The digitalisation of teaching and the diversification of learning environments require high-quality guidance that is readily accessible for everyone also in digital environments. Digital guidance means online guidance that utilises information and communication technology.

The areas of study guidance and counselling at universities of applied sciences include learning and study counselling, guidance in career planning and professional growth, and support of personal growth and well-being. Successful guidance can direct and support the student in their current situation by e.g. helping them in assuming an active role in their studies and career planning (cf. the 'Verkko-ohjaaja' guide). The ethics of guidance includes equitable and equal treatment of all. In this context, digital guidance means not only human guidance between people, but also the utilisation of self-directed materials, tests and automated feedback such as 'bots' as part of the guidance process. The learner's path serves as a framework for identifying and describing the guidance themes (cf. OPI-viitearkkitehtuuri).

Created as part of the eAMK project, the quality criteria for digital guidance are intended to help ensure that all the relevant aspects of digital guidance services have been duly taken into account. The criteria are intended for all counsellors who engage in study guidance and counselling duties at institutes of higher education. The quality criteria are of a checklist or recommendation type. These criteria can also be used in other guidance and counselling work.

The purpose of the quality criteria is to:

- serve as a tool for the development and self-evaluation of digital guidance, at both individual and organisational levels
- improve the quality of digital guidance services from both the service providers' and the users' point of view
- ensure the proper implementation of data security and data protection in digital guidance services

The quality criteria consist of four themes:

Theme 1: Digital guidance service package

Theme 2: Digital guidance as activities – process and event

Theme 3: Digital counsellor's competence and guidance methods and environments

Theme 4: Data protection, data security and ethicality

In the more detailed descriptions of the quality criteria, the term 'guidance' is frequently used, which is a shorthand for digital guidance. The first criteria under each theme are the quality aspects, the attainment of which is not the responsibility of an individual counsellor or student, but instead requires the preconditions offered by the organisation.

THEME 1: DIGITAL GUIDANCE SERVICE PACKAGE

Here, a service package means the existing guidance services that are available throughout the study path. Users are aware of the guidance services that are available during the study path, their contents and providers.

Objectives	How reflected in the guidance?	Responsible for the criteria being met		
		Organisation	Counsellor	Student
1 A The service package covers the student's guidance needs during their studies	The guidance serves the student during their studies in the following themes: Digital competence, variety of courses offered, studying at UAS, personal study plan, ability to study and professional growth (see the Digital guidance path image, eAMK).	X	X	X
1 B. Guidance services have been described and the responsibilities have been defined, and they have been communicated to the students and the operators involved	The responsibilities of the organisation, the counsellor and the student have been agreed upon in the guidance service description. Different client groups, such as applicants, degree students (bachelor's, master's) and open studies students, at different stages of their studies, have been taken into account in the guidance service descriptions from the point of view of continuous learning. The guidance service description indicates • where the materials related to different guidance needs can be found, e.g. self-learning materials • when the different guidance services are available, how a guidance time is booked and/or how the guidance services can be accessed • how the web-based guidance and IT support services are provided.	X X X X X		
1 C. Accessibility of guidance services promotes equality and	The organisation complies with the obligations set out in the Act on the Provision of Digital Services.	X X		

improves the quality of digital services	Information about the guidance services is provided on the official website of the organisation.	X		
	The guidance services have been named understandably and their technical functioning has been ensured.	X		
	The use of visual elements in the service descriptions and guidance services is well-considered and clear.	X		
	In the materials provided in text form, due consideration has been given to	X		
	• readability, sufficient font size and uniform appearance • the possibility of using a screen reader	X		
	A text track or a separate text file has been provided in video and audio materials.	X		
	The guidance services take into account the guidance needs resulting from the internationalisation of education (e.g. time differences, the language of service and service culture).	X		
	The service description indicates whether the guidance service provider is a human or whether the service has been automated (e.g. bots).			
1 D. The service description takes into account cooperation and networks	The services of partners and networks outside of the organisation that participate in the guidance are indicated in the description of guidance services (e.g. student health services, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, providers of career tutoring services).	X		
1 E. The guidance is part of the developing quality system of the university of applied sciences.	The organisation has a guidance plan in place that also takes digital guidance into account.	X		
	The organisation's guidance plan has been made available for all.	X		
	The guidance takes place in a timely manner in relation to the organisation's processes and resources.	X		
		X		
	The student has the opportunity to participate in the agile development and continuous improvement of services (e.g. plan-do-check-act).			
		X		

	The organisation has appointed persons in charge of the regular updates of digital guidance materials and services.			

The guidance process is understood as an essentially collaborative, goal-oriented activity. Efforts are made to provide the guidance on a timely basis in such a way that process and the event have been prepared in advance. Technically produced materials that support self-direction are increasingly used in guidance activities. With regard to such guidance materials, the organisation and the counsellor are responsible for providing information about them, while the student is responsible for their utilisation.

Objectives	How reflected in the guidance?	Responsible for the criteria being met		
		Organisation	Counsellor	Student
2 A. The study phase is taken into account in the guidance	The transition phases of studies (applying for admission, commencement of studies, international student exchange, postgraduate studies, career and working life guidance) are taken into account in the provision of the guidance.	X	X	
	The guidance is provided in a timely manner from the student's point of view.		X	X
	The response time to the student's guidance needs is consistent with the organisation's service promise.	X	X	
2 B. The guidance is systematic and goal-oriented	Guidance is also available for suddenly emerging guidance needs (e.g. chat and on-call hours).	X		
	Those involved in the guidance work towards a purposefully shared understanding of the guidance needs and objectives.		X	X
	In the guidance situation and environment and in the materials used, the different phases of the guidance process are taken into account: the initial situation and assessment of guidance needs, the actions related to and outline of the guidance situation, and the ending of guidance.		X	X
	(For further information, see: Verkko-ohjaaja. Opas ohjaukseen sekä tieto- ja neuvontatyöhön verkossa)			
2 C. The counsellor has the opportunity to prepare for the situation if applicable	The information systems available to the higher education institution enable the utilisation of the data generated by data analytics for guidance purposes.	X		

	I have the opportunity to obtain the information required by the guidance situation from different systems, such as the study records and the data sources of data analytics.		X	
	I am familiar with the necessary cooperation networks and I know how to make use of the information they provide.		X	
	The student has the opportunity to describe and name their guidance needs when reserving an appointment.	X	X	
	I have ensured the functioning of the agreed guidance environment and prepared for the steps to be taken in the event of technical disturbances.		X	
2 D. The guidance supports learning to learn and student well-being	Digitally provided well-being services (e.g. health, physical activity, mental health) have been integrated as part of the guidance process.	X		
	The guidance supports learning skills and ability (e.g. learning skills, digital competence, learning difficulties, challenges in learning ability or life situations).		X	X
	The student's individual need for support has been taken into account and its suitability for digital guidance has been assessed.		X	

THEME 3: DIGITAL COUNSELLOR'S COMPETENCE AND GUIDANCE METHODS AND ENVIRONMENTS

The objective of the guidance is to support the student's learning, growth and development.

Objectives	How reflected in the guidance?	Responsible for the criteria being met		
		Organisation	Counsellor	Student
3 A. The choice of the guidance method is based on the student's needs and the range of available methods is diverse and sufficient	The organisation has methods available that are suitable for individual and group guidance and support communality.	X		
	I provide guidance methods and tools that are suitable to the student's needs and comply with the Act on the Provision of Digital Services (Act 306/2019, chapter 3).		X	
	The student has the opportunity to influence the selection of an appropriate digital tool supported by the organisation.	X	X	X
3B. The guidance supports the student's participation	The guidance makes it possible for the students to assume an active role and take initiative in the process.		X	
	I take the special characteristics of online interaction into account, such as the choice and suitability of the tools used, preparation, interaction and closing (cf. Vinkkejä digiohjaukseen: Verkko-ohjaaja. Opas ohjaukseen sekä tieto- ja neuvontatyöhön verkossa).		X	
	The guidance situation aims at achieving a shared understanding of the agreed-upon measures.		X	X
3 C. The person providing counselling has proper professional competence	The organisation supports the counsellors' competence with regard to digital guidance, tools and environments.	X		
	I am aware of the ethical and legal responsibility associated with counselling, its methods and environments.		X	

	I have the necessary pedagogical and technical skills for digital guidance and the desire to develop and educate myself in these skills.		X	
	I can assess the student's service needs and the appropriate digital guidance tools and environments.		X	
	I can use and utilise the information generated by information systems in guidance work (learning analytics, study records).		X	
	I recognise situations (e.g. health reasons, use of intoxicants, disciplinary reasons) in which face-to-face guidance is necessary.		X	
3 D. The guidance environment is secure	The security aspects related to the guidance environment and its use have been taken care of.	X	X	X
	The guidance environment enables undisturbed concentration and protection of privacy.		X	X

THEME 4: DATA PROTECTION, DATA SECURITY AND ETHICALITY

The guidance is ethical, data secure and protected

Objectives	How reflected in the guidance?	Responsible for the criteria being met		
		Organisation	Counsellor	Student
4 A. In a guidance situation, the participants undertake to comply with the ethical and legal principles of the organisation	The organisation provides systematic training for the development of the counsellors' competence (including data protection and data security matters).	X		
	I assume responsibility for developing my own competence.		X	
	I have studied the organisation's data security guidelines and legislation.		X	
	The participants are aware of the copyright of the materials used in the guidance.	X	X	X
	In the guidance situation, I work professionally in an expert role and comply with professional ethics. I understand ethical considerations and take them into account when assessing the suitability of digital guidance to the guidance situation and the student's needs.		X	
	The participants are aware of and take into account the confidentiality obligations related to guidance.		X	X
	The students have been informed if the guidance situation is recorded and published for a well-founded reason.		X	
	The student has the right to decide on their participation in the recorded material and on its publication.			X
4 B. An atmosphere of trust is present in the guidance situation	The participants are aware of whether the guidance and counselling service is provided by an automaton/bot.	X	X	X
	The guidance situation is fair and dialogical.		X	X
	The participants are aware of who are present in the guidance situation and where the guidance takes place.		X	X

	The students are informed of the ways of protecting personal data.		X	X
	The participants are aware of their own responsibility in the creation of an atmosphere of trust in e.g. group guidance situations.		X	X
4 C. The guidance situation meets the requirements concerning data security and protection	Guidelines and technical support are available for the environments and tools used in the guidance.	X		
	The organisation provides guidance services which a participant can use anonymously (e.g. chat, digital guidance material).	X		X
	The students have been informed of the responsibility for updating the data security of their devices, of ensuring their personal data security and of the digital footprints created in the systems.	X	X	X
	In a guidance situation, priority is given to information systems and applications approved and updated by the organisation to which the users primarily log in with user credentials created by the organisation.		X	
	The student has been informed in advance about the verification of their identity in the guidance service description.		X	
	In a personal guidance situation, the identity of the student can be reliably verified (e.g. secure sign-in, showing of identity documents, video image).		X	
	In the guidance situation, only the materials related to the guidance situation are open and the environment is protected against disruptions such as pop-ups and messages that appear on the screen.		X	

REFERENCES

Digital Guidance Application Experiments 2019. eAMK. https://www.eamk.fi/en/pedagogy2/digital-guidance-experiments/.

Guttorm, T., Hakkarainen, T., Kolehmainen, A., Mäenpää, K., Peltola, S. & Ylönen, H. (eds.) 2017. Verkko-ohjaaja. Opas ohjaukseen sekä tieto- ja neuvontatyöhön verkossa. ePooki. Oulu UAS research and development publications 38. http://urn.fi/urn:isbn:978-951-597-151-7.

Kaikki oppaan huoneentaulut kootusti. In Guttorm, T., Hakkarainen, T., Kolehmainen, A., Mäenpää, K., Peltola, S. & Ylönen, H. (eds.) 2017. Verkko-ohjaaja. Opas ohjaukseen sekä tieto- ja neuvontatyöhön verkossa. ePooki. Oulu UAS research and development publications 38. Page 106. http://urn.fi/urn:isbn:978-951-597-151-7.

Hyvän ohjauksen kriteerit 2015. https://opintopolku.fi/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/158918_hyvan_ohjauksen_kriteerit-1.pdf

Act 306/2019. Issued on 15 March 2019. Act on the Provision of Digital Services: https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2019/20190306 .

Act 906/2019. Issued on 9 August 2019. Act on Information Management in Public Administration. https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2019/en20190906.pdf .

OPI-viitearkkitehtuuri. 12 December 2019. Korkeakoulun prosessialueet. Ohjaus. https://wiki.eduuni.fi/display/CSCKOOTUKI/OPI-viitearkkitehtuuri+2019%3A+koko+dokumentaatio?preview=/80950833/130524977/2019-12-12-OPI-viitearkkitehtuuri-dokumentaatio.xlsx.