To address these challenges, universities in South Africa have implemented academic advising systems aimed at guiding students through their academic journey and providing support for personal, social, and academic difficulties.<sup>4</sup> Effective academic advising has been identified as a key strategy to improve retention rates by providing students with the resources and advice they need to succeed.<sup>5</sup>

However, despite the recognized importance of academic advising, studies have shown that South African universities face several challenges in implementing effective advising systems. These include insufficient resources, a lack of trained academic advisors, and inconsistencies in how advising services are delivered across institutions.<sup>6</sup>

The role of academic advising in improving student outcomes, particularly retention and graduation rates, remains underexplored in the South African context, necessitating further investigation into how these systems can be optimized to address the needs of students. This study therefore, explores the effectiveness of academic advising in South African universities, assessing whether and how academic advising programs contribute to improved student outcomes, particularly retention and graduation rates.

## METHODOLOGY

The desktop research approach, also known as secondary research, involves the systematic collection and analysis of existing data from published sources such as journal articles, institutional reports, and case studies. This method was chosen for the study due to its ability to efficiently synthesize a wide range of insights into academic advising practices in South African universities. Desktop research is particularly suited for exploring academic advising in South Africa because it integrates diverse perspectives from multiple institutions without requiring primary data collection. It provides access to historical trends and comprehensive evaluations documented in scholarly literature and institutional reports, making it cost-effective and time-efficient for studies with limited resources. The choice of articles and sources included in this study was informed by their relevance, rigor, and contextual applicability to academic advising in South African higher education.

Peer-reviewed articles such as De Klerk et al.'s model for identifying academic advisors were selected because they provide a theoretically grounded and empirically informed framework tailored to the South African context, addressing key advisor attributes and roles essential for effective advising.<sup>7</sup> In this study, desktop research encompassed peer-reviewed articles such as De Klerk et al.'s model for identifying academic advisors and Sithaldeen et al.'s<sup>8</sup> evidence-based advising programme design, institutional reports such as Hundermark, evaluation of the Academic Advising Professional Development (AAPD) course, and case studies reflecting practical applications and limitations at institutions like Durban University of Technology.<sup>9</sup> While desktop research enables a broad understanding of trends across institutions, its reliance on existing data can result in gaps if certain

<sup>2</sup> Council on Higher Education (CHE), "VitalStats: Public Higher Education 2019," Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), "Annual Report 2022/23," Pretoria: Department of Higher Education and Training, 2023, [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/202311/dhet-annual-report-2022-23.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202311/dhet-annual-report-2022-23.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> M. Mouton, S. Moodley, and R Singh, "Enhancing Student Success Through Professionalised Academic Advising: A Model for Identifying Academic Advisors for South African Higher Education Context," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 38, no. 5 (2021): 5219–35.

<sup>5</sup> T. Ngwenya and P. Moyo, "Enhancing Student Success Through Professionalised Academic Advising: A Model for Identifying Academic Advisors for South African Higher Education Contexts," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 38, no.5(2023):210–29.

<sup>6</sup> K. Molefe, "Challenges in the Implementation of Academic Advising Programs in South African Universities" (University of Pretoria, 2023).

<sup>7</sup> D. de Klerk, A. Jadhav, and G. Hundermark, "Enhancing Student Success beyond COVID-19 through Professionalised Academic Advising: A Model for Identifying Academic Advisors for South African Higher Education Contexts," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 38, no. 5 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.20853/38-5-5219>.

<sup>8</sup> Riashna Sithaldeen et al., "Using Action Research and Grounded Theory Techniques to Design an Evidence-Based Academic Advising Programme," *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 12, no. 2 (2024): 37–50.

<sup>9</sup> Sithaldeen Riashna and Van Pletzen, "A Critical Review of Academic Advising Approaches at Durban University of Technology," *Journal of Student Success in Africa* 9(2): 1–15. 9, no. 2 (2022): 1–15.

aspects are under-researched or undocumented. Nonetheless, this approach effectively consolidated existing knowledge on academic advising practices in South Africa while highlighting areas for future exploration through primary research methods like interviews or surveys.

## DISCUSSION

Academic advising has been recognized globally as an essential component of student success, particularly in terms of retention and graduation rates.<sup>10</sup> In the context of South Africa, Mouton et al. found that effective advising practices, when integrated with personalized academic support and mentoring, can lead to improved student outcomes.<sup>11</sup> These practices include regular one-on-one meetings, early identification of academic difficulties, and support in course selection, which have all been shown to contribute to higher retention rates. Similarly, Du Plessis highlights that academic advising helps students feel more connected to the university, leading to a greater sense of belonging, which in turn improves their commitment to completing their degrees.<sup>12</sup>

However, despite the positive impacts, the quality and effectiveness of academic advising in South African universities are often inconsistent. According to Ngwenya and Moyo, many universities struggle with the effective implementation of advising systems due to a lack of training for advisors, limited resources, and the overwhelming caseloads of academic advisors. This can result in students receiving inadequate or sporadic support, which undermines the potential benefits of academic advising.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast, the University of Cape Town (UCT) and Stellenbosch University have been praised for their proactive academic advising systems that incorporate a combination of personalized academic advising and peer mentorship. These systems have demonstrated effectiveness in improving retention and graduation rates by providing tailored academic support and creating a supportive environment for students.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, research by Sibanda shows that universities with dedicated advising units and trained staff tend to experience better student retention outcomes.<sup>15</sup>

Lee and Chung state that despite the recognition of its importance, academic advising in South African universities often focuses predominantly on academic performance and course selection, with less emphasis placed on the holistic needs of students, including emotional, financial, and social support.<sup>16</sup> Sibanda stated that the lack of a comprehensive advising framework that addresses these needs has been identified as a critical gap in the effectiveness of advising systems.<sup>17</sup>

Reports by the Council on Higher Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training emphasize that a more integrated approach to academic advising, which includes a focus on student wellness, financial aid counseling, and career guidance, is essential to improving the retention and graduation rates in South African universities. Holistic academic advising systems that consider the broader challenges faced by students are likely to have a greater impact on student success.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Leesa Schmidt and Debra Lown, "Academic Advising as a Tool for Student Success and Educational Equity," *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice* 20, no. 2 (2018): 243–59.

<sup>11</sup> Mouton, Moodley, and Singh, "Enhancing Student Success Through Professionalised Academic Advising: A Model for Identifying Academic Advisors for South African Higher Education Context."

<sup>12</sup> Amanda Du Plessis, "The Impact of Academic Advising on Student Success: A South African Perspective," *Journal of Higher Education Studies* 12, no. 3 (2022): 78–92.

<sup>13</sup> Ngwenya and Moyo, "Enhancing Student Success Through Professionalised Academic Advising: A Model for Identifying Academic Advisors for South African Higher Education Contexts." limited resources, and the overwhelming caseloads of academic advisors. This can result in students receiving inadequate or sporadic support, which undermines the potential benefits of academic advising

<sup>14</sup> Mouton, Moodley, and Singh, "Enhancing Student Success Through Professionalised Academic Advising: A Model for Identifying Academic Advisors for South African Higher Education Context."

<sup>15</sup> T. Sibanda, "The Impact of Dedicated Academic Advising Units on Student Retention in South African Universities," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 39, no. 1 (2024): 45–64.

<sup>16</sup> J. Lee and S. Chung, "Holistic Academic Advising: Addressing Emotional, Financial, and Social Needs of University Students," *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice* 56, no. 3 (2019): 243–59.

<sup>17</sup> Sibanda, "The Impact of Dedicated Academic Advising Units on Student Retention in South African Universities."

<sup>18</sup> Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2022* (Pretoria: DHET, 2023), [https://www.dhet.gov.za/Information Systems Management/Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa, 2022.pdf](https://www.dhet.gov.za/Information%20Systems%20Management/Statistics%20on%20Post-School%20Education%20and%20Training%20in%20South%20Africa,%202022.pdf).

Academic advising has emerged as a critical component in supporting student success, retention, and graduation rates in higher education institutions globally. In the South African context, where students face unique challenges stemming from historical inequalities and socio-economic disparities, the role of academic advising has gained increased attention. This literature review examines the effectiveness of academic advising on student retention and graduation rates in South African universities, drawing from recent research, institutional reports, and case studies.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Landscape of Higher Education in South Africa**

South Africa's higher education system is characterized by significant diversity, with students coming from varied socio-economic backgrounds and levels of academic preparedness. The Council on Higher Education report highlights that many students, particularly those from historically disadvantaged communities, face multiple challenges, including financial instability, academic underpreparedness, and lack of adequate support systems. These factors contribute to high dropout rates and extended time-to-degree completion, making effective academic advising crucial for student success.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Role of Academic Advising in Student Success**

Academic advising plays a multifaceted role in supporting student success. Tiroyabone and Strydom emphasize that academic advising provides students with relevant information, facilitates their conceptual understanding of the university, and allows students the opportunity to form meaningful relationships with the institution through advisors and various advising initiatives. This connection is particularly important in the South African context, where many students are first-generation university attendees and may struggle to navigate the complex higher education environment.

### **Effectiveness of Academic Advising on Retention Rates**

Several studies have demonstrated the positive impact of academic advising on student retention rates in South African universities. Mouton et al. found that effective advising practices, when integrated with personalized academic support and mentoring, can lead to improved student outcomes. Their study, which examined advising programs across multiple institutions, highlighted that regular one-on-one meetings, early identification of academic difficulties, and support in course selection all contributed to higher retention rates.<sup>21</sup>

A longitudinal study conducted at the University of the Free State (UFS) by Tiroyabone and Strydom provided quantitative evidence of the impact of academic advising on student success. The study used mixed modeling to show that students who participated in academic advising had a higher probability of passing more than 70% of their modules compared to a comparable group who had not participated in advising, regardless of their Admission Point (AP) scores. This research underscores the potential of academic advising to level the playing field for students from diverse academic backgrounds.<sup>22</sup>

Du Plessis further supports these findings, emphasizing that academic advising helps students feel more connected to the university, leading to a greater sense of belonging. This increased sense of connection has been shown to improve students' commitment to completing their degrees, thereby positively influencing retention rates.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Universities South Africa, "Academic Advising Is a Critical Determinant of Student Success," August 27, 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Council on Higher Education (CHE), "VitalStats: Public Higher Education 2019," Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 2020, [https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/CHE\\_VitalStats\\_2019.pdf](https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/CHE_VitalStats_2019.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Mouton, Moodley, and Singh, "Enhancing Student Success Through Professionalised Academic Advising: A Model for Identifying Academic Advisors for South African Higher Education Context."

<sup>22</sup> Gugu Wendy Tiroyabone and Francois Strydom, "The Development of Academic Advising to Enable Student Success in South Africa," *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 9, no. 2 (2021): 1–16. The study used mixed modeling to show that students who participated in academic advising had a higher probability of passing more than 70% of their modules compared to a comparable group who had not participated in advising, regardless of their Admission Point (AP) scores. This research underscores the potential of academic advising to level the playing field for students from diverse academic backgrounds.

<sup>23</sup> Du Plessis, "The Impact of Academic Advising on Student Success: A South African Perspective."

### **Challenges in Implementing Effective Academic Advising**

Despite the recognized benefits, the implementation of effective academic advising in South African universities faces several challenges. Ngwenya and Moyo identify key obstacles including insufficient resources, lack of trained academic advisors, and inconsistencies in how advising services are delivered across institutions. Their research, which surveyed academic advisors across multiple universities, found that many advisors felt overwhelmed by large caseloads and inadequate training, limiting their ability to provide comprehensive support to students.<sup>24</sup> Molefe further elaborates on these challenges, noting that the absence of a standardized framework for academic advising in South African higher education contributes to variability in the quality and effectiveness of advising services. This lack of standardization makes it difficult to assess and compare the impact of advising across different institutions.

### **Best Practices and Successful Models**

Despite these challenges, several South African universities have implemented successful academic advising models that have shown promising results in improving student retention and graduation rates. The study by Mouton et al. stated that the UCT and Stellenbosch University have been recognized for their proactive academic advising systems that incorporate a combination of personalized academic advising and peer mentorship.<sup>25</sup> These systems have demonstrated effectiveness in improving retention and graduation rates by providing tailored academic support and creating a supportive environment for students.

Sibanda conducted a comparative study of academic advising practices across South African universities and found that institutions with dedicated advising units and trained staff tend to experience better student retention outcomes. The study highlighted the importance of institutional commitment to academic advising, including adequate resource allocation and ongoing professional development for advisors.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Impact of Technology on Academic Advising**

The integration of technology in academic advising has emerged as a significant trend in South African higher education. Nyar discusses how universities are leveraging technology to enhance the reach and effectiveness of academic advising. Online platforms, mobile applications, and data analytics tools are being used to provide students with easier access to advising services, track academic progress, and identify at-risk students early.<sup>27</sup>

A case study by De Klerk et al. at the University of the Witwatersrand demonstrates how the implementation of a data-driven advising system improved the institution's ability to provide timely and targeted support to students. The system used predictive analytics to identify students at risk of academic failure, allowing advisors to intervene proactively. This approach resulted in a measurable increase in retention rates among first-year students.<sup>28</sup>

### **Holistic Approach to Academic Advising**

Recent literature emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to academic advising that goes beyond academic performance and course selection. Lee and Chung argue that effective academic advising in the South African context must address the multifaceted needs of students, including emotional, financial, and social support. Their research suggests that a comprehensive advising

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<sup>24</sup> Thandiwe Ngwenya and Siphon Moyo, "Challenges in Academic Advising: Resource Constraints and Professional Development Gaps in South African Higher Education," *Unpublished Manuscript* (University of Johannesburg, 2023).

<sup>25</sup> Johann Mouton, "Reimagining Doctoral Success for 'Non-Traditional Students': A Phenomenological Study," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 35, no. 6 (2021).

<sup>26</sup> Sibanda, "The Impact of Dedicated Academic Advising Units on Student Retention in South African Universities."

<sup>27</sup> Nyar, Tinashe. *Leveraging Technology for Academic Advising: Enhancing Access and Effectiveness in Higher Education* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2020), 45–47.

<sup>28</sup> de Klerk, Jadhav, and Hundermark, "Enhancing Student Success beyond COVID-19 through Professionalised Academic Advising: A Model for Identifying Academic Advisors for South African Higher Education Contexts."

framework that addresses these broader needs is more effective in improving student retention and graduation rates.<sup>29</sup>

This holistic approach is supported by reports from the Council on Higher Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training, which emphasize that integrated advising systems that include a focus on student wellness, financial aid counseling, and career guidance are essential to improving student outcomes in South African universities.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Role of Academic Advising in Addressing Socio-Economic Disparities**

A critical aspect of academic advising in South African universities is its potential to address socio-economic disparities among students. Letseka and Maile highlight the persistent challenges faced by students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including financial constraints and a lack of social capital. Academic advising has been identified as a key intervention to support these students.<sup>31</sup>

Recent research by Uleanya and Rugbeer explores how academic advising can be tailored to meet the needs of first-generation and low-income students in rural South African universities. Their study found that personalized advising approaches that consider students' socio-economic contexts and provide guidance on navigating university systems and accessing resources were particularly effective in improving retention rates among these student populations.<sup>32</sup>

### **Professional Development and Training for Academic Advisors**

The effectiveness of academic advising is closely tied to the quality and training of academic advisors. Hundermark conducted a comprehensive study on the development of the academic advising profession in South African universities. The research highlights the importance of ongoing professional development and the need for a standardized framework for advisor training.

Hundermark's study also examines the impact of the Academic Advising Professional Development (AAPD) short course, which has been implemented across several South African universities.<sup>33</sup> The findings suggest that advisors who completed the AAPD course were better equipped to provide comprehensive support to students, resulting in improved student satisfaction and retention rates.<sup>34</sup>

### **Measuring the Effectiveness of Academic Advising**

One of the challenges in assessing the impact of academic advising on retention and graduation rates is the difficulty in isolating its effects from other factors that influence student success. Strydom and Loots propose a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of academic advising in South African universities. Their model incorporates both quantitative metrics, such as retention and graduation rates, and qualitative measures, including student satisfaction and engagement levels.<sup>35</sup>

The authors argue that a comprehensive evaluation approach is necessary to capture the full impact of academic advising on student success. This includes considering long-term outcomes such as career readiness and alumni engagement, in addition to immediate retention and graduation metrics.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To enhance academic advising in South African universities, establishing standardized frameworks is essential. National guidelines should be developed to outline the core competencies of advisors, ethical

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<sup>29</sup> Lee and Chung, "Holistic Academic Advising: Addressing Emotional, Financial, and Social Needs of University Students."

<sup>30</sup> Council on Higher Education (CHE), "2022/2023 Annual Report," 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Letseka, Moeketsi, and Maile, Simeon. "High University Dropout Rates: A Threat to South Africa's Future." *Human Sciences Research Council Review* 6, no. 2 (2008): 1–5.

<sup>32</sup> Chimene Uleanya and Hemalatha Rugbeer, "Tailoring Academic Advising for First-Generation and Low-Income Students in Rural South African Universities," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 34, no. 3 (2020): 45–60.

<sup>33</sup> de Klerk, Jadhav, and Hundermark, "Enhancing Student Success beyond COVID-19 through Professionalised Academic Advising: A Model for Identifying Academic Advisors for South African Higher Education Contexts."

<sup>34</sup> de Klerk, Jadhav, and Hundermark, "Enhancing Student Success beyond COVID-19 through Professionalised Academic Advising: A Model for Identifying Academic Advisors for South African Higher Education Contexts."

<sup>35</sup> Francois Strydom and Cecilia Loots, "A Framework for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Academic Advising in South African Universities," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 34, no. 2 (2020): 45–62.

standards, and best practices in advising. These guidelines must be created collaboratively with universities, professional associations such as the South African Association for Academic Development, and student representatives to ensure relevance and institutional buy-in. Such guidelines will help unify advising practices across institutions and provide clarity on the role and expectations of academic advisors.

Accreditation of academic advising programs or individual advisors should be explored to ensure adherence to quality standards and promote professional recognition. This could involve a tiered certification system based on experience and qualifications, offering advisors clear pathways for professional growth. Accreditation would also elevate the status of academic advising as a profession and ensure consistency in service delivery.

Mandatory training programs for academic advisors are crucial. Advisors should be required to complete standardized training that covers key advising skills, ethical considerations, knowledge of university policies and resources, and cultural sensitivity. These training programs should be regularly updated to reflect changes in higher education and evolving student needs. Furthermore, clear job descriptions must be developed for academic advisors across institutions. These descriptions should outline roles, responsibilities, and expectations to attract qualified candidates and hold advisors accountable for their performance.

### ***Improving Resource Allocation***

Effective resource allocation is vital for strengthening academic advising services. Universities should establish target advisor-to-student ratios tailored to different disciplines and student populations. Lower ratios are particularly important for first-year students, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those enrolled in high-risk programs. Adequate staffing ensures that advisors can provide personalized support to students who need it most.

Dedicated funding must be allocated specifically to academic advising services, separate from other university budgets. This will ensure that advising services have the resources necessary to operate effectively without being underfunded during financial constraints. Universities should also incentivize faculty members who dedicate time to academic advising through promotion considerations, teaching release time, or other forms of compensation.

Investing in infrastructure is another critical step. Universities should create dedicated advising offices equipped with private meeting spaces and technological tools that facilitate efficient service delivery. Such investments will enhance the accessibility and professionalism of advising services.

### ***Adopting Holistic Advising Models***

A holistic approach to academic advising is essential for addressing the diverse needs of students. Integrated services should be created where academic advising is co-located with other student support services such as financial aid counseling, mental health support, career services, and disability services. This one-stop shop model simplifies access to resources and fosters a more comprehensive approach to student support.

Proactive advising strategies should be implemented to identify at-risk students early and provide targeted interventions. Mandatory advising sessions for first-year students and early alert systems can help advisors address challenges before they escalate. Personalized advising is equally important; advisors should tailor their guidance based on students' individual goals, strengths, challenges, learning styles, interests, and career aspirations.

Peer mentoring programs can complement formal advising by allowing upper-year students to provide guidance to new students. Peer mentors can help students navigate university systems, connect with resources, and build a sense of community.

### ***Integrating Technology***

The integration of technology can significantly enhance the efficiency and accessibility of academic advising services. Early alert systems enable faculty members to flag academically struggling students so that advisors can intervene promptly with appropriate support measures. Virtual advising platforms

allow students to access services remotely through video conferencing, online chat, or email, improving accessibility for those unable to attend in-person sessions.

Data analytics can be leveraged to track student progress, identify trends, and evaluate the effectiveness of advising interventions. This data-driven approach ensures that policies are informed by evidence and helps institutions refine their practices over time. Additionally, centralized information systems should be created to provide advisors with comprehensive access to student data such as academic records, financial aid information, and previous advising notes.

### ***Continuous Professional Development***

Ongoing professional development opportunities are essential for maintaining high-quality academic advising services. Advisors should have access to regular training programs that keep them updated on best practices, new technologies, and changes in university policies. Mentorship programs can pair experienced advisors with new ones to provide guidance and support while fostering skill development.

Participation in conferences and workshops allows advisors to network with peers in the field and learn about emerging trends in academic advising. Supporting scholarship and research related to advising practices can further enrich the profession by contributing new insights into effective strategies tailored to South African contexts.

### ***Ongoing Research and Evaluation***

Continuous research and evaluation are necessary for assessing the long-term impact of academic advising on student success outcomes such as graduation rates or career achievements. Longitudinal studies can provide valuable insights into how advising interventions influence these metrics over time.

Qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, can explore students' experiences with academic advising while identifying areas for improvement. Regular surveys can gather feedback from both students and advisors regarding service effectiveness.

Benchmarking against other universities, both locally within South Africa and internationally, can help institutions identify best practices while fostering innovation in their own processes. Collaboration among universities at local or regional levels can further enhance efforts by generating replicable models of success.

By focusing on these key areas standardized frameworks, resource allocation, holistic models, technology integration, professional development, and research, South African universities can create more equitable academic advising systems that support student success while contributing positively to national development goals.

## **CONCLUSION**

This literature review has revealed that academic advising plays a crucial role in supporting student retention and graduation rates in South African universities. Effective advising practices have been shown to improve student engagement, academic performance, and overall satisfaction with the university experience. However, the implementation of comprehensive advising systems faces challenges including resource constraints, lack of standardization, and the need for specialized training for advisors. Successful models of academic advising in South African universities demonstrate the potential for a significant positive impact on student outcomes. These models typically incorporate personalized support, technology integration, and a holistic approach to student development. Moving forward, addressing the identified challenges and implementing best practices in academic advising will be crucial for improving retention and graduation rates in South African higher education institutions. As the higher education landscape in South Africa continues to evolve, academic advising will play an increasingly important role in supporting student success. By investing in effective advising systems, universities can not only improve retention and graduation rates but also contribute to broader goals of equity and access in higher education.

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