As autonomous institutions, higher education institutions (HEIs) are responsible for organising their own provision of guidance and counselling. They must, however, act in accordance with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, issued by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. One of the key expectations of the Quality Code is that ‘from admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education’. For further information, see the article on ‘Quality Assurance in Higher Education’.

### Academic guidance

The provision of academic guidance for students is a matter for individual higher education institutions (HEIs) to determine. It may include one or all of the following.

- **Course guidance:** this can cover full information on the programme of study, content and availability of modules, workloads, timetables, methods and timing of assessments, and the process of degree classification.
- **Personal tutors:** arrangements involving a named academic from the student’s department being nominated as their personal tutor are widespread among HEIs. Personal tutors often play an important role in academic support and, in some HEIs, such tutors also have a pastoral support role.
- **Skills guidance:** this can include tutorials, handouts or web guidance on skills such as essay writing, written language skills, research skills, time management, verbal presentations, and revision and exam techniques. Support for students whose first language is not English is also available in most HEIs; see the subheading ‘Specific support measures’ in the article on ‘Support Measures for Learners in Higher Education’ for further information.

### Psychological counselling

Higher education institutions (HEIs) provide confidential psychological services as part of their student support or health services.

Services available to students may include:

- counselling
- student mental health advice
- exam concessions and arrangements
- mentoring
- peer support.

In December 2016, Universities UK launched a programme of work to address the mental health and wellbeing of both students and staff in universities. The programme funded a project which
resulted in the September 2017 Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) publication, *Not by Degrees: Improving student mental health in the UK’s universities* [7]. In the context of increasing demand for student support and counselling services, the report’s recommendations included that:

- the higher education sector should collectively adopt student mental health and wellbeing as a priority issue, with individual institutions developing their own ‘whole university’ approaches which are subject to audit and quality assurance
- the Government should introduce a new Student Health Fund
- the Government should pilot a new digital Student Health Passport to improve the continuity of healthcare and treatment among students who move between home and university.

Universities UK also launched the ‘Step Change’ [8] framework as part of the programme. The framework is designed to support senior teams in HEIs in adopting a whole university approach to mental health. It recommends that universities work closely with the National Health Service (NHS) to consider how mental health care services should be commissioned and delivered to student populations.

In June 2018, the Universities Minister to the UK Government announced [9] the development of a Mental Health Charter, involving new standards to promote student and staff mental health and wellbeing in universities across the UK. A working group [10], led by the Department for Education (DfE) [11] in England, has also been established to examine the transition students face when going to university and ensure they are supported. Student Minds [12], a mental health charity, is leading partners including the Office for Students (OfS) [13] (in England), UPP Foundation [14], National Union of Students [15] and Universities UK [16], to develop the charter, which will recognise and reward those institutions which demonstrate that they have made student and staff mental health a priority and have delivered improved health and wellbeing outcomes. In March 2019, Student Minds launched [17] a consultation road trip and survey as part of its work to develop the charter.

### Career guidance

There are no statutory requirements relating to the provision of careers advice in higher education: the provision of careers advice and guidance for students is a matter for individual higher education institutions (HEIs) [18] to determine. However, all HEIs have their own careers service which is staffed by appropriately trained professionals.

Careers services offer a wide range of support for students including:

- careers advice, including graduate placements, careers fairs and further study opportunities
- CV workshops
- networking / mentoring opportunities
- coaching on interview techniques
- support with job applications.

A significant number of university degree courses now include employability skills and some include compulsory careers sessions. Many institutions also help students to develop the ‘soft skills’ which employers seek (including effective communication, acting as a team player, creative / critical thinking, and problem-solving) through extra-curricular initiatives.

In many cases, students can still access their university careers service up to three years after graduation. Some universities allow lifelong assess.
The UK Quality Code for Higher Education guidance document on enabling student achievement provides guiding principles for HEIs about equipping students ‘for a rewarding career’ (p. 4).

The Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) is an independent research charity specialising in higher education and graduate employment. It supports careers advisory services as they guide students and graduates through university and into the labour market. Its website Prospects provides careers information and services to students, graduates, university careers services, employers and others.

The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) is the professional body for careers and employability professionals working with higher education students and graduates and prospective entrants to higher education. AGCAS provides support and training for professionals in the sector, with the aim of promoting and ensuring excellence in service delivery.

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