A Third Space Approach to Integrated Academic Student Success Advising (ASSA)

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Abstract

The Academic Student Success Advising (ASSA) project enacted an integrated academic and pastoral approach to advising using McIntosh's (2023) fundamental principles of advising. This research conducted at two Australian universities explores how shared principles of advising can provide an underpinning structure to pan-university advising approaches as a mechanism of student development. Forty staff were interviewed, exploring understandings and experiences of advising. Data were analysed through the four key advising themes: inclusive, personalised and integrated, developmental, and student-centred. The findings suggest that staff perceive value in integrated advising approaches that connect students' academic and pastoral experiences through an 'advising as teaching lens' and that link areas of the university to enhance student success. Recommendations highlight the value of investing in staff understandings of advising to enhance student development, the intentional embedding of co-curricular skills, and the continued need to develop systems to track advising outcomes.

Keywords: Advising; pastoral advice; academic development; retention; student success.

Introduction

In 2020, the University of the Sunshine Coast (UniSC) and the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) embarked on a collaborative project of 'Academic Student Success Advising' (ASSA) in response to a need to explore integrated models of advising in the Australian context. In this article, we reposition advising from the bounded existing understanding of advising as a function fulfilled by 'advisers', towards a more integrated and conceptual understanding of advising as a pan-university strategic approach. In the design phase of this project, McIntosh's (2019) at the time unpublished fundamental principles of advising were used. In this article, we use McIntosh's (2023) updated fundamental principles of advising as a conceptual frame to better understand the dimensions of advising and their application in different contexts and in different delivery models. We discuss the history and evolution of advising approaches, and describe predominant understandings present in the

literature, before detailing the fundamental principles of advising and the two projects conducted by UniSC and UniSQ. As such, the focus of our data analysis was on the principles of advising that underpinned the design of the two projects and the ways in which staff interpreted and enacted them through an ASSA approach, rather than the operational aspects of the delivery models. Analysing how the principles of advising are understood and implemented through ASSA approaches presents rich opportunities for structured cross-disciplinary and pan-university student development. In the current literature, a gap exists in understanding the scope and dimensions of advising as a student development approach. Exploring how the principles of advising are enacted contributes to an understanding of how it could be utilised as a pan-university and integrated strategy of student development.

ASSA is referred to in several ways in the literature including personal tutoring, personal advising and academic advising (National Academic Advising Association, 2023). In a historical and international context, advising is a deeply established and century-old practice including both intellectual and pastoral development of students, with advisers sometimes fulfilling the role of *loco parentis* – in place of parent (Kuhn, 2008). This integrated academic and pastoral model remains a feature of contemporary UK and North American practice with an aim of providing structured and intentional student development. Within these international contexts, the role of advisers has been traditionally fulfilled by academic staff who focus on promoting students' cognitive and discipline specific development, as well as cross-curricular competencies. These include academic literacies, problem solving and resilience (Lochtie et al., 2018), and goal setting, reflecting on progress, identifying future actions and employability options (McIntosh & Barden, 2019). Stuart, Wilcocks and Browning's (2019) research highlighted the potential multiple positive outcomes of ASSA, including improving attendance, engagement, and subsequently grades, as well as future employment. These competencies and outcomes form the foundations for becoming *citizen scholars* (Arvanitakis & Hornsby, 2016). In these international contexts, ASSA has been identified as facilitating the development of relationships with academic staff as a central element of a positive sense of belonging to course of study and institution (Lochtie et al., 2018). Meeting with an academic adviser is considered a key mechanism for retention (Thomas, 2006) and while a sense of belonging alone does not guarantee success, the development of constructive relationships positively influences student motivation, effort, engagement, and satisfaction (Thomas, 2018).

In Australia, where the ASSA initiatives described in this study are located, advising is often delivered by specialised and centralised professional teams focussing separately on student success, career development, academic literacies and student wellbeing (White, 2011). The introduction of professional student services teams emerged from an intentional widening participation initiative and the subsequent sector-wide higher education review (Bradley et al., 2008), which identified the need for increased breadth of student services to improve student outcomes. The need for comprehensive student services that respond to the dynamic and complex structural and personal factors that influence student engagement and success is widely acknowledged in the literature (for example see Kahu & Nelson, 2018). This is particularly true for students from more diverse backgrounds, including students from low-socio economic status (SES) backgrounds, regional and remote students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with disabilities who experience additional financial, geographical and sociocultural barriers to education (Nelson et al., 2017). These barriers can also challenge students' ability to access cross-curricular services and development outside of mandatory university commitments. Devlin's (2013) work in socio-cultural incongruity highlights the complexities of navigating higher education environments, including knowledge and understanding of the unspoken requirements of university study and possessing the competencies to meet these tacit expectations. In the most recent review of the Australian higher education sector, the 2023 Australian Universities Accord Interim report notes the responsibility of universities to provide learning advice to assist students to complete their qualification in the minimum time and cost, and to improve student welfare and wellbeing (Department of Education, 2023). A pan-university mechanism of both academic and welfare, or pastoral cross-disciplinary, integrated advising meets this responsibility.

To achieve a pan-university approach to advising, a focus on embedding a shared philosophy of supporting and developing students across all university activities is needed. It also includes the need for advising to be broadly enacted in various ways across different university contexts, including a view that facets of advising are the integrated responsibility of all staff and areas of university. It is therefore useful to view advising through the emergent lens of 'advising as teaching' (Lowenstein, 2020 p. 65), with a focus on the proactive skills and competencies that can be intentionally embedded across multiple university functions that may have been traditionally bounded as non-teaching. With the emergence of the third space in higher education, defined by Whitchurch (2012) as the dynamic space "between professional and academic spheres of activity" the past decade has seen a proliferation of activity that transcends the traditional boundaries of universities and has dismantled some of the silos of higher education (p. 3). Within the third space, traditional conceptualisations of advising roles have evolved from one-to-one advising functions that respond to student challenges, to dynamic and proactive contributions to learning and teaching, curriculum design, policy, and staff development as a more proactive mechanism of developing students' capabilities, skills and competence (McIntosh & Nutt, 2022). While this is relatively new work in Australia, it is nonetheless occurring, albeit in pockets rather than at a macro level. It does, however, require a repositioning of the concept

of advising, away from 'advising as support', where advisers react to student challenges, to advising as teaching and development, where advising is a strategic concept ingrained within all university activities. Thus, the authors of this article conceptualise ASSA as a series of linked pan-university activities, where fundamental principles of advising transcend traditional advising roles and services and are extended to underpin all university functions including policy, curriculum, student services, enrolment, and recruitment. This conceptualisation includes the ongoing need for specialised and professional teams that address the structural barriers and personal challenges experienced by students within higher education.

A framework to achieve a pan-university philosophy of advising as described above is McIntosh's (2023) fundamental principles of advising (Figure 1). The four fundamental principles include **inclusive, personalised and integrated, developmental** and **student-centred** and can be utilised as an overarching framework for all university activities and functions.

Figure 1

McIntosh's (2023) Fundamental Principles of Advising
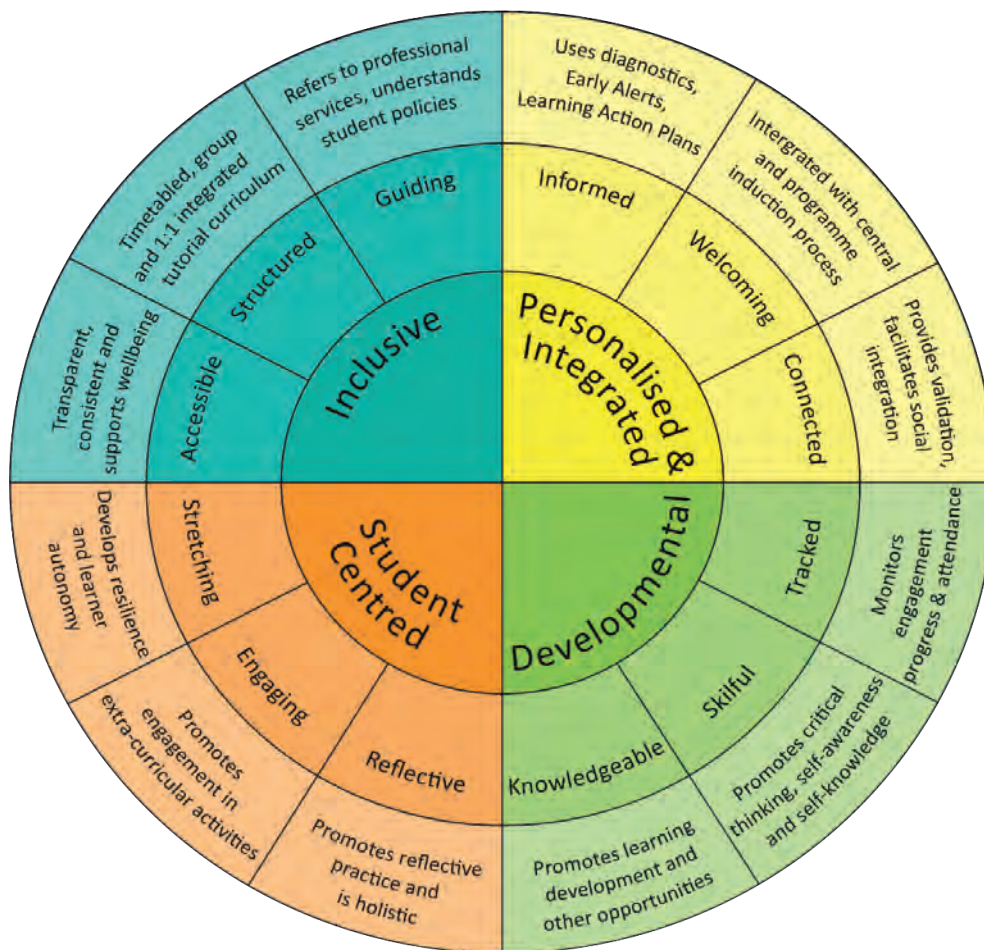
The **inclusive** principle relates to advising that is *structured*, *accessible* and *guiding*. Advising should provide a *structured* framework ensuring all students work towards outcomes, potentially through an advising curriculum (Picton, 2021). Advising is increasingly viewed through a pedagogical lens, with literature now describing advising as teaching. Lowenstein (2020) poses the question, "If advising is teaching, what do advisers teach?" (p. 65) and describes wide ranging development, including logic, making sense of the curriculum, building autonomy, and the ability to relate learning experiences to one another. Advising must also be *accessible*: transparent and consistently applied, promoting student wellbeing, and fostered through interpersonal relationships (Braine & Parnell, 2011). Lastly, the process should be *guiding,* referring students to additional services and resources.

The **personalised and integrated** principle relates to *welcoming*, *connected* and *informed* advising. A *welcoming* approach should frame existing program and induction processes integrated as a whole-of-university pursuit. Advising should be a *connected* experience in pastoral and academic senses (Lochtie et al., 2018) promoting validation of learning. Building strong relationships between students and academic and professional staff creates a sense of belonging to course of study and institution, and contributes to increased effort, self-efficacy, wellbeing, learning, and achievement (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Picton & Kahu, 2021). Advising should also be *informed* using student data to continually monitor student success. A coordinated and systematic tracking and monitoring of student progress and performance contributes to a proactive and personalised approach (Braine & Parnell, 2011; Yale, 2017).

The **developmental** principle relates to advising that is *skilful*, *knowledgeable* and *tracked*. As a mechanism to promote holistic student development and success, advising encourages "students to think critically, to solve problems and to try out new things" (Lochtie et al., 2018, p. 1). **Developmental** advising focuses on cultivating *skilful* students who are self-aware and reflect on and build self-knowledge. This includes strategies for independent and effective study, decision making, and problem solving (Lochtie et al., 2018). Advising should also aim to develop students who are *knowledgeable* about their discipline, who can transfer and apply their knowledge and possess a repertoire of academic literacies (Thies et al., 2014). Like all student learning, advising should be *tracked* to monitor student development, progression, and learner autonomy, as part of a personalised and student-centred experience (Lowenstein, 2020)

Finally, the **student-centred** principle relates to *stretching, reflecting* and *engaging.* Advising promotes *stretching,* where students play an active role in their development (Lowenstein, 2020), have intentional opportunities to develop autonomy and resilience (Lochtie et al., 2018), and are encouraged to set stretch goals (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; McIntosh & Barden, 2019). *Reflecting* is key to learning, enabling students to recognise their achievements, identify future proximal and distal goals and consider employability (McIntosh & Barden, 2019). Moreover, advising is concerned with *engaging* students as *citizen scholars*, encouraging them to look beyond the formal learning environment for opportunities to connect to people, discipline and career aspirations (Arvanitakis & Hornsby, 2016). This in turn promotes the development of belonging, wellbeing, autonomy and resilience (Lochtie et al., 2018).

Academic Student Success Advising (ASSA)

The ASSA Projects

The principles of ASSA are dynamic and flexible, enabling universities to translate and operationalise their delivery through a shared conceptualisation and different strategic approaches. This Australian study was interested in investigating two university projects where their design shared McIntosh's (2019; 2023) fundamental principles of advising as an underpinning conceptual frame, with a different delivery model. In this article the researchers were primarily interested in exploring how staff members interpreted and experienced the principles of advising, rather than focussing on the differently operationalised approaches. Despite their different operational model, both projects designed their approach considering the ways in which McIntosh's principles would put into practice advising that:

- Applies a consistent and structured approach, promoting wellbeing and linking with other existing services (**Inclusive** dimension)
- Uses available data, synthesised with induction processes, and promotes connections (**Personalised and Integrated** dimension)
- Fosters learning and skills development (**Developmental** dimension)
- Encourages autonomy, engagement and reflection (**Student-centred** dimension).

The UniSC Academic Liaison (AL) project was piloted in the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine. The AL project was implemented as a school-based delivery model, featuring discipline-specific advising focussing on students experiencing challenges. Advising was conducted by an academic staff member, who worked closely with centralised professional teams, as well as providing training and development to academic colleagues to initiate advising within learning and teaching contexts. As a discipline-based service, the AL aligned with **personalised and integrated** advising connecting to established school-based practices. It also aligned to developmental advising, providing coaching in discipline-specific knowledge and skills. The AL used the **inclusive** principle, with a trauma-informed structure in place, connecting and referring students to other relevant services and processes, including wellbeing, student success, disability services, and careers and employability. The approach was designed as **student-centred**, with a proactive and solution-focussed lens to increase students' abilities to reflect, develop autonomy and sequentially build skills and knowledge. For example, the AL guided students on academic issues (reflecting on and interpreting feedback), pastoral issues (building a repertoire of wellbeing strategies) and helping students to build discipline skills relevant to placement and future employment.

The UniSQ Academic Intervention and Monitoring Systems (AIMS) project implemented a centralised and campaign-based approach, delivered by professional staff in specialised teams, where professional staff provided proactive advising at key points of the student lifecycle. The AIMS project offered integrated academic and pastoral advice and development across two faculties (Business, Education, Law and Arts; and Health, Engineering and Sciences) enacting the principles of advising in multiple ways. For example, professional staff enacted the **inclusive** principle by mapping a structure of the student journey and then working with academics to provide proactive advice at key times. Centralised teams could then apply the **developmental** principle through consistent support, reinforcing knowledge and skills taught in the curriculum and identifying key assessment items to provide proactive check-ins. As a centralised service, mapping was aligned to central and program induction, responding to the **personalised and integrated** principle. The delivery model was designed around a **student-centred** frame, with advisers using coaching techniques to comprehensively build students' ability to reflect, develop knowledge and skills, and set goals.

This article details staff perspectives of these two conceptually similar, but differently operationalised approaches to ASSA. In the broader research, data was also collected from students, with this data informing a second paper. This present study explores the scope of McIntosh's (2023) principles of advising and how they were similarly or differently applied to the two advising approaches. We aim to contribute to understandings of how shared principles of advising can provide an underpinning structure to pan-university advising approaches as a mechanism of student development. Our research question therefore was: *How did the staff participants operating in the third space understand and enact the principles of advising?*

Methodology

The qualitative study reported in this paper expands upon understandings of the application of principles of advising across two different models. The two participating universities created a partnership resulting from their shared status as regional universities and their membership in the Regional Universities Network. In the first instance, the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at UniSC approved the joint project through the low-risk pathway, followed by an expedited approval at UniSQ.

The project used a participatory co-design approach; a branch of action research that aims to enact a collaborative process that centres the issues of focus on those who are impacted (Lewin, 1946). Early theorising of action research postulated that the inclusion of the participant voice was key to participant empowerment and change (Freire, 1970), and recognised participants as co-creators and experts of their own knowledge and experiences (Vallianatos, 2015). In education settings, Cumbo and Selwyn (2022) describe participatory design as "an approach to promote mutual learning through equitable partnerships of communities and experts through the design of an intervention" (pp. 60-61). From its conception, expert third space staff were participatory co-designers of the projects, considering how they would incorporate and contextualise the principles of advising, what delivery model would meet the needs of the students they worked with, and what resourcing, training and evidence would be needed to enact the model. The co-designers participated in enacting the projects in various ways and were later interviewed to explore their experiences of their approach.

Using a purposive sampling technique, staff involved in the co-designed ASSA projects were invited to participate in focus group or individual interviews. Approximately 40 UniSC and UniSQ staff members participated, including the strategic project group, professional, and academic staff. An information-rich sample size demonstrating thematic saturation was achieved (Miles & Huberman, 1994). All staff interviewed for this project were operating within the third space (Whitchurch, 2012), transcending the boundaries and traditional hierarchical interpretation of their role. The work within this space is referred to by McIntosh and Nutt (2022) as integrated practice, "where skills, knowledges and identities are shared across professional and academic domains and are thus fused and assimilated in an integrated way" (pp. 1-2). All staff participants in this project were practising experts within this integrated space, and as such this paper identifies staff as either being from UniSC or UniSQ, rather than identifying them as executive, academic or professional.

Adopting an interpretive phenomenological approach, the interviews explored the experiences of engaging with the ASSA initiative, aiming to better understand how advising interacted within the broader experience of learning, teaching and advising functions of the staff participants (Flood, 2010). A range of concepts were explored through semi-structured interviews, conducted by the third author. Open-ended questioning enabled participants to expand on topics and elicited nuanced responses (Given, 2008). This was critical in exploring the broader factors at play when enacting and delivering advising principles. During the interviews, staff members were asked a range of questions about their ASSA approach, including *What skills and competencies do you aim for students to develop as a result of participation in the ASSA approach?* and *What have been some of the challenges in establishing an ASSA program at your university?* Interviews resulted in rich qualitative data, and an

enhanced understanding of the lived experiences of staff (Merriam, 2009). Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed using NVivo™ software.

The resulting data set was combined to enable an analysis of shared features, understandings, and experiences across the two projects. As participatory co-designers, we were interested in exploring how the different ASSA approaches similarly enacted and reflected the principles of advising, rather than exploring how the different projects were operationalised. In doing so, the data offered insight in how the principles were enacted, informing the recommendations of how an ASSA approach could be effectively implemented and enhanced. We first undertook an inductive thematic analysis of the entire combined staff data set to explore broad themes and patterns present within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A preliminary inductive analysis enabled us to explore aspects of the experience that we had not theoretically considered. This uncovered a range of inductive themes, including the use of systems and processes, the value of staff relationships and the challenges of advising. We also explored the data through a theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which we used as an analytical framework to explore the participants' perceptions and experiences of the fundamental principles of advising on which their delivery model was based. This analysis looked beyond the semantic structure of the research questions that were asked in the interviews, taking a latent thematic approach (Boyatzis, 1998). A feature of this approach is the expertise of the researchers themselves to synthesise data and interpret meaning through a logical chain of reasoning to report insights and understanding that support the results (Suter, 2012). This enabled us to remain responsive to new and emerging codes, while conducting interpretive work "where broader assumptions, structures and/or meanings are theorized as underpinning what is actually articulated in the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 85). This process resulted in a detailed analysis of aspects of the data that related to the themes present in the principles of advising and offered insight in to how the two delivery models understood and enacted them.

Results

The data explores the ways in which third space staff participants in this study understood and enacted the principles of advising (McIntosh, 2023). UniSC staff are identified with a number and the letter 'C', and UniSQ staff are identified with a number and the letter 'Q'.

Inclusive Advising (Structured, Accessible, Guiding)

The principles of *structured, accessible* and *guiding* as part of **inclusive** advising were enacted at both universities. McIntosh's (2023) concept of *structured* (timetabled, group or 1-1, integrated tutorial curriculum) was perceived differently in this study. Participants talked about it as the organisational structure that facilitates advising. At UniSC, *structured* was enacted through collaborative but separate parts of the university, with one staff member describing this as: "It's building nice bridges between student success teams, student academic advisers, and the school" (C4). Another staff member spoke of the benefit of this resulting collaboration: "the ability to translate, discuss and share information" (C2). At UniSQ, *structured* related to students' journeys and understanding key milestones of programs to promote student success. It was enacted through a systematic approach, starting with a "touch base, see if we can assist in any way" (Q5), and followed by additional scheduled check ins at specific points of the student journey.

Participants reported understanding the *accessible* principle in alignment with McIntosh's (2023) definition of transparent, consistent and supports wellbeing. For UniSC, this was evident in the consistent process of advising. For example, one participant discussed the approach in place for students who failed placement: firstly, "I see a student soon after that fail notification", secondly, "they need to debrief", and thirdly, "I remind them what their options are, how they can come work with me to get confidence back, close any gaps in knowledge, and get them back out on to placement next year" (C1). For UniSQ, supports wellbeing was evident with one staff member explaining "just that feeling of being supported, that someone's with you, that someone cares, and that there's someone you can turn to for help" (Q6).

Both ASSA projects included the principle of *guiding* (which refers to professional services and resources) and interpreted it in alignment with McIntosh's (2023) definition. For example, in the UniSC project, a flow chart was introduced to academic staff and across professional teams to guide the referral process, explained by one staff member as: "a flow chart is used by everyone … we've got an online referral system that has come into play" (C2). At UniSQ a referrals system was also implemented to ensure students were guided to the correct team: "connecting them to the right support resource if our knowledge base doesn't expand past that" (Q5).

Despite examples of effectively implementing aspects of the **inclusive** principle, challenges were also identified. While valued, the establishment of genuine partnerships between academic and professional staff beyond the co-design group were identified as needing improvement. As part of establishing a pan- university delivery model, a consistent communication approach during the design phase was needed. One staff member offered sage advice for others considering implementing ASSA:

> We're trying to shift understandings of how professional and academic staff work together and partner. That has been challenging. For anyone else who is going to be setting this up, I would say, think about how you're communicating to every stakeholder that's involved. (C3)

Similarly, at UniSQ, staff identified the importance of a consistent communication approach and the need to prioritise authentic integration of student success work, with one staff member describing the challenge:

> Trying to get buy in from different areas about things you want to do. If you're struggling to get buy in, it's pretty easy for it to fall by the wayside, because there's so much other stuff going on. (Q10)

These identified challenges provide insight for how the projects can further their collaborative practice to transcend traditional silos and boundaries that frequently exist in universities.

Personalised and integrated advising (Welcoming, Connected, Informed)

The principles of *welcoming, connected, informed* were mostly well understood by staff at both universities. The *welcoming* and *connected* dimensions were being enacted according to McIntosh's (2023) descriptions. For UniSC, staff identified that *welcoming* students to university required thought about what factors might influences students' early experiences at university. One staff member explained how a personalised approach to advising could aid the navigation of a new learning environment:

> For students that are first in family or come from lower socio-economic backgrounds who may not have engaged with big organisations, it's empowering students with the knowledge that it's okay to knock on someone's door and ask the questions. (C3)

From this, *welcoming* at UniSC targeted building a range of skills and competencies, with one staff member commenting on the underlying driver of enacting *welcoming* as "filling in the knowledge gaps that they have around the foundational knowledge areas" (C4). At UniSQ *welcoming* was also enacted as part of a transition experience. It was important that the welcome was proactive, with one staff member explaining that the design of the approach intended to develop an early "sense of belonging and that welcome to university, the developing the relationships with the support areas" (Q13).

The *connected* principle, defined by McIntosh (2023) as related to validation and facilitating social integration was enacted in both projects with a focus on validating student belonging to institution rather than on social integration. A staff member at UniSC, described validating student-staff partnership through an ethos of "everyone is a part of the team, including the students. They're a part of our team as well. It gives them confidence to discuss with people" (C6). Additionally, UniSC considered it important to enact the *connected* dimension at the intersection of the various parts of students' learning and lives, where curriculum and support are integrated. One staff member commented: "There needs to be an integrated approach to supporting students. We need to recognise students can't compartmentalise what's happening in their personal lives with what's happening within the curriculum" (C5).

At UniSQ staff also interpreted *connected* as belonging and partnerships. There was recognition that students need to experience connections to the people that advise and support them, their institution, and with their program:

> Every single conversation and interaction, it all shapes their sense of belonging. It happens in those conversations, if we're influencing students to feel like they are connected to feel like we're a part of them as well. That might sound a bit cliche, but I guess that kind of affinity with the university and affinity with their program. (Q8)

A systematic approach was still developing for both projects in terms of enacting the *informed* principle (related to uses of diagnostics, early alerts, and learning action plans). However, both universities had aspects of the *informed* principle in place. A staff member at UniSC recognised the role of the existing data system but felt it difficult to enact *informed* advising with the existing system, commenting it was "a system that needs to be perfected" (C1). This was a challenge shared by UniSQ, where enacting *informed* advising involved several systems, with one staff member describing the approach: "There are bits and pieces of student data, all in different systems. There's really no holistic view, which is really what we're trying to build in terms of the practice and outreach and how we work with students" (Q8).

Developmental Advising (Skilful, Knowledgeable, Tracked)

A significant aim of the ASSA projects in the design phase was to apply the principles of *skilful, knowledgeable*, and *tracked*. Both UniSC and UniSQ used a coaching framework to develop students and saw the *skilful* dimension (related to promoting critical thinking, self-awareness and self-reflection) as both academic and pastoral. At UniSC, developing *skilful* students was connected to an awareness of a professional identity, explained here by one staff member:

> We talk to students in the context of the professional program, and as emerging professionals. We land that language on them from day one, so that they can get a sense of 'Wow, what is it to be a professional?'. We situate them in their professions really early to anchor them in the programme to give them understanding of why they're actually here if they didn't know it already. (C3)

At UniSQ, *skilful* was in part perceived as encouraging a critical thinking mindset about students' emerging professional identities, developing their strategies and being accountable as learners, as one staff member described:

> We want students to develop a greater capacity to take responsibility for themselves in their study, to understand exactly what their career goals are, and how their study and programme and course choices will meet those aspirations and those goals that they have in terms of their program, for students to be a little more self-sufficient and resilient in responding to setbacks, and issues that they may have that challenge their study. (Q6)

Both universities also enacted the *knowledgeable* principle (related to promoting learning development and other opportunities) by connecting students to their discipline content. At UniSC, this was fluidly applied by traversing professional and teaching spaces through a curriculum embedded approach:

> The school is trying to embed managing skills, coping skills, those sorts of strategies within first year courses so that it's contextualised, [students] develop skills and insight, but it's done in a way that these are the skills you need for professional practice. We can do all of [the] bolt on training in the world around these skills but unless it's contextualised and students understand this is what I need to be a professional, it won't gain any traction at all. (C5)

UniSQ's approach to *knowledgeable* was similar, connecting professional and academic spaces to contextualise learning. A focus on building knowledge, skills and competencies to set students up for ongoing success was explained by one staff member:

> We've worked with programmes on first assessment submission for engineering students. We're working with law this semester, but we want it to be more developmental, really asking students to think carefully about things that do and don't work, subject choice, all those sorts of things. (Q1)

A challenge for both universities was the sub-principle of *tracked* (related to monitoring engagement, progress and attendance). Similar to challenges experienced by both universities regarding the *informed* principle, monitoring systems were not well established. While both UniSC and UniSQ found some success in enhancing communication through tracking students in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, the approach was perceived as needing refinement. At UniSC a staff member had advised a student to take a series of actions regarding a failed placement, however the systems did not support a dynamic or transparent communication system: "I don't have any way of tracking to see whether they actually do that or not" (C1). For UniSQ, there was a perceived limitation around tracking the work that had been done with an individual student to ensure a more streamlined and efficient advising process. One staff member elaborated on this:

> We don't have the systems to support dashboard capability. I can't share with course examiners and program directors where we've talked to a student, what we've learned. If they're doing something, and we're doing it at the same time that's a point of tension that we're trying to address, to be able to share what we're doing really openly and transparently with everyone. (Q6)

The complexities and frustrations of data systems were recognised as important to resolve. One staff member commented: "If you get it right, it's an enabler of an underlying system that allows the work to be done seamlessly and recorded and reported on really well" (Q13).

Student-Centred Advising (Stretching, Reflective, Engaging)

The *stretching* principle (develops resilience and learner autonomy) was considered very important at both universities. For UniSC, enacting *stretching* was around intentionally facilitating the development of students' skills to encourage accountability and self-regulation, described by one staff member as students', "recognising the need to seek help, embedding

that accountability and ownership of [students knowing] I know what's there, it's on me to actually go and do it" (C1). It was also about students' building confidence as learners, with one staff member commenting on the result of *stretching* students: "encouraging them to step out of their comfort zone … it changes them, they develop confidence within themselves" (C9). Similarly, at UniSQ *stretching* was included in the design of the approach as a mechanism to encourage students to take ownership for learning. This was enacted through "having those honest conversations with our students" (Q5). Interestingly, it was considered extremely important to future iterations of the UniSQ project to focus on *stretching* staff to develop particular skills:

> I'm deeply interested in how I can support my staff to be what they need to be as advisers. You also need a whole bunch of skills, you know, as a teacher, as an adviser, as a coach. I think really maturing the coaching component of advising is what I would like to lead in this next phase. (Q6)

Although not discussed in depth, the *reflective* principle (related to promoting reflective and holistic practice) was touched on by both universities. UniSC talked about it more in terms of why it is an important part of an advising approach, with one staff member commenting: "it helps the students self-reflect about where their pathway is" (C2). At UniSQ staff talked about reflection in terms of coaching students to consider their current achievements alongside their goals as a mechanism of alignment, as clarified by one staff member: "We ask how are you going? What are you trying to achieve?" (Q1).

Both universities appeared to have gaps in their approaches to the *engaging* principle (related to extra-curricular activities). Neither university specifically spoke about this dimension of the advising principles. However, staff at both universities did speak about the skills that students might develop resulting from an ASSA approach, potentially sharing similarities with extra-curricular activities. For UniSC, participating in advising could promote students' employability skills such as gaining confidence, networking, and professionalism:

> Giving them confidence to network with people that they may not feel comfortable networking with initially because of the perceived level position that that person has. And I think that's really important, especially when we're talking about external engagement with the health service. So that can support students in gaining positions because they've already had these conversations with the health service with the external industry professional. (C6)

For a UniSQ staff member, the *engaging* principle was included in the design of the approach as part of a fundamental transformational experience and linking this to intergenerational change:

> Every single time you help someone back up and help them get through when they would otherwise have dropped and maybe never come back. You're not just changing their life, you're changing their children's and their families and generations to come. (Q6)

Discussion

The data offers insights into how the overarching principles of advising were understood and enacted. It also offers context for the scope and dimensions of the potential of ASSA for other universities. The current study contributes three key findings related to how the principles of advising were understood and enacted, and how the principles add to the evidence-based practice on advising. First, it identifies that the **integrated** dimension of advising was critical to enacting student development. This was particularly evident regarding the importance of **inclusive** integration of services across the university. Secondly, despite the advising delivery models in this project being different, it was evident that a conceptual structure of **developmental** 'advising is teaching' was enacted, using a **student-centred** lens. Thirdly, monitoring success within an advising framework represented a challenge for both universities, was well understood but poorly enacted, and is an area of future opportunity.

The first key finding is that the **integrated** dimension of advising is critical in terms of student development, and it relates to the **inclusive** integration of services. The staff perspective of integration was primarily focussed on the *welcoming* and *connected* dimensions. Delivery models at both universities centred around delivering a personalised and dialogic approach to promote a sense of connectedness and belonging for students. The delivery models supported ongoing contact with students, enabling approachable and available advocacy with a cheerleader function (Braine & Parnell, 2011). It also focussed on the connection of integrated services across multiple touchpoints to promote a feeling of stable and enduring support (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

The **integrated** principle, as enacted in these projects intersected with the **inclusive** principles of *guiding* and ensuring **accessibility** for students, encompassing referrals to other relevant student success mechanisms, and supporting wellbeing. This was part of building a pan-university and trauma-informed approach to student development. Mann's (2020) advising approach at The University of Melbourne embraces this philosophy. Drawing on Kift's (2015) transition pedagogy, Mann

describes authentic partnerships between academic and professional staff as "crucial to ensuring that the student experience is considered holistically and remains connected to the academic mission of the university" (2020, p. 3). Larsen, Horvath and Bridge's (2020) study on the impact of targeted transition programs for highly diverse student cohorts also found connection to staff fostered a heightened sense of purpose and belonging. To build this sense of connectedness across the university, it is critical that there is a culture of partnership and systems and processes to share information and data to create continuity for students, underpinned by clearly articulated roles and responsibilities, and policy. The participants in this study indicated that at both universities, this was an area for development.

The second key finding is that in both projects, the **developmental** principle was considered a key aspect of ASSA, extending beyond the teaching of discipline knowledge and skills. Participants in this study talked about developing a broad range of skills such as professionalism, resilience, and goal setting. These types of skills are sometimes referred to as the 'hidden curriculum', understood to be a set of skills that support the navigation of university life, and understandings of the university context beyond the discipline specific curricula (Margolis et al., 2001). This integrated pastoral and academic approach is a key point of difference between ASSA and other advising approaches where advice is given in only one area of development, for example career advice, wellbeing or academic skills. Through an 'advising as teaching' lens (Lowenstein, 2020 p. 65), both academic and professional staff engaged in a process of reconceptualising their work. All staff in this project underwent some key transformations in understanding integrated practice. While the work of professional staff has historically been described as a 'support role', a term that may potentially be interpreted through a deficit lens (Picton & Kahu, 2021), there was increased recognition in this project of a shift to staff embodying an 'advising as teaching' model with all staff fulfilling an integrated role.

The term 'advising as teaching' (Lowenstein, 2020 p. 65) is well accepted in the UK and North America where advising is ubiquitous. In this study, there was an intersection between **developmental** and **student-centred** advising through a coaching frame. Lowenstein (2020) examined three widely used approaches to advising: prescriptive, developmental and coaching, concluding that coaching is most compelling in terms of helping students to sequence their learning, connect concepts across the curriculum, master models of learning, and acquire transferable skills. The approaches in this study required students to be active participants in learning in order for advising to respond to individual students' circumstances (Crosier et al., 2007). Through this approach, which encourages 'students to think critically, to solve problems and to try out new things' (Lochtie et al., 2018, p. 1), *stretching* could occur. While not within the scope of this current study, further research could specifically explore the impact of this new teaching and development lens that academic and professional staff applied to their work. It was clear from participants' comments that conceptual and practical shifts were occurring as they intended to build student skills and competencies across a range of academic, personal, institutional and professional domains.

Finally, the study found monitoring and tracking student success within an advising framework was challenging for both universities and is an area of opportunity. Lowes' (2020) conceptual article on big data in advising posits that data facilitates information sharing necessary for quality advising, but for data to effectively contribute to student engagement and success it must be interpreted through a humanistic framework. A humanistic approach to advising is described by Berma (2022) as focussed on relationships where advisees use self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-evaluation as incentives for growth and change. The impact of the formation of these positive relationships through ASSA has been evidenced in the literature. For example, Yale's (2017) study found that positive and genuine relationships with advisers reduced the impact of some first-year challenges and contributed towards a sense of belonging. A humanistic approach was enacted in both projects, and while in this study tracking student growth was recognised as critical, neither project had sufficiently matured their data systems to achieve this.

Recommendations and Conclusion

From the findings, we make three recommendations. Firstly, we recommend universities invest time in developing staff understandings about roles and responsibilities within a whole of university advising approach. At times, this may involve active advising, and at other times referrals to specialised professional teams, the deployment of asynchronous resources, or adaptions within the curriculum. A second recommendation is that universities intentionally design curriculum and embed cross-curricular skills and competencies in alignment with graduate attributes. While this was being enacted through individual advising, the practice could be scaled and enhanced through curriculum embedding guided by an advising curriculum (Picton, 2021). Finally, we recommend that universities continue development of data systems to record, track, and apply student data as part of a proactive and monitored advising approach.

This study forms the basis for future research. Exploring the use of data to monitor student development in cross-disciplinary competencies would be useful, particularly in projects that scale advising beyond the scope of the two projects in this study.

Additionally, specifically exploring students' perceptions of how the advising principles and ASSA influenced their experiences would also be a valuable contribution to the evidence base. The Australian higher education sector review, the Australian Universities Accord (Department of Education, 2023) presents a timely opportunity to explore models that facilitate student success, development and learning to ensure approaches respond adequately to the diverse ways that students experience university.

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