

A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR ACADEMIC ADVISORS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

by

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DECLARATION

I, Ninette Aucamp, declare that this thesis titled “A Competency Framework for Academic Advisors at the University of the Free State”, submitted for the qualifications of Master of Industrial Psychology at the University of the Free State is my own independent work.

All the references that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that this work has not previously been submitted by me at another university of faculty for the purpose of obtaining a qualification.

N. Aucamp

Date

DEDICATION

This was a journey, not a task. Although not easy, I enjoyed every moment. I am thankful to my Heavenly Father for his grace to complete this study and the opportunity to study towards becoming an industrial psychologist.

To my husband, Barno who is always beside and behind me, and to my children, thank you for understanding, for being patient, and for loving me while I pursue my dream. I love you so much. To my close friends and family, who lifted my spirits when needed, who cared and showed interest, I am forever thankful.

To my study leaders, who allowed me to be independent, and enjoy this journey, thank you for your support, your assistance, and guidance. To every participant who shared their expertise and their advising journey, your time is appreciated. To Ruth, who passed on during the time of this study, your legacy lives on in our hearts.

Thank you to CTL management, for allowing me time in my work schedule, and for supporting me in my dream. Gugu, a special word of thanks for your support. Thank you also, Dr Sonya, for always being willing to help. Your insights meant so much!

I hope that this study will help to shine some light on authoritative, professional academic advising in South Africa and that it will open up many more conversations on what we can do to develop this field within our beautiful country.

“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love, he will no longer rebuke you but will rejoice over you with singing.” – Zeph 3:17.

ABSTRACT

Academic advising is one of the cornerstones of academic success in the higher education sector. To strengthen the university's mission and strategic direction, establishing professional and effective advising practices is crucial. Without developing an established competency framework for professional advisors in South Africa, the field is underdeveloped, and questions persist on the competencies necessary for professional advisors in this context to be effective in their jobs. Therefore, the main aim of this study was to develop a competency framework for academic advisors in the South African milieu.

Competencies are identified as core skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behavioural competencies associated with a specific job. The study was designed to identify the core skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behavioural attributes of academic advisors, in creating work performance standards, training programmes, and advising practices, which may further develop and enhance the competencies professional advisors need to perform their duties successfully. This was done through a process of competency modelling according to the steps identified by Dalton (as cited in Keller, 2016). Literature concerning advising and the professional development thereof, and existing competency frameworks and models of occupations related to advising were studied. A job analysis was then completed on academic advisors at the UFS to identify competencies related to professional advising. Data were triangulated, and a competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS was presented.

The results firstly argued that academic advising cannot be classified as a profession in South Africa at this stage, despite many efforts to professionalise this occupation. Although many professional skills are related to this occupation, formal educational pathways, as well as formal governing structures, should be established.

The results further showed consensus on what literature identifies as essential competencies for academic advisors, and what are critical competencies for academic advisors at the UFS. Academic advisors at the UFS follow a developmental approach to advising and competencies identified as critical for advisors echo this perspective. These competencies include knowledge, skills, and attributes in the five components of advising, namely conceptual, informational, relational, technological, and professional. The study further identified three

possible abilities related to advising, namely emotional intelligence, language ability, and reasoning ability. Recommendations for future research are made.

The findings of this study may help inform the development of professional advising practices at the UFS and in South Africa, as the need for professional academic advising persists. This competency framework may also guide the recruitment, selection, training, and development of professional academic advisors at the UFS, and promote professional and effective advising practices. Professional and effective advising practices may increase the likelihood of students connecting to campus support networks and succeeding in their studies.

Keywords: Academic advising, competency modelling, Industrial psychology, South Africa, professional advisors, professional development, training, and development

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AA	Academic Advising
AAPD	Academic Advising Professional Development Programme
CTL	Centre for Teaching and Learning
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ELESA	Academic advising association for South Africa
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
JSSA	Journal of Student Affairs in Africa
NACADA	National Academic Advising Association
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
SA	South Africa
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SASSE	South African Survey of Student Engagement
SLO	Student Learning Outcome
SLP	Short Learning Programme
SPPOV	Student Personnel Point of View
TDG	Teaching and Development Grant
TLM	Teaching and Learning Manager

UCDG	University Capacity Development Grant
UFS	University of the Free State
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Introduction and problem statement

In the 21st century, academic advising, and consequently, academic advisors, and the services that they render have become a much-discussed topic in higher education conversations in South Africa. During the #FeesMustFall protests in 2016, students expressed their need for “consistent and credible academic advising as a fundamental academic support base programme” (Strydom, 2016). With the primary purpose of advising being student success and retention, academic advisors aim to help students plan their academic path from entering university to graduation (Strydom, 2016; Keller, 2016). Although advisors work on a variety of student and academic programmes within higher education institutions, their primary function is to support the strategic goals and mission of the university, by connecting students to the institution, helping them transition into university life and progressing to degree completion (Otto, Rosenthal, & Kinle, as cited in Keller, 2016).

Student retention rates indicate that degree completion is still problematic in South Africa (Strydom 2016). Cohort studies of undergraduates by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2016 indicated that only 19.8% of South African students entering the 2005 cohort in contact mode graduated after three years of study, whilst 57.1% graduated after six years of study, and 63.3% only after ten years of study (Strydom, 2016). Furthermore, a study conducted by the Susan Dell Foundation after the #FeesMustFall protests indicated that only 32% of financial aid students graduate after five years of study. Students not graduating on time and dropping out of higher education results in large cost implications for the state, the student, and the parents (Tswanya, 2017).

Researchers emphasise academic advising as one of the core functions to improve student retention and success (Tinto 1987; Miller & Alberts, 1994; Anderson, 1997; Habley, 1994; Noel, as cited in Glennen & Vowell, 1995; Light, 2001; Keller, 2017). Furthermore, many researchers interpret academic advisors as being the cornerstone of student success (Oriano, 2013; Grites, 2013; King & Kerr, as cited in Workman, 2013; Keller, 2016). Voller (2013) states that institutions that are serious about student learning, persistence, and graduation rates must

provide training and professional development for their academic advisors. With student success and retention being one of the core drivers of organisational strategy at a university, quality advising would form an integral part of successfully attaining the organisational strategy of the university. Trabant (as cited in NACADA, 2006, para 2) states that advising content is “grounded in the understanding that advising is essential to the educational mission of our institutions.”

Thus, to strengthen the university's mission and strategic direction, it is crucial to establish professional and effective advising. This further accentuates the importance of professionalisation and academic advising. Conceptualising the core competencies that form the basis of the profession can aid in the recruitment, selection, training, performance management, and professional development of advisors at South African institutions.

Currently, the University of the Free State (UFS) plays a leading role in developing academic advising as a profession in South Africa. Academic advising practices are at the foreground of the teaching and learning strategy, as it helps students engage for success (UFS teaching and learning strategy, 2016). The UFS defines academic advising as “a developmental teaching and learning process where the institution establishes and fosters a relationship with students and supports them to succeed academically and in the future as life-long learners” (Strydom, 2016, p. 3). This ongoing process is equated to a series of intentional interactions where the advisors guide the student to self-actualise, realise, and connect their educational and career aspirations.

The UFS' view of academic advising is adapted from The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), also known as the global community for advising, at the Kansas State University. To guide students through the process effectively, advisors would need specific knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes. Given the increasing demand for retention and the association between academic advising and increased levels of student success, Levin et al., (2010) reiterate the importance of employing personnel who are competent and caring.

Competencies can be defined as a combination of observable and measurable knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal attributes that contribute to enhancing employee performance, ultimately resulting in organisational success (University of Nebraska, 2022; Keller, 2016). Without a clear set of competencies for academic advisors, job advertisements, job descriptions, and successful employment may be inconsistent (Woolf & Martinez, 2013), potentially impacting student success negatively.

Limited literature exists that examines academic advising from a competency standpoint. NACADA developed a core competency model for academic advisors as a guide to develop and promote the contributions of advising to student development, progress, and success. However, this model has not been contextualised for South Africa. One of the main reasons for this is that academic advising has not formally been defined as a profession in South Africa. Therefore, recruitment, selection, employment, and development strategies have not been intentional in identifying the necessary skills, knowledge, and behavioural competencies associated with professional advising. It is thus necessary to develop a competency framework for academic advisors, tailored to the South African context. This research investigated frameworks and models that might inform identifying of core competencies of advisors at the UFS. Furthermore, the researcher provides deeper insight into the institutional expectations of academic advisors and the various advising roles at the UFS.

The main aim of this research was to identify the core competencies and propose a competency framework for academic advisors within the South African milieu. This may inform job descriptions and announcements, recruitment, selection, employment, and performance management of academic advisors. In addition, it may provide managers with potentially useful information on which competencies they should grow and develop for effective professional advising. Providing a competency framework can help analyse and improve advising practices at an institution and should benefit the professional development practices of advisors. In addition, the study provides a framework, which may inform the professional training and development of academic advisors at the UFS and in South Africa. This might provide a deeper insight into the institutional expectations of academic advisors in various advising roles at the UFS. Furthermore, the proposed framework might also offer a frame of reference to academic advisors for self-assessment and evaluation, to guide their learning, career development, training, and evaluation (NACADA, 2017c). A contextualised competency framework may help clarify the roles and responsibilities of advisors, identify strengths and areas for staff development, and advance scholarship in the field.

1.1.2 Theoretical framework

Although this research was mainly conducted from the standpoint of industrial psychology, and specifically personnel psychology, the theoretical underpinnings of this study were an

integration between theories, frameworks, and perspectives from academic advising literature, the field of higher education, and industrial psychology. To obtain a clear view of the competencies related to the advising profession within the South African context, researchers need to integrate perspectives from these fields. Existing theories and competency models, such as the academic advising core competency model of NACADA (2017) and the Competency Framework for Career Development Practitioners in South Africa (DHET, 2016), provide some insight into competencies related to academic and career advising. These frameworks were integrated with the perspectives of key role players in academic advising at the UFS to develop a competency framework for advisors at the UFS. This was done through a process of competency modelling, as identified by Dalton (as cited in Keller, 2016).

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.2.1 Primary research question

The primary research question addressed in this study was: What should a competency framework for professional advising practices at the UFS look like?

1.2.2 Secondary research questions

The secondary research questions supporting the primary research question were:

1. What is unique to the South African advising context?
2. What core competencies does existing literature identify for professional academic advisors?
3. What are the competencies associated with effective professional advising practices at the UFS?

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 Research aim

The aim of the research was: To develop a competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS.

1.3.2 Research objectives

The objectives identified to conduct this research were:

1. To investigate the context of academic advising in South Africa through a literature review.
2. To investigate what core competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours) existing literature associates with professional academic advising practices.
3. To identify the core competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours) associated with professional academic advisors at the UFS.
4. To develop a competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study is represented in the form of a mini-dissertation, consisting of six chapters. The outline of the chapters is as follows:

Chapter 1: This chapter provides a brief overview of the background and context of the study. The research problem is discussed, and an overview is provided of the primary and secondary research questions, as well as the aims of the research. A brief outline of the study is provided.

Chapter 2: A literature review is provided on the concepts and theories related to this study. Firstly, the researcher provides an overview of academic advising as a profession and the underlying principles that form the foundation thereof. Secondly, theories and models related to academic advising are discussed. Academic advising is explored within the South African context.

Literature is reviewed to identify competencies associated with academic advising as a profession, which further informs the data triangulation presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3: This chapter provides a literature review on competency modelling. Competencies, as used in this study, are defined through literature, as well as existing competency models and frameworks. This chapter further investigates various existing competency models and frameworks associated with the practice of academic advising in association with one another, to identify competencies related to academic advising in the South African context.

Chapter 4: The qualitative research design and methodology employed to obtain, analyse and interpret the data are outlined. An overview is provided on the epistemology of the study, and the researcher argues why this specific paradigm was used in this study. Methods of data collection, analysis, and storage are explained, and ethical considerations are discussed.

Chapter 5: The focus of this chapter is on reporting the results from the data analyses. Results from the job analysis and critical incident technique are discussed and reflected on. An interpretation of the results is provided, based on the triangulation of various data points in this study.

Chapter 6: This chapter summarises the research findings. Findings are discussed regarding the theory and frameworks outlined in chapters 2 and 3. A competency framework is proposed for academic advisors at the UFS. Contributions of this study to the field of academic advising are discussed, whilst limitations of the study are considered, and recommendations for future research are presented. Conclusions and implications based on the results are shared.

1.5 SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the study. The context and motivation for the study were introduced and linked with the relevancy of developing a competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS. A brief introduction to academic advising and the need for professionalisation of this practice was provided. The aims and objectives of the study were stated, and the qualitative methodology of the research was examined. The next chapter presents a review of the literature on academic advising.

CHAPTER 2: ACADEMIC ADVISING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of literature and concepts related to academic advising. Academic advising as a concept is discussed, followed by the definition thereof, as well as theories and approaches guiding academic advising. Academic advising as a profession is firstly discussed and then explained in comparison to similar practices, such as teaching, counselling, and career development. This is followed by an exploration of advising within the South African context. This chapter concludes with advising with regard to higher education and student success.

2.2 DEFINING ACADEMIC ADVISING

The articulation of a central and succinct, yet comprehensive definition of academic advising has proven to be a difficult endeavour for scholars in the field, as there can be no single definition suitable for all institutions and their contexts (McGill, 2019). Institutions define academic advising from the theoretical perspective they follow. A few definitions sharing the developmental perspective of advising is discussed in the next sections.

One of the first published definitions of academic advising includes the definition of Crookston (1972); a developmental view drawing basic assumptions from the student development theory. The first of these assumptions refers to higher education as an opportunity for an individual to achieve a self-fulfilling life, in conjunction with teaching being typified as an experience where both the teacher and learner interact with one another. Crookston (1972) indicates that the student cannot merely be a passive recipient of knowledge, but is equally responsible for the quality of learning, context, process, and development (Crookston, 1972). Additionally, the definition of Winston et al. (1984) emphasises the importance of the student-advisor relationship, which aids the student to develop career and life goals in their definition of advising as “[A] systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the use of the full range of

institutional and community resources” (Winston, Enders, & Miller, 1982, p. 17). The UFS provides a synthesis of these elements in their definition of academic advising:

...[an] ongoing and intentional teaching and learning practice that empowers students in their learning and development process in order for them to explore and align their personal, academic, and career goals. As a shared responsibility between the advisor and advisee, advising aims to maximise students' potential by facilitating a conceptual understanding, sharing relevant information, and developing a relationship focused on promoting academic success. The envisaged result is that students have a meaningful academic experience while in higher education and feel a sense of belonging to the institution. (Siyaphumelela Workstream, 2019)

The UFS sees this developmental process as one which assists students in the clarification of their life/career goals and the development of an educational plan. Advising actions foster a decision-making process by which students realise their maximum educational potential through communication with an advisor. The student-advisor relationship is ongoing, multifaceted, and built on shared responsibility between the student and the advisor (Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), UFS, 2016).

The definitions above share commonalities about how developmental advising takes place. Firstly, advising is seen as a shared decision-making process, rather than a relationship of dictatorship. Secondly, advisors have a broader focus than academics. They acknowledge the importance of educational planning and setting short-term and long-term goals as part of the advising process. And lastly, they acknowledge the student-advisor relationship as ongoing and multi-faceted.

2.3 ACADEMIC ADVISING AS A CONCEPT

According to the United States’ NACADA universities, students, and academic advising in all institutions are diverse. Because of this disparity, it is almost impossible to create one single definition of academic advising (McGill, 2019). To mitigate this, NACADA introduced the concept of academic advising in 2005. The concept is based on three components that are always present

in academic advising, namely the curriculum, pedagogy, and student learning outcomes (NACADA, 2006). This concept is firstly illustrated, and then elaborated on below:

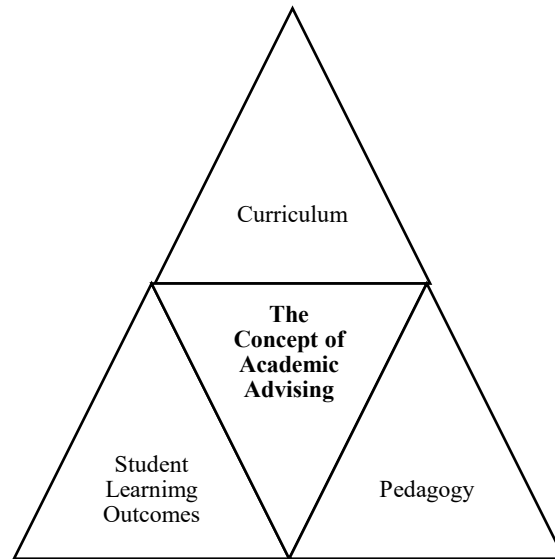


Figure 2.1 The Concept of Academic Advising (NACADA, 2006).

2.3.1 Curriculum of academic advising

The curriculum of advising refers to what academic advisors teach students through their journey as students. It includes, but is not limited to: the institution's advising mission; culture and expectations; inter-relationship between curriculum and co-curriculum; modes of thinking; learning and decision making; selection of academic programmes; development of life and career goals; campus/community resources; policies, rules and procedures; and transferability of skills and knowledge (NACADA, 2006; Reynolds, 2013). Overall, academic advisors deal with helping students navigate their educational journey, from registration, through to graduation, while helping them acquire the advising curriculum.

2.3.2 Pedagogy of academic advising

As a teaching and learning process, academic advising requires a pedagogy, which refers to how advising is done and how it achieves what it does. The pedagogy includes the preparation, facilitation, documentation, and assessment of advising interactions (NACADA, 2006). NACADA further accentuates that, although specific techniques and advising methods may differ, a positive working relationship between an advisor and student is vital in achieving the outcomes of academic advising.

2.3.3 Expected student learning outcomes (SLO)

As advising has previously been described as a teaching and learning process, students have identified learning outcomes of knowledge acquired through the advising process. Student learning outcomes for advising include what students are expected to know, be able to do, value, and appreciate as a result of involvement in the academic advising experience (NACADA, 2006; UFS, 2018).

2.4 EVOLUTION OF ACADEMIC ADVISING

Developing academic advising as a profession transpired parallel to changes in higher education over the past two centuries. What is currently often seen as the “hub of the wheel that establishes lines to all other support services on campus” (King & Kerr, as cited in Workman, 2013, p.14) and specialises in student success, once was typified by providing the correct curriculum codes to a student.

The modern context of advising surfaced during the late 19th century, as institutions grew increasingly diverse with more fields of study and career options for students. In 1870, the Johns Hopkins University first allowed students to choose electives and supplement their majors (McGill, 2019). A more student-centred philosophy emerged within higher education during the 1930s and 1940s, as student support systems flourished in institutions. This philosophy was known as the Student Personnel Point of View (SPPOV), which defined key elements of a student personnel programme to include services to the student of trained, sympathetic counsellors to assist the student in thinking, through educational, vocational, and personal adjustment problems. More

than anything else, the SPPOV established the legitimacy of academic counselling along with personal vocational, and job placement counselling in higher education. This still held in the 1970s (Morrison & Fernante, as cited in Gordon, Habley, & Thomas, 2008) and extends to the 21st century.

Academic advising only became a defined and examined activity, when advisors started to compare how they conducted advising, and how it was being conducted across a variety of institutions. NACADA was established during a national meeting in 1977 and researchers started to focus publications on advising as a profession.

Croockston (1972) and O'Banion (1972) published research conceptualising notions of what it meant to advise a student with terms such as prescriptive advising and developmental advising. In later years, proactive advising approaches were included. Prescriptive and developmental advising models (discussed in sections 2.7.1 and 2.7.2) are still used by institutions in 2022 to advise students; however, proactive intrusive approaches have brought crucial advances to the field. Advising models underwent a shift from being prescriptive, where students were told what to do within an authoritative relationship, to developmental, where students are involved in the advising process (UFS, 2018). With a developmental focus, academic advising is also placed within the teaching and learning project in higher education in 2022, moving towards being recognised as a profession in its own right, which is within an integrated discipline between psychology, higher education, and teaching and learning.

2.4.1 South African history of academic advising

Academic advising has been well established globally in countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, where it has been in existence since 1980 (De Klerk, 2021; Schoeman, 2021; De Klerk, 2022; Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021). However, only a year ago, De Klerk (2021) described academic advising in the South African context as still in its infancy, with academic advising for South African higher education still being investigated and defined. These views were mainly attributed to the limited number of available peer-reviewed literature about academic advising practices in South Africa in 2021 (De Klerk, 2021; Schoeman, 2021). De Klerk (2021) described advising practice as one built on “anecdotal evidence and the resounding push for extra support services in higher education” (De Klerk, 2021). Schoeman (2021) agrees with De Klerk that advising is still developing as a defined practice in South Africa.

She notes that there is still a discrepancy in how advising practice is referred to at South African universities, and terminology such as academic counselling or academic coaching is often used to describe advising practice (Schoeman, 2021).

De Klerk (2021) describes work by Francois Strydom, Senior Director at CTL at the UFS as: “Possibly the most influential, relevant, and significant contributions to literature about academic advising as a profession within the South African higher education context”. In the works that De Klerk (2021) refers to, Strydom and Loots (2020) highlight academic advising as a high-impact practice in the South African context. Moodley and Singh (as cited in De Klerk, 2021) have highlighted academic advising as a proven high-impact practice in assisting to combat student dropout rates in South African universities since 2015.

Strydom and Loots (2020) further view academic advising as an important link between faculties and student support services and accentuate the connection between academic advising, student engagement, and student academic success. De Klerk (2021) claims that South Africa requires a formal advising framework for higher education and that such a framework should be developed and funded in a collaborative, multi-institutional DHET-ICDJ project which will also address the lack of reliable advising literature published in the South African higher education context.

This claim proved to be true when the special edition of the Journal of Student Affairs in Africa (JSAA) was released in 2021 featuring nine published articles on the academic advising practice within the South African context. This special edition of the JSAA made significant progress to address the gaps identified by De Klerk (2021) and Schoeman (2021) in their publications. One of these articles, by Tiroyabone and Strydom (2021), provided a documented history of the development of academic advising in South Africa, and was one of the first publications that documented this journey.

The South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) led to an active inquiry into academic advising as a practice in South Africa in 2010 (Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021), when the SASSE findings highlighted the importance of academic advising and its importance to student success (Strydom et al., 2017). From this, two universities piloted initiatives based on academic advising principles.

Since 2010, the UFS has been the leading institution of higher education driving the national agenda of positioning academic advising within the South African higher education context (Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021). The UFS was the first university that compiled a South African definition of academic advising, which describes advising as a “developmental teaching and learning high-impact process, which is aimed at enhancing student success” (Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021). In addition, the UFS became the first South African institution affiliated with NACADA, based in the USA, and adopted its theoretical understanding of advising from this association. This is also the result of the competency framework for academic advisors of NACADA playing a key role in the point of reference in this study.

Tiroyabone and Strydom (2021) note the importance of also reflecting on the important role that national policy changes have played in the development of academic advising in South Africa, as higher education policies have always emphasised the importance of student success. The Teaching and Development Grant (TDG) offered by the DHET already encouraged the development of student support in the early 2000s. Nevertheless, “it was only when the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) included student advising as one of the ‘pillars’ in enhancing student success in 2018, that advising rose to prominence” (Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021).

Being intentional about the national development of advising, the DHET provided a collaborative grant for funding seven institutions, led by the UFS, to develop academic advising in SA. Bitzer (as cited in De Klerk, 2021) notes that teaching and development grants are good avenues for funding the establishment of academic advising structures.

The DHET grant was built on the work of the advising workstream, which formed part of the Siyapumelela initiative, and has already played a key role in establishing advising structures within South African universities as part of this project. The Siyaphumelela workstream compiled a national definition for academic advising in 2017 (Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021; UFS 2018). The Siyaphumelala workstream definition of academic advising included the following:

Academic advising is an ongoing and intentional teaching and learning practice that empowers the student in their learning and development process to explore and align their personal, academic and career goals. As a shared responsibility between the advisor and advisee, advising aims to maximise the students’ potential by facilitating a conceptual understanding, sharing relevant

information and developing a relationship focused on promoting academic success. The envisaged result is that students have a meaningful academic experience while in higher education and feel a sense of belonging to the institution. (Siyaphumelela workstream, 2019)

Beside establishing a national definition for advising in SA, the collaborative grant also led to the formation of ELETSA (Sotho for advising), the first academic advising association for South Africa. The term ELETSA is derived from Sotho, meaning “giving advice” (Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021). This initiative aims to position academic advising as a practice that improves coordination, and effectiveness, and enhances student success in South Africa (Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021). As a leading institution in this progressive effort, the UFS further facilitates developing advising as a profession in South Africa through the Academic Advising Professional Development (AAPD) programme, an accredited short learning programme (SLP) offered by the UFS (Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021). More than 174 professional advisors have completed the programme by 2022 (Schoeman, Loots, & Bezuidenhoud, 2021). This programme is currently the only academic advising training programme in the country accredited by the South African Qualifications Authority, contributing significantly to the professionalisation of academic advising in South Africa (Schoeman, Loots, & Bezuidenhoud, 2021).

2.5 ACADEMIC ADVISING WITHIN AN INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

Student success does not arise by chance. It is firstly the result of an intentional, structured, and proactive set of strategies that are coherent and systematic and carefully aligned to the same goal. Secondly, a coherent systematic structure is at no time more important than in the first year of studies (Tinto, 2009).

Habley (2008) examined the administrative structures of advising at universities using several different organisational models. Although advising practices cannot be categorised with precision, advising models identified by Habley (2008) provide useful constructs for describing and analysing advising programmes (Kuhn, 2008). Habley (2008) describes the models as follows:

- *Faculty-only model:* All students are assigned to an instructional faculty member for advising. There is no advising office.

- *Supplementary model:* Students are assigned to an instructional faculty member for advising. The advising office provides general academic information and referrals. However, all advising transactions must be approved by the faculty advisor.
- *Split model:* Specific groups of students, for example, undecided, underprepared etc., are advised in an advising office. All other students are assigned to academic units or faculty advisors.
- *Dual model:* Each student has two advisors. A member of the faculty advises the student on matters related to majors, whilst an advisor in an advising office advises the student on general requirements, procedures and policies.
- *Total intake model:* Staff members of an administrative unit are responsible for advising all students for a specified period, or until some specific requirements have been met. After meeting these requirements, students are assigned to an academic subunit for advising.
- *Satellite model:* Each school or college within the institution establishes its approach to advising.
- *Self-contained model:* Advising for all students from the point of enrolment to the point of departure is done by advising staff within an advising unit.

The UFS follows a dual model, according to the conceptualisation of Habley (2008). Faculty advisors provide students with curriculum advice and implement progression and other faculty rules. On the other hand, academic advisors at CTL assist students with degree changes, general advice, exploratory career conversations, study skills, time management, and credit checks.

Academic advising has the potential to play a central role in supporting and complementing other university student support services, such as tutorials, counselling and development, and career development services. Habley (1994) refers to academic advising as the “hub of the wheel” at universities. Academic advising can become a central service and contact point with students, from which students can be further guided and referred to other student support services and resources as needed. The diagram below presents a visual

representation of this connection between academic advising and other student support services on campus:

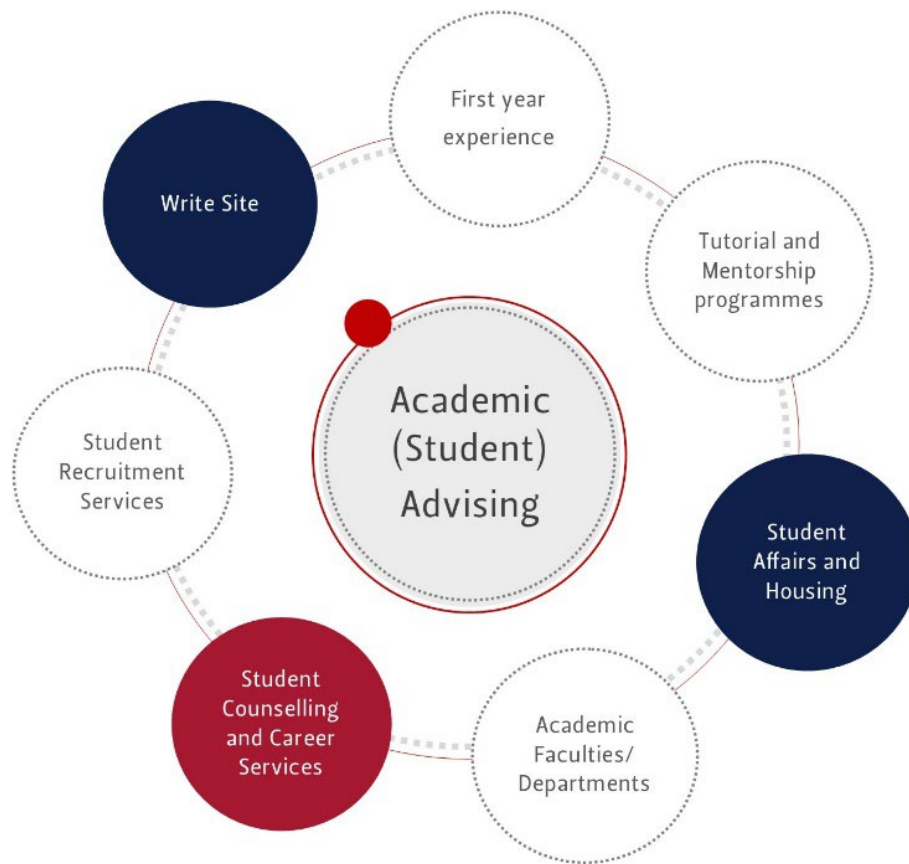


Figure 2.2. The connection between Academic Advising and other student support services at the UFS (UFS, 2018).

Figure 2.2 indicates how academic advisors are placed in various departments in the institution, which are connected to provide a collaborative, multi-dimensional support network for students. Academic advisors at the UFS are spread across various departments, such as student admissions, faculties, CTL, and student affairs. In this study, the general term academic advisor at the UFS includes all these groups of academic advisors. Advisors often vary in their function within the UFS advising network: admissions officers assist students with applications and admissions; administration officers assist with degree changes; advisors from CTL provide general academic advice; support staff appointed as academic advisors assist students with curriculum advice; and programme directors, faculty managers and deans in the faculties deal with student appeals. Although all these staff members have different roles in the institution, and

function within different levels in the organisation, they all form part of the academic advising network, and one can argue that there needs to be a shared set of competencies that they should have in common in order to provide quality advising. The next section explores the theoretical frameworks related to advising practice.

2.6 THEORIES RELATED TO ACADEMIC ADVISING

Theory-building provides the lenses through which academic advising can be seen more clearly. With limited established theories in academic advising (Creamer, 2000), academic advising draws from a variety of theories and models within higher education, psychology, business and leadership, positive psychology, and philosophy (Keller, 2016). This section informs the reader on how these theories can be used to provide a sound theoretical basis for the investigation. Being multi-dimensional, academic advising thus draws its definition from a variety of disciplines, such as psychology, higher education, student success theories, and industrial psychology (Shaffer et al., 2010; UFS, 2018).

Rather than existing on a single theory developed for academic advising specifically, this practice draws from an array of theories from other subject fields (Hagen & Jordan, as cited in Gordon, Habley, & Grites, 2008). These authors argue that this does not limit the legitimacy of advising as a practice. Instead, they state “one theory alone may have limitations, but the use of an array of theories will lead to a better understanding of this broadly complicated phenomenon known as academic advising and will tend to vouchsafe its rightful place among teaching, research, and service” (Hagen & Jordan, as cited in Gordon et al., 2008, p.17).

Practitioners of advising often come from a variety of backgrounds and draw from the theories that inform their practice. Theories that have been proven to inform advising practice first include developmental theories under the categories of psychosocial-identity formation, cognitive-developmental structures, and personal preferences or types.

Psychosocial theories investigate different periods in a person's life, as well as specific challenges faced during these phases. These theories include Erikson's eight stages of identity development and the later work of Chickering and Reissner (Williams, 2007; Hagen & Jordan, as cited in Gordon et al., 2008; UFS 2018). Furthermore, positive psychology theories, such as the theory of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, can also help view university students. Lastly,

Chickering's vectors of development can provide insight into the identity development of students along with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of development (Hagen & Jordan, as cited in Gordon et al., 2008) and Marcia's theory on ego identity development (UFS, 2018; Williams, 2007).

Additionally, cognitive development theories refer to how individuals perceive and interpret their life experiences and are also very relevant to academic advising (Williams, 2007). Theories that can be helpful in this instance include Kolberg's Stages of Moral Development, the work of Perry, or a model developed by Cross on Black, namely identity formation (Hagen & Jordan, as cited in Gordon et al., 2008; Williams, 2007).

Theories such as Kolb's learning styles and personality type indicators such as Myers-Briggs can also provide useful views on personal preferences or types in the advising relationship (Williams, 2007). These kinds of theories focus on more preferential differences, personality differences, and how students would approach their learning environment (Hagen & Jordan, as cited in Gordon et al., 2008).

Career development theories help provide an insight into educational and career planning when advisors provide career advice, as they are connected with the appropriate choice of career when taking numerous variables, such as age, experience, values, personality type, social and family goals, etc. into consideration (Creamer, as cited in Williams, 2007). An example of such theories would be Holland's vocational personality types.

Other theories that might be insightful in the advising perspective include transition theories such as that of Schlossberg and Tinto, as well as coaching models such as the GROW model. As these theories did not inform the view of this study, they are not elaborated on. However, it indicates how advising, as a profession, draws views from fields such as higher education, psychology, industrial psychology and career development. Authors from these fields inspire academic advisors to further their horizons by connecting their advising practice to theories within their discipline, whether it be social sciences, humanities, education or arts, as advising is a practice on one hand and a field of scholarly inquiry on the other.

In addition to theories, academic advisors adopt a variety of academic advising approaches in their practice. These approaches include prescriptive advising, developmental advising, and proactive-intrusive advising. The following section briefly discusses these approaches.

2.7 ADVISING APPROACHES

As theories provide the lens through which advisors view their interactions with students, advising approaches guide how advising is applied. This section provides an overview of the most common approaches to advising, namely prescriptive advising, development advising, and proactive-intrusive advising. Advising practice is not limited to only using one approach, but advisors can use these approaches interchangeably as the advising context requires.

2.7.1 Prescriptive advising approach

Being the first form of advising practised (Drake & Miller, 2013), prescriptive advising views the advisor and student relationship as based on power dynamics, where the advisor has the authority (Crookston, 2009). This relationship is similar to that of a doctor and patient, where the patient has a problem, the doctor gives advice, diagnoses an illness, and/or writes a prescription. If the patient follows the doctor's advice, the person will get better. In the same way, it has traditionally been believed that it is the advisor's job to prescribe the best solution and the advisee to simply follow the prescriptions made or advice given by the expert (Gilman, as cited in Kuhn, 2008). This is often seen as highly convenient by staff, as it is less time-consuming, and allows for a highly structured, defined relationship between the advisor and the advisee (Drake, 2013). In this approach to advising, the advising relationship is seen as short term and takes a problem/solution viewpoint, rather than relationship-building and ongoing development of the student.

The prescriptive advising role has, to a certain extent, been replaced by developmental approaches internationally (Drake, 2013). However, prescriptive advising still has a place in advising at certain points of the student's journey. An example could be when a student has reached the maximum residential period and needs to appeal. In such an advising interaction, an advisor would need to be assertive, concise, and have conflict management skills, thereby taking a prescriptive approach.

2.7.2 Developmental advising approach

The developmental advising approach continues to be the most fundamental and comprehensive approach to academic advising practice (Grites, 2013). This approach enables academic advisors to take a holistic view of each student, and to provide purposeful,

interpersonal, and goal-orientated advising (Ender & Wikie, as cited in Keller, 2016; Grites, 2013). Properly practised, this approach encourages advisors to use their skills to develop student skills (Grites, 2013; Fielstein & Lammers, as cited in Keller, 2016); identify abilities and expectations (Fielstein & Lammers, as cited in Keller, 2016); to know the resources and opportunities available to the student (Grites, 2013); and to support maximum development in academic, personal and career goals (Grites, 2013). Fielstein and Lammers (as cited in Keller, 2016) add that developmental advisors help improve study skills, plan a course of study, improve interpersonal skills, understand their values, and explore career options. Developmental advising remains one of the most fundamental and comprehensive approaches to academic advising in all institutional contexts and is also the advising approach followed by the UFS.

The developmental advising approach views advising as a “systematic process based on a close student-supervisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational and personal goals through the utilization of the full range of institutional and community resources” (Winston, Ender, & Miller, as cited in Keller, 2016, p.19). The UFS draws their definition from a similar viewpoint in that advising is viewed as a developmental teaching and learning process, which fosters a relationship with students, in which they receive support to succeed academically. It is a developmental process, as the student develops skills that will help them become lifelong learners (Strydom, 2016).

The developmental view of advising draws from the theories by Chickering (1969), Perry (1970), and Super (1976, 1980, 1983) that correspond to the personal, educational, and career goals of students respectively (Grites, 2013). Chickering (as cited in Keller, 2016) states that advisors should go beyond the technical and informational aspects of advising and strive to understand the student’s university experience (Keller, 2016). Advisors should try to understand the problems students face and the feelings that surround them, whilst displaying a high degree of respect for the student (Grites, 2013). Where the prescriptive approach to advising is more authoritarian, developmental advising is a process where control is negotiated between the advisor and the student. Keller (2016) outlines the contrasting dimensions of prescriptive and developmental approaches to advising as follows:

Table 2.1 Contrasting dimensions of prescriptive and developmental advising

In terms of	Prescriptive	Developmental
Abilities	Focus on limitations	Focus on potentialities
Motivation	Students are lazy and need prodding	Students are active and striving
Rewards	Grades, credit, income	Achievement, mastery, acceptance, status, recognition, fulfilment
Maturity	Immature, and irresponsible, must be closely supervised and carefully checked	Growing, mature, responsible, capable of self-direction
Initiative	The advisor takes initiative in fulfilling requirements, the rest is up to the students	Either or both may take initiative
Control	By advisor	Negotiated
Responsibility	By advisor to advise, by the student to act	Negotiated
Learning output	Primarily in students	Shared
Evaluation	By advisor to student	Collaborative
Relationship	Based on status, strategies, games, low trust	Based on the nature of the task, competencies, situation, high trust

Prescriptive advising is more authoritarian than developmental advising (Keller, 2016). Where prescriptive advisors focus on student limitations (Grites, 2013), developmental advisors are skilled to identify and develop student potential. Furthermore, prescriptive advisors see students as immature, irresponsible individuals, whereas developmental advisors see students

as growing (Grites, 2013), and seeking acceptance and mastery (Campbell & Nutt, 2008). Developmental advising is not only focused on a specific personal or vocational decision, but also on interactions between the student and their environment (Grites, 2013), interpersonal actions, and the ability of the student to solve problems and make decisions. Both of these approaches, however, acknowledge that learning takes place in the advising relationship (NACADA, 2006), although the learning is directed differently. Academic advising cannot be fully understood if it is not viewed as part of a teaching and learning process (Grites, 2013).

2.7.3 Proactive-intrusive advising approach

Proactive-intrusive advising started off as intrusive advising through the work of Robert Glennen in the mid-1970s, but later became proactive advising (Varney, 2012). The first intention of proactive advising was aimed at blending advising and counselling. The idea behind this model was to provide students with information before they requested it, while also building a relationship with the student at the same time (Varney, 2012). Varney explains that intrusive advising is about getting to the heart of what is causing difficulty for a student and recommending the appropriate intervention on time (Varney, 2007).

In addition, Earl (as cited in Varney, 2012) describes proactive advising as a “deliberate, structured student intervention at the first indication of academic difficulty to motivate the student to seek help”. While using qualities such as experience and structure from prescriptive advising, and relationship building and sensitivity to student needs from developmental advising, proactive advising can support students on time and in a meaningful manner that leads to increased academic motivation and persistence (Varney, 2007; Varney, 2012). Advisors use this advising approach to anticipate student challenges and implement plans to keep these challenges from becoming insurmountable. For this reason, intrusive advising is seen as one of the best ways to reach students at risk (Heisser & Parette, as cited in Varney, 2007). Proactive advising makes use of predictive models that can predict whether a student will leave the institution before graduating based on observable characteristics of the student at a given time, such as gender, incoming grades, hours of paid work, and student engagement data. Proactive advising, therefore, involves (Varney, 2012)

- deliberate intervention to enhance student motivation;

- using strategies to show interest and involvement with students;
- intensive advising designed to increase the probability of student success;
- working to educate students on all options; and
- approaching students before situations develop.

These predictions can then be used to target students with interventions and support based on their risk level (Finnie et al., 2017; UFS, 2019). An example of this would be monitoring student grades and warning students who are not performing to standard about exclusion. It is, however, important that the strategies followed in this approach also connects the student with the necessary resources and information to overcome the anticipated challenge (Finnie et al., 2017).

2.8 ACADEMIC ADVISING AS A PROFESSION

The viewpoint of academic advising as a profession from an international perspective is firstly discussed, followed by a focus on specific developments in South Africa concerning the professionalisation of academic advising. It is important to first distinguish between a profession and an occupation. Coetzee and Schreuder (2016) define an occupation as a group of similar jobs found in different organisations at different times. This is true for academic advising. Academic advisors in different institutions in South Africa have similar job profiles, institutional roles, and responsibilities. We thus know that academic advising can be viewed as an occupation, but much debate still exists on whether it can be viewed as a profession as well.

Because there are so many professional competencies associated with academic advising, and advisors operate in a specialised field of knowledge, advising is often referred to as a profession. Professionalisation refers to a process whereby “an occupation transforms itself through the development of formal qualifications based on education, apprenticeship, and the emergence of regulatory bodies” (Bullock & Trombley, 1999, p. 989).

Similarly, Shaffer et. al. (2010) examined the evolution of academic advising towards a profession using the lens of Wilensky’s (1964) sociological theory, which identifies four stages of

professionalisation. These stages comprise creating occupations, establishing schools, forming associations, and ratifying codes (Wilensky 1964), and are briefly described below:

Stage One: Creating occupations

This stage usually involves creating a market demand for the specific service to an extent that practitioners can make a living pursuing one activity to the exclusion of others. This means that every profession starts as an occupation.

Stage Two: Establishing schools

This stage involves establishing schools where recruits can be trained. Without attending training schools, a person is not seen as “credible in that position”. An example would be a teacher who needs formal teaching training (Shaffer et al., 2010). Although one training institute exists in South Africa for training academic advisors (UFS), advisors can be appointed and regarded as academic advisors without attending this training. Therefore, advising is still not regarded as a profession at this stage.

Stage Three: Forming associations

Forming associations is often led by the need to clarify professional activities and standards for competent practice, to rid the field of incompetent claimants to professional practice, and to lobby for formal and legal recognition and protection of legitimate practitioners (Shaffer et al., 2010). Internationally, associations such as NACADA have been fulfilling these roles within the advising practice for many years. The National Advising Association of South Africa (ELETSA) was founded in 2020, but is still in the early phases of implementing advising support and regulations.

Stage Four: Ratifying codes

The existence of a professional association in any profession typically leads to the ratification and writing of codes of ethics for such a profession. These codes define professional obligations towards clients and colleagues and serve as the basis of self-regulation of members in that particular profession (Shaffer et al., 2010). Professional codes also help articulate norms for professional behaviours and attitudes. Members who join the regulatory association adopt and adhere to these established codes and norms (Shaffer et al., 2010). The professionalisation of

advising as a practice and the development of professional advising codes and norms can thus also provide valuable insight into the solidification of advisor competencies for recruitment, selection and development.

Although academic advising has progressed through all four stages of professionalisation in certain areas, scholars of academic advising have long grappled with the professional status of the field (McGill, 2019). Formal structures have been established, as well as codes and norms for behaviours. However, some aspects that might still hamper the transformation of this career into a profession, are the lack of formal learning and certification structures, as well as regulation of these in the appointment of advisors.

Cooper (2012) indicates that occupational groups working toward professionalisation, encounter many obstacles from internal and external entities (2012). Obstacles to the professionalisation of the field include the need to further define the field, the role of the professional association, training and required education to perform the advising role, personal and occupational autonomy, as well as the need for a consistent administrative home for advising (McGill, 2019).

For advising to be recognised as a profession, it would further need to be associated with accredited, formal training and education. Miller (2014) states that, for academic advisors to be certified, they have to undergo training where they have demonstrated knowledge and their ability to apply the skills learned within the field. Furthermore, there should be ongoing requirements to maintain certification. If recipients fail to maintain competency or fail renewal requirements, the certificate should be revoked. In addition, certifying entities must demonstrate compliance with a set of accredited standards that include a certifying board separate from the professional association (Miller, 2014). This author explains that one possible reason for academic advising not reaching professional certification is the cost of setting up a certifying board. Apart from certification, there must be an acknowledged curriculum built on accredited theories and a broad and deep research base present, as well as delineated advising approaches that serve as the basis within the curriculum. At the moment, this is true in countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, but South Africa has not evolved that far in academic advising.

In South Africa, efforts have also been directed towards the national professionalisation of academic advising practice. Conceptually, the UFS has been playing a leading role in the professionalisation and development of academic advising nationally to help address low

retention rates. Through the Kresge Foundation-funded Siyaphumelela initiative, significant advancements in defining and developing academic advising in South African higher education institutions are being initiated on a national level. Moreover, a collaborative University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) has been awarded to seven national higher education institutions over three years (2018-2020) to drive a contextualised practice, and to allow institutions to work collaboratively in advancing research and developing advising in South Africa (CTL, 2018). Thus, the potential of academic advising as a key contributor to students' development and success is recognised and prioritised by higher education institutions in South Africa. This study provides valuable insights into this project, as it can help to shine some light on the profession of advising within the South African context.

2.8.1 Need to further define the field

Definitions of academic advising are as many as the institutions that offer academic advice. McGill (2019) identifies the issue of scholarship as a barrier to the professionalisation of academic advising, with impeding concerns including defining the field, articulating a knowledge base, and conducting the necessary research to demonstrate effectiveness.

Schulenberg and Lindhorst (2008) note that the field struggles to articulate its unique role in higher education due to the advising community not having developed the language needed to describe the elements of academic advising that make it a unique practice. In a similar sense, Cunningham (2015) notes that there is still little understanding of what academic advisors do in higher education at large and that a theory of advising needs to be developed. In a survey conducted by Aiken-Wisniewski et al. (2015), academic advisors indicated frustrations with the inconsistently defined practice concerning titles, practitioner backgrounds, practice, and recognition. Thus, without clearly defined functions that all academic advisors understand and practice, the struggle to become a unified profession continues.

Despite the development of the concept of academic advising (NACADA, 2006), and the Core Values of Academic Advising (NACADA, 2017a), there remains a lack of clarity regarding role boundaries and responsibilities. This limits the field and practitioners' quest for a status consistent with professionalisation (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015). This barrier has been partially addressed with the newly published academic advisor competencies (NACADA, 2017c). However, future work might include outlining both appropriate and inappropriate duties for

academic advisors (McGill, 2019). It is suggested that future research continue to clarify the roles of those working in the field. As an example, research on the essential features of academic advising might lead to a normative theory of advising, which could guide advising as a practice and advance the field toward professionalisation (Himes, 2014).

2.8.2 Role of the professional association

As mentioned before, NACADA has played a significant role in the path to the professionalisation of academic advising. Since the establishment of NACADA in 1977, the association has grown to represent an international advising community and encompasses approximately 14 000 members (McGill, 2019). However, despite the development and contributions of the association, Adams et al. (2013) note that NACADA could play a bigger role in practitioner self-regulation and the setting of professional standards for the field of academic advising. For instance, endorsing a clearer and more comprehensive definition of academic advising and articulating the activities that constitute good and bad academic advising may help standardise advising and the practice thereof (McGill, 2019).

2.8.3 Training and education required to perform the advising role

Effective advising programmes ensure that advisors are well-trained and have access to a wide variety of continuous formal and informal professional development and learning opportunities (Berkely, 2022). McGill (2019) outlines two major related obstacles to the professionalisation of academic advising, namely the acquisition of training and the mandatory education to perform the advising role. Habley (2009), as well as Kuhn and Padok (2008), comment on the lack of specificity of academic advising in creating specialised knowledge to be considered a profession. Professional development in the field is further complicated by practitioners coming from a variety of educational fields and professional backgrounds, leading to inconsistent advising backgrounds and bases for practice (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015).

Literature suggests that the current broad field focuses on improving training and evaluation models and methods (Padak & Kuhn, 2009), such as the evaluation of advisor performance reviews (Kerr, 2000). When discussing the professionalisation of academic advising, the issues related to training should be contrasted with those of education (McGill, 2019). According to models of professionalisation, paraprofessionals are trained to do their jobs,

whereas professionals are formally educated to perform their work (Abott, 1988). Thus, professionals are characterised as having long tertiary periods of education and their responsibilities cannot be learned on the job (Goode, 1957). Literature notes that professional academic advising development should consist of informational, conceptual, relational (Habley, 1986; NACADA, 2017b), personal, and technological competencies (McClellan, 2007, UFS, 2018).

Additionally, if graduate education is a criterion for professionalisation, a curriculum and specialised body of knowledge need to be examined and established so that programmes can build on each other (Habley, 2008). As such, literature suggests the need for graduate training to become a necessity for advisors (Padak & Kuhn, 2009). More academic advising programmes should also be developed (Shaffer, 2016).

On an international level, the Kansas State University started offering a Master of Science degree in Academic Advising in 2003, as well as a Leadership in Academic Advising Doctorate. The doctorate programme aims to prepare professional advisors for leadership roles in research and teaching focused on academic advising in higher education (Kansas State University, 2022). In addition, a few graduate certificate programmes have emerged across the US, such as the one offered by Berkley University titled Advancing Practice for Academic Advisors (Berkley University of California, 2022) and the Level 1 and Level Advising certificates offered by Wayne State University in Detroit (Wayne State University, 2018). These certificate programmes are based on the training models of Habley (2008) and McClellan (2007), but do not serve as formal education. No formal advising training programmes exist in the UK; however, advisors have to fulfil the criteria that apply to academic staff. This might include a doctoral degree and a teaching and learning theory and pedagogical practice qualification, such as the Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education. Although not an advising qualification, these can contain elements of the knowledge and skills needed for advising and personal tutoring (McGill, Ali, & Barton, 2020). The development of academic advising qualifications in other countries is still left undefined and undocumented.

However, despite these efforts to educate professional academic advisors, McGill states that advising will continue to experience difficulty in being recognised as a profession until defined curriculums are offered via graduate studies in a variety of institutions (McGill, 2019). It is therefore paramount for institutions of higher education with a strong advising focus to venture into offering formal advising programmes to advance this field. However, Shaffer et al. (2010) note that there

can be no credible basis for expanding the number of degree-granting programmes without clearly establishing a professional curriculum to study. These authors indicate that the development of a theory that forms a universal professional body of knowledge is still lacking in this field (Shaffer et al., 2010).

2.8.4 Personal and occupational autonomy

Professions are characterised by autonomy at both occupational group and individual practitioner levels (McGill, 2019). Because academic advising falls under individual institutions of higher education, academic advisors do not have complete autonomy as they answer to the upper-level administrators of their institutions. Padak and Kuhn (2009) note that, for academic advising to become recognised as a profession, it has to stand on its own and not be a part of the bundled or shared responsibilities of a faculty. Although the field of academic advising is becoming more specialised, the degree to which individual autonomy exists in practice still very much depends on institutional and departmental settings (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015). A clearer distinction of roles and responsibilities might circumvent confusion about responsibilities for practitioners and lead to great autonomy in advising practice.

2.8.5 Need for consistent administration

The last barrier to the professionalisation of academic advising entails finding a consistent administrative home for academic advising on diverse campuses. Although not an obstacle in all cases, the administrative position of advising affects the types of advising offered and the consistency of practice, among other variances (McGill, 2019). For instance, some academic advisors are classified as primary-role advisors, whilst others are primarily faculty members. A faculty might have a unit with four permanently appointed academic advisors who provide curriculum advice to students as their primary job function. On the other hand, a programme director, who has lecturing as a primary job function, might also provide curriculum advice to students as a secondary job function, or a faculty manager who deals with the staff component in the faculty, might also coordinate the appeals committee, which is a function of advising, and as a result, provides academic advice to students. This division complicates the efforts to professionalise academic advising. Schulenberg and Lindhorst (2008) suggest that developing a

common, unifying purpose would provide advisors with the language needed to describe both the practice of academic advising, as well as its own scholarly identity independent of other fields and professions. This study aimed to help promote a scholarly body of knowledge that can assist in defining and developing professional advising practices in SA.

2.9 ADVISING IN RELATION TO OTHER PRACTICES

The UFS adopted a developmental approach to academic advising, where advising is viewed as a shared responsibility between advisor and student, and where learning and development take place. In this view of academic advising, the advising process often overlaps with other practices, such as teaching, counselling, and career development (Shaffer et al., 2010). The following sections discuss advising in relation to these practices.

2.9.1 Advising as a teaching and learning process

Academic advising should not be viewed as a once-off service, but rather as a teaching and learning experience, which is closely tied to the institutional mission (NACADA, 2006). This means that students learn through their interaction with academic advisors. In the developmental approach to advising, students learn how to manage their time and studies, how to make good decisions and solve problems, which institutional rules and regulations apply to them, and much more. Student learning outcomes are developed for advising programmes to help indicate what students need to learn (Campbell & Nutt, 2008). The UFS has formulated student learning outcomes according to what students need to know, do, and value as a result of advising. Advisors need to be intentional in their interactions with students to facilitate this process of learning. An advising curriculum can help guide what students need to learn by participating in the advising process. The academic advising curriculum includes, but is not limited to, the institution's mission, culture, and expectations; the meaning value, and interrelationship of the institution's curriculum and co-curriculum; modes of thinking, learning, and decision making; the selection of academic programmes and courses; the development of life and career goals; campus and community resources, policies, and procedures; and the transferability of skills and knowledge (McWilliams & Beam, 2013; NACADA, 2006).

Thus, academic advising focuses on student learning and educational experiences and seeks to connect students' academic interests and skills with their personal and career ambitions. Advisors teach students to plan and manage their educational journey and guide them through decision-making processes related to their studies (Grites, 2013). Teaching students through advising forms an integral part of the role of an advisor in their job. Skills and competencies, such as listening, communication skills, presentation skills, group facilitation, and delivery of material are applied to the advisor, because of the teaching nature of the job (Keller, 2016).

2.9.2 Advising and counselling

Because both practices take a developmental and holistic approach to supporting students, advising and counselling can often be misjudged as interchangeable processes. Although advisors and counsellors collaborate and often refer students to one another, these two practices each have a clear distinctive role in a student's academic journey.

Butler (1995) differentiates between the advisor and counsellor roles by 'separating' academic, career and personal matters. In this view, the aim of advisors is for students to learn information-seeking, analytical, and developmental skills in the context of and in support of academic matters. Academic matters dealt with during the advising process may include progression, course selection, registration, cancellation of modules, application of rules, appeals, and academic support during personal trauma and illness (such as the death of a loved one during the examination or academic concessions due to disability).

On the other hand, the counsellors' aim is for students to learn self-exploration and analytical, decision-making, and behavioural skills in the context of making effective personal life choices. Advisors will refer students to counsellors if they need assistance with interpersonal relationships, suffer from decreased concentration or struggle to focus, which negatively impacts their learning. Advisors will also refer students to student counselling services when any psychological interventions are needed, such as assistance with mental health disorders, when they experience physical or emotional abuse, depression and suicide ideation, and substance abuse. This also includes when students' learning and motivation are negatively impacted by their sexual orientation and when they are discriminated against (Butler, 2005).

Kuhn, Gordon, and Webber (2006) later categorised responsibilities of academic advising on a continuum that helps explain responsibilities addressed by academic advisors and counsellors respectively (2006). Fundamental to the continuum is five levels of involvement with students, namely informational, explanatory, developmental, mentoring, and counselling. The first two levels of responsibility fall into the advisor's scope of practice. Advisors provide basic information and clarify academic information, policies, and procedures for students to act on. The overlap between the two practices is seen in the developmental and mentoring levels of this continuum. Advisors build lasting and trusting relationships with students, and the values, goals, needs and personal circumstances of students are central to their educational plans. Advisors work collaboratively with students to set academic, personal and educational goals, and often engage in a mentorship role when motivating and encouraging students to reach their full potential (Kuh, Gordon, & Weber, 2006).

2.9.3 Advising and career development

The need to better integrate elements of career development and academic advising is not a new one (Schoeman, Loots, & Bezuidenhoud, 2021; Ledwith, 2014). Although seen as two different practices, academic advising units and career services professionals can partner to serve students (Ledwith, 2014). This author indicates that, whilst academic advisors provide support, assistance and accountability about postgraduate career outcomes to students, career services professionals are proactive in their efforts to work together with their academic advising counterparts to integrate students into the world of work. An example of such a case is the University of Nebraska, where advising and career development departments are integrated. As a collaborative department, advisors aim to educate students through advising practices and build confidence in their decision making, as well as increasing career development opportunities through engagement with campus and professional communities, and increasing student awareness of various options and paths available to achieve their goals (University of Nebraska, 2022).

Although these practices overlap in many ways (Ledwith, 2014) it is still important to distinguish between the core of these two practices. Typically, career centres offer career advising and/or career counselling at institutions of higher education. Gordon (as cited in NACADA, 2022) notes that career counselling differs from career advising as being more psychological and

problem focused, whilst career advising can be defined as a process “which helps students understand how their personal interests, abilities and values might predict success in the academic and career fields they are considering and how to form their academic and career goals accordingly”. Career counselling, on the other hand, involves a formal relationship in which a professional counsellor assists a client, or a group of clients, to cope effectively with career concerns (Ledwith, 2014).

2.10 ACADEMIC ADVISING IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

Understanding and practising academic advising is informed by the regional context in which it is practised (McGill et al., 2020). The South African higher education sector is still faced with the daunting imperative of transformation and the need for sustained academic advising and support for students and lecturers in universities in South Africa is escalating (USAF, 2021). Academic advising in the South African higher education context has faced increasing growth and attention over the last decade and various initiatives have been put in place to support the development of the field, including the launch of the national Siyaphumelela initiative, the UCDG, as well as the launch of ELETSA, a national academic advising association.

2.10.1 Siyaphumelela initiative

In 2014, the Siyaphumelela initiative, coordinated by the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) set out to help partner institutions foster a culture of student success, identify data and tools to improve student success, strengthen institutional capacity, and develop practices for long-term student success. After achieving many of its original goals, the initiative has now increased its scope with the Siyaphumelela Network 2.0. This network includes 14 universities. Seven partner universities (Durban University of Technology, Nelson Mandela University, University of Cape Town, University of the Free State, University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of the Western Cape, and the University of the Witwatersrand) and one associate university (University of Pretoria) serve as regional student success hubs and share insights with participant institutions, which include the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, North-West University, Sol Plaatje University, University of Venda, University of Zululand and Walter Sisulu

University (Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021). The network aims to implement student success strategies including campus-based holistic student support, student tracking, academic advising, and ethical data use.

Siyaphumelela 2.0 is “committed to sharing experience and expertise across the system” and aims to have a system in place that will eventually provide support to all South African higher education institutions through regional and national networks and integrated services (Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021). The DHET has committed to a three-year funding initiative through its UCDG, which will fund student advising services at participating campuses and create a national student data system to track educational outcomes.

2.10.2 University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) 2018 -2021

A collaborative UCDG has been awarded to several higher education institutions to allow institutions to work collaboratively in advancing research and development in advising within South Africa. The UCDG strives to build national capacity among seven participating institutions. These institutions include the UFS, Durban University of Technology, Nelson Mandela University, the University of Cape Town, University of Pretoria, University of Witwatersrand, and Mangosuthu University.

2.10.3 South African Academic Advising Association

The South African Academic Advising Association, known as ELETSA, a non-profit organisation operating in the South African region, was established in 2021. The association holds allied membership status through NACADA, based in the USA. ELETSA currently facilitates a short learning programme focused on staff development called the Academic Advising Professional Development Programme (AAPD).

2.10.4 Academic Advising Professional Development short learning programme (AAPD)

The AAPD is an NQF level 5 accredited programme offered twice a year over a week and currently serves as South Africa’s national short learning programme in academic advising

professional development. The programme is aimed at professionals working with students in the higher education environment in SA. The purpose of the short learning programme is to provide introductory training to participants to be able to fulfil their role as academic advisers successfully. This programme was developed by, and is currently presented at, the UFS.

2.10.5 Academic advising and student success

Student retention and success is the primary purpose of academic advising (Strydom, 2016; Keller, 2017; Elliot & Healy, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Peterson, Wagner, & Lamb, 2001). Linked to the strategic goals and mission of the university, advisors connect students to the institution and help them transition and progress to degree completion (Otto, Rosenthal, & Kinle, as cited in Keller, 2016; Keller, 2017). Researchers agree that academic advising is one of the core functions to improve student retention and success (Tinto 1987; Light, 2001; Miller & Alberts, 1994; Anderson, 1997; Habley, 1994; Noel, as cited in Glennen & Vowell, 1995; Keller, 2017; Oriano, 2013; Grites, 2013; King & Kerr, as cited in Workman, 2013; Voller, 2013; Keller, 2017). Tinto (2004) indicates that successful retention programmes, therefore, need to incorporate effective advising strategies. Light (as cited in Campbell & Nutt, 2008, p. 53) pinpoints the value of academic advising in retention by claiming that “[G]ood advising may be the most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience”.

To reach their targets of improving student retention, universities need to pay serious attention to ensuring quality advising. Trabant (2006) recognises advising as being essential to the educational mission of higher education institutions (as cited in NACADA 2006). This is done through training and professionalisation of the advising role. Voller (2013) states that institutions that are serious about student learning, persistence, and graduation rates must provide training and professional development for their academic advisors. With student success and retention being one of the core drivers of an organisational strategy at a university, quality advising would form an integral part of the successful attainment of the organisational strategy.

2.10.6 Academic advising and student retention

Despite an assortment of student support interventions, South Africa is still challenged by low retention and graduation rates. This can be attributed to systematic causes, including poor

school education, lack of resources, and inappropriate curriculums that often leave first-year students with a lack of readiness for university (Wilson-Strydom, as cited in CTL 2018; Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021; De Klerk, 2021). In South Africa, the majority of the student population are still first-generation students, commuting daily, and often feeling lost, overwhelmed, and lacking a sense of belonging (Wilson-Strydom, as cited in CTL, 2018). Students not graduating on time and dropping out of higher education institutions result in large cost implications for the state, the student, and the parents (Tswanya, 2017). However, research has found a direct link between student academic advising and student success at the UFS.

An academic advising and student engagement report that was released early in 2018 indicated that UFS students who participated in academic advising had a higher probability of passing 70% of their modules than students who did not participate in advising (CTL, 2018). The report further indicated that students who participated in academic advising were engaged in their studies, recognised the quality of advising and that the personal advising relationship of care at registration made a significant contribution to orientating them as new students. These findings reiterate the importance of academic advising to students in the South African context. Academic advising thus plays an important role in helping South African students to navigate through higher education institutions successfully, consequently, improving student retention (UFS, 2019).

2.10.7 Understanding the South African student population

A study by CEPD in 2005 (as cited in Osman, & Castle, 2006) found that more than half of the students in higher education are older than 23 years of age. Mature or adult learners have different characteristics and needs than younger students. Some of the unique characteristics of this student group include being more goal-oriented; setting educational goals that would enhance work-related skills; being primary workers and secondary students; being more likely to study via correspondence and distance learning. They are also more likely to discontinue their studies due to personal reasons; additional financial concerns; lack of social support; poor confidence in their own abilities; lack of life skills; and work responsibilities or difficulty balancing their careers and academics (Harding, 2008; Osman & Castle, 2006). Another factor that would contribute to advising services being specialised within the South African context is the vast majority of students coming from low socio-economic backgrounds and studying on government funding.

Advisors are faced with everyday challenges such as students not being able to afford books or travel to campus to attend classes.

Furthermore, the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) provides valuable contextual information on student behaviours and views within universities in South Africa. The SASSE survey of 2016 (UFS, 2016) indicates the following unique student characteristics in the South African context:

- Generally, black, coloured, and first-generation students are more vulnerable to financial stress than other students.
- 69% of students indicate that they have run out of food without being able to buy more.
- 29% of first-generation students indicate that they run out of food without being able to buy more on most days / every day, compared to 12% of non-first-generation students stating the same.
- Students who indicated that they experience high stress levels regarding their finances also indicated that they had less time to spend on their studies because they were required to spend more time taking care of others, working, and travelling to and from class, when compared to other students (with lower levels of stress regarding their finances).
- 25% of first-year students and 31% of senior students attend class unprepared.
- Many students have unrealistic expectations about the university (related to the difficulty of university-level work, time-management, and the ability to pay for university expenses).
- First-year students rate the following as very important to them: support to succeed academically, learning support services (for example tutoring and writing centres), opportunities to interact with diverse peers, challenging academic experiences, and assistance in managing non-academic responsibilities (for example, family responsibilities).

These statistics show the uniqueness of the need for academic advisors in the South African context to develop skills such as cultural awareness, diversity and inclusion, financial management, and student skills development. Advisors in the South African context are

confronted with the daily challenges students have to face to survive in this socio-economic environment. With food and financial security being major issues to deal with daily, South African advisors need to have good referral skills and need to be able to maintain a student support network that they can use to support students.

2.11 SUMMARY

Academic advising is a multi-dimensional construct that has developed as a result of transitions within the higher education milieu. For any university to implement student retention strategies, careful execution of advising structures needs to be taken into account. Within the South African context, the professional development of academic advisors is becoming a priority in conversations on higher education, to which the results of this study might be beneficial. Understanding the context of the South African student can help to get a better contextual understanding of what academic advisors in South Africa need to deal with daily, and what specific knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours they need for impactful advising within this context.

This chapter explored academic advising as a concept, and as a profession in relation to other practices. Advising approaches were shared, and the researcher provided insight into academic advising in the South African context. The next chapter will investigate advising from the view of competencies and professional development pathways for academic advisors, both internationally and in South Africa.

CHAPTER 3: COMPETENCY MODELLING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the literature associated with competencies concerning academic advising. Competencies are defined as described by the literature on competency. Following is a discussion on competency modelling, and how it was employed in this study. The literature is reviewed to identify competencies associated with academic advising as a profession, which further informed the data triangulation in Chapter 5.

3.2 COMPETENCY DEFINED

Rodriguez et al. (2002) state that competencies are being used in many areas of the human resources cycle, such as selecting and recruiting, development, performance management and organisational strategy. The successful attainment of organisational strategies is reliant on high-performing employees. Therefore, competencies form the basis for human resources to contribute to the success of the organisation.

A variety of definitions exist for competencies and competency models. Brown (2006), as cited in Keller (2016, p 53.), describes competencies as “something an individual must demonstrate to be effective in a job, role, function, task or duty”. Competencies are often used to provide clarity on what it takes to be successful in an organisation and a specific position. Zapf (2013) refers to competence, or competencies as a cluster of related knowledge, skills, attitudes, and other personal characteristics that affect a major part of one’s job. Competencies correlate with performance on the job, can be measured against well-accepted standards, and can be improved by employing training and development. Ricciardi (2005), as cited in Keller (2016), does not relate competencies to a specific job but rather describes competencies as distinct sets of behaviours applied to compete for tasks that are directly related to achieving a critical outcome. The Berkeley University of California refers to this view of competencies when stating that, to effectively support student growth, development and educational achievement, advisors need to develop a set of professional skills, knowledge and behaviours (Berkeley University of California,

2022). It is therefore through this view of professional competencies that this study aimed to investigate competencies for academic advisors at the UFS.

3.3 COMPETENCY MODEL DEFINED

A set of work-related competencies is typically referred to as a competency model. Competency models refer to collections of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) needed for effective performance in the jobs in question (Campion et al., 2011; Keller, 2016; NACADA, 2017c). Campion et al. (2011) state that competency modelling is an important innovation to help organisations pay attention to job-related information and employee skills in the management of employees. Competency models often distinguish between top performers and average performers in relation to a specific job and should be linked to business objectives and strategies. However, companies do not always have the luxury of being able to develop competency models, as it requires time and expense (Dalton, 1997; Keller, 2016).

Competency models are more than merely a list of characteristics related to a job (Champion et al., 2011; Dalton, 1997; Keller, 2016). Champion et al. (2011) point out several important characteristics of competency models:

- They help organisations pay attention to job-related information and employee skills in the management of employees.
- They aid in distinguishing top performers from average performers.
- They describe how competencies change with job levels.
- They are linked to business objectives and strategies.
- They are developed top-down rather than bottom-up.
- They may consider future job requirements either directly or indirectly.
- They are presented in a manner that facilitates ease of use.

- They include a finite number of competencies identified and applied across multiple functions or job families.
- They are used to actively align human resources systems.
- They are often more of an organisational development intervention that seeks broad organisational change.

Keller (2016) indicates that a competency model must identify and validate the existence of underlying motives, traits, and attitudes for a particular position. It is therefore critical that the competency model for advisors be based on which advisors are effective and how they became that way. Furthermore, the researcher aimed to point out how people can acquire the necessary traits, values, skills, and perspectives to be an advisor.

Dalton (1997) states that developing a competency model should involve a methodology that demonstrates the validity of the models' standards. To promote the standards of the competency model in this study, the researcher selected the participants for the semi-structured interviews carefully through purposeful sampling to maximise the richness of data as much as possible. Secondly, the researcher used the technique of member checking to validate the data received from semi-structured interviews. This technique requires taking information back to the participants so that they can evaluate the accuracy and credibility of the interpretation of the data (Creswell, 1998, as cited in Ren 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that member checking is the "most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (Ren, 2017). As suggested by Erlandson and colleagues (as cited in Ren, 2017), the process of member checking was done informally as well as formally to improve the credibility of this study. During the interviews, the researcher informally verified the understanding with participants.

3.4 COMPETENCY MODELLING

Competency modelling refers to the process organisational leaders and human resources professionals employ when developing competency models. Dalton describes the following steps in competency modelling (Dalton, 1997; Dalton, as cited in Keller, 2016):

1. Specify the job or position being analysed.
2. Identify expected business challenges.
3. Conduct critical incident interviews for anecdotal evidence on effective and ineffective performers.
4. Conduct a content analysis of the critical incidents to identify the underlying competencies.
5. Validate the model to ensure that it captures the characteristics of effective employees compared to ineffective ones in a given situation.

These steps were employed in this study to develop a competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS. Firstly, the researcher conducted a literature review to identify possible competencies that can relate to academic advisors in the South African context. Secondly, expected business challenges were identified. Thirdly, critical incident interviews were held with ten academic advisors from the UFS to identify competencies related to an effective and ineffective academic advisor at the UFS. Data collected from these interviews were inductively analysed through a process of content analysis to identify skills, knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and other characteristics associated with professional academic advising. After completing the analysis, the data were compared with competencies identified in the literature to compile a competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS.

3.4.1 Completing a job analysis of academic advisors

Brannick and Levine (2002) define job analysis as a systematic process whereby the nature of a particular job is discovered. Thornton and Mueller-Hanson (2004) mention that job analysis includes several components of the job situation. Industrial psychologists use the process of job analysis to determine the important tasks of a job and the human attributes (knowledge, abilities, skills, experience, and personal characteristics) necessary to perform job tasks (Landy & Conte, 2010). These components can include the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes related to the specific job.

Other than a competency model, a job analysis is not aimed at aligning the competencies needed in a specific job with organisational strategies and objectives, but rather to inform, refine, improve or defend specific human resources systems (Campion et al., 2011). Job analysis refers to a thorough analysis of a specific job. It investigates the skills, knowledge, behaviours, and attitudes associated with a specific job. The key difference between competency modelling and job analysis is that competency modelling is a broader organisational development intervention, whereas a job analysis is aimed at capturing the requirements of a specific job (Campion et al., 2011). Although two different concepts, when combined, they can contribute to a highly robust approach to competency modelling (Campion et al., 2011). Dalton (1997) supports the approach of constructing competency models by stating: "In fact, it would clear up some confusion if we returned to labelling those requisite characteristics such as knowledge, skills, and abilities rather than competencies".

In addition, Campion et al. (2011) suggest using multiple data collection methods, such as observations, SME interviews, and structured brainstorming methods in focus groups to identify potential competency information; using clear construct definitions in the competencies and linkages to theory and literature; using sampling techniques; using appropriate statistical analysis; assessing reliability and other psychometric quality checks; validating models against organisational criteria; and validating models across sources of information (Campion et al., 2011).

Competency modelling for academic advisors at the UFS firstly comprised a job analysis to be completed on a typical advisor post. The job analysis was completed through semi-structured interviews which included typical questions from a functional job analysis and using the critical incident technique.

Functional job analysis breaks down job roles into seven areas: things, data, worker instructions, reasoning, people, maths, and language (Darwinbox Digital Solutions, 2021). To obtain information in these areas, questions are asked that relate to the instruments used to complete the functions of the job, the levels and types of reasoning the job requires, the data points that need to be collected, transcribed and shared as part of the job, etc. (Campion et al., 2011). The interviews also included the critical incident technique to get a deeper insight into the behaviours etc. associated with providing quality advising versus providing advising that is below the required standards.

A critical incident can often be used in the process of job analysis to clarify vaguely derived competencies (Campion et al., 2011). A critical incident analysis provides very good insight into the everyday operations of the job (such as the line manager responsible for the incumbent, or the current person doing the job) with scenarios within the various key performance areas of the job. The person is then asked to describe the behaviours displayed by someone who is doing a very good job, and the behaviours that would signify someone who is performing poorly on the job. These behaviours are then used in analysing the types of behaviours and skills a person would need to perform well in this job. The critical incident job analysis assisted in the functional job analysis and provided the researcher with rich data on the competencies to be included in the competency model for academic advisors at the UFS.

As part of the literature that informs the process of competency modelling, the researcher identified which existing competency models were relevant as a reference to advising in the UFS. These models firstly included the existing competency model for UFS staff, and secondly, existing competency models related to advising as a practice. These included the competency model by NACADA for academic advisors, advisor competencies from the Educor Academic Advising Centre, and the South African National Framework for Career Development. The researcher then studied the models to identify competencies related to academic advising. These models were subsequently integrated with existing literature on advising to identify which existing competencies stood out for professional academic advisors. The following section discusses each of these selected models, followed by an integrative discussion on relevant competencies.

3.5 COMPETENCY MODELS RELATED TO ADVISING

Before the researcher could collect, analyse and interpret data regarding the necessary competencies for academic advisors, literature was consulted in order to get a clear view of the current perspectives on the competencies associated with good academic advising. The main focus of academic advising is to achieve student retention. The primary role of advisors is to help students reach success in their academic careers through teaching and learning that results in productive career and life planning (Khun, 2008).

3.5.1 Advisor competency model developed by the National Association of Academic Advising (NACADA)

To get a clear understanding of the knowledge and skills that support academic advising as a profession, NACADA (2017) developed a competency model for advisors. The model was created for use by:

- *Primary role advisors*: for self-assessment and evaluation, and to guide learning, career development, and advancement.
- *Faculty advisors and advising administrators*: to clarify academic advising roles and responsibilities and highlight the contributions of academic advising to teaching and learning.
- *Advising supervisors, managers, and mentors*: to identify strengths and areas for staff development and to guide hiring, training, and evaluation.
- *Learning professionals, trainers, and researchers*: to support curriculum development, establish learning priorities and advance scholarship in the field (NACADA, 2017c).

The NACADA framework was developed to support the core competencies for academic advising identified by Habley (1987; 2008) and forms the foundation for effective advisor training programmes into three categories, namely conceptual, informational, and relational (Habley, 2008). Firstly, the conceptual component involves the ideas and theories that advisors need to understand to be able to provide effective advice to their students. Secondly, the informational component forms the substance of academic advising. This is the knowledge needed to guide students at their institution. Lastly, the relational component addresses the skills needed to convey concepts and information from the other two components to advisees. Whilst the conceptual and informational components refer to a framework of knowledge that the advisor should be able to apply in his/her everyday job, the relational component refers to a set of behaviours that an advisor should display when working with students.

These three competencies, as drawn from Habley's work, relate closely to the developmental perspective of advising. Student development theories form part of the elements that an advisor should know, as well as the developmental vision and mission of advising posed

by the institution. In addition, relational elements guide how the advisor can go about building a relationship of trust with the student and focus on identifying and developing the strengths of the student (CTL, 2018).

With South African students facing an array of challenges, this approach to advising helps enforce the view of advising as someone that is looking out for the student, as George Kuh is often quoted in advising material (Gordon et al., 2008). Academic advisors should know all three elements and be able to apply them in their daily interactions (NACADA, 2017b). NACADA further identifies key elements that advisors should know within each of the three components, as outlined below:

3.5.1.1 Conceptual

Academic advisors should be knowledgeable on

- the history and role of academic advising in higher education;
- NACADA's Core Values of Academic Advising;
- the theory relevant to academic advising;
- academic advising approaches and strategies;
- the expected outcomes of academic advising; and
- how equitable and inclusive environments are created and maintained.

3.5.1.2 Informational

Academic advisors should be knowledgeable on

- institution-specific history, mission, vision, values, and culture;
- curriculum, degree programmes, and other academic requirements and options;

- institution-specific policies, procedures, rules, and regulations;
- legal guidelines of advising practice, including privacy regulations and confidentiality;
- characteristics, needs, and experiences of major and emerging student populations;
- campus and community resources that support student success; and
- information technology applicable to relevant advising roles.

3.5.1.3 Relational

Academic advisors should be able to

- articulate a personal philosophy of academic advising;
- create rapport and build academic advising relationships;
- communicate in an inclusive and respectful manner;
- plan and conduct successful advising interactions;
- promote student understanding of the logic and purpose of the curriculum;
- facilitate problem-solving, decision-making, meaning-making, planning, and goal setting;
and
- engage in ongoing assessment and development of the advising practice.

With a wide array of knowledge, skills, and attitudes mentioned in the framework of NACADA, there is still a shortage of South African contextualisation. Theories used to ground advising practices have been developed in Westernised countries such as America and are not contextualised for the rich environment that South Africa has, alongside the socio-economic challenges that advisors need to deal with daily in South Africa.

3.5.2 Educor academic advising centre

Concerning the South African territory, Educor (2022) launched the first academic advising centre in South Africa. This advising centre aims to provide students with the best academic resources and academic support available through telephonic and email advising sessions. The advising centre views the advisor's role as mentoring the student to reach his/her full potential.

This would require the advisor to

- prepare, plan and schedule advising sessions;
- identify challenges/gaps in a student's learning experience and provide the required support;
- be knowledgeable about academic curriculum and college policies and procedures and changes to them, where possible;
- empower students to take responsibility for their academic success, become independent thinkers, and be reflective;
- maintain confidentiality regarding the student's academic record;
- encourage and guide the student as they define and develop goals;
- provide students with information about academic research and strategies for using the available resources and services on campus;
- create and maintain an interactive environment encouraging mutual trust and open communication;
- guiding students in making informed decisions; and
- refer administrative and subject matter queries to the relevant brand/college/lecturer.

3.5.3 National framework for career development

Another framework that can inform advising practices in South Africa is the national framework for career development (DHET, 2016). Career advising forms an integral part of academic advising at the UFS. Although academic advisors have not formally been identified within this framework, their roles and responsibilities overlap with entry-level career development practitioners (CDPs) and advanced career development practitioners.

In addition, the competency model for career development practitioners in South Africa suggests that a competency framework for career development practitioners can describe the knowledge and skills needed by all levels of the broad field of career development practitioners who work in diverse roles, in diverse settings with diverse client groups. Furthermore, it can foster a professional identity for those working in the field, as well as provide a structure for qualifications, training, standardisation, and professionalisation (DHET, 2016).

The DHET recommends competencies to be categorised when developing a competency framework to ensure the development of a well-conceptualised and structured framework. They identify competencies as being either core or specialised within the South African context (DHET, 2016). Core competencies identified by the DHET are summarised in Table 3.4.

Table 3.1 Description of core competencies for career development practitioners in South Africa (DHET, 2016)

Competency	Description
Effective communication	Involves verbal or written interaction. Effective communication enables rapport and relationships to be built and fosters productive and collaborative work environments.
Demonstrate ethical behaviour	Ethical standards guide the conduct of CDPs. The ethical practice serves to develop credible, consistent, and responsible service to people and, in so doing, protects the public and also CDPs. Most professions are guided by an ethical code by which the conduct of their members can be considered.

Demonstrate professional behaviour	Professional behaviour reflects professionalism; a trait that both clients and colleagues expect to be apparent when striving for excellence in all that one does and includes showing respect and integrity in behaviour with sound self- and case-management skills when interacting. Professional behaviour further includes the establishment and management of stakeholder relationships and industry networks.
Manage diversity	Career development was born out of the social justice movement at the beginning of the 20th century and social justice remains a core value of career development services. Social justice recognises the uniqueness of individuals, i.e., every individual is different. Dealing with people from diverse backgrounds is integral to the work of CDPs. Diversity impacts the career development of people in various ways including living with disabilities, personal characteristics, beliefs and values, gender expectations, and access to opportunities.
Use career information effectively	A fundamental reason for people accessing CDPs is to obtain information on occupations and jobs, learning pathways, study options, and employment opportunities. Labour market information provides a foundation for assisting people to make informed study decisions. In-depth knowledge of and ability to use labour market information is crucial in providing career development services and employment.
Deliver an effective career development service:	Converting knowledge into a meaningful career development engagement is a competency often taken for granted. A CDP must be able to effectively draw upon his/ her knowledge to deliver meaningful career development conversations in diverse settings. Standardised instruments will only be used by registered practitioners who will operate under SCDP and need to work with groups and in other settings, the CDP will need to work with individuals, making use of appropriate resources and technologies. Regulations of the psychology profession underpin this competency service.
Advance employability of clients	A critical role of a CDP is to improve a client's opportunity of being employed or promoted. This includes providing information on employability, CV writing, and editing, coaching for interviews, advising on job search strategies, and other interventions that make a person more employable, using their existing skillset.

Use career information effectively	A fundamental reason for people accessing CDPs is to obtain information on occupations and jobs, learning pathways, study options, and employment opportunities. Labour market information provides a foundation for assisting people to make informed study and employment decisions. In-depth knowledge of and ability to use labour market information is crucial in providing career development services.
Understand career development	Career development has a long history during which an extensive theory base has been built, that distinguishes career development from other fields. This theory base provides a way of understanding individual and group career development and should inform practice.
Facilitate non-standardised self-exploration career assessments	Psychometric and non-standardised assessments are established and recognised processes of acquiring qualitative and quantitative information about clients seeking help. Whilst non-standardised self-exploration assessments and techniques can be facilitated by all professionally trained psychologists, and techniques he/ she can apply to relate to his/her competency level. The CDP must know which career assessment CDPs, and standardised psychometric assessments may only be used by suitably categorised HPCSA registered.

Table 3.1 outlines ten competencies for career development practitioners. The complete framework can be found in Appendix A.

Each competency identified in this framework is identified by a set of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. The professional body/bodies for career development practitioners can deem them competent if they possess the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes required to practice at a particular level. Furthermore, specialised competencies were identified for practitioners in specialised careers who wish to register as career development practitioners and specialise in the area of expertise they already possess. This would require practitioners to display the core competencies as listed and receive further recognition of the competencies in which they wish to specialise if they have the related qualification or experience, whichever is applicable (DHET, 2016). The specialised competencies include

- career counselling;
- psychometric assessment;

- research;
- career development education; and
- recruitment, selection, and placement.

Although academic advisors have not intentionally been included in this framework, academic advisors often perform functions related to research competency.

Career counselling and psychometric assessment are skills that are specific within the scope of practice of a counselling psychologist, clinical psychologist, and industrial psychologist. These psychological acts do not form part of the scope of an academic advisor. Advisors who are registered with the HPCSA as practising psychologists would operate within these specialised functions only if it is seen as specific to their job function, in which case they would be liable to the code of conduct within the psychology profession, as set out by the HPCSA.

3.5.3.1 *Types of career development practitioners*

Apart from the core and specialised competencies identified by the national framework for career development, career development practitioners are also categorised into three categories, namely

- entry-level career development practitioners (ELCDP);
- advanced level career development practitioners (ALCDP); and
- specialist career development practitioners (SCDP).

Each of these practitioner types plays a crucial role in delivering career development services (DHET, 2016). Entry-level career development practitioners are qualified to provide information to clients regarding their career, financial aid, educational institution, learning programme, entry requirement, labour market, job availability, career trending, National Qualifications Framework, and Occupational Framework for Occupations (OFO). This practitioner can collect, evaluate, and assimilate career-related information, and can refer clients to these various sources of information. Practitioners at this level can conduct information-sharing sessions with both individuals and groups (DHET, 2016).

In addition to the requirements of an entry-level career development practitioner, a person on the advanced level has additional knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that enable them to provide more advanced or specialised services. These may include, but are not limited to, providing career advice and guidance, applying career development theories and decision-making models, administering non-standardised assessments, assisting clients in understanding the results of these assessments in relation to their circumstances, developing possible career and study options with the client, and together with the client, designing a plan of action for these possible career and study options (DHET, 2016).

Other functions included in this group, but which are limited to the career development office at the UFS, comprise assisting clients to develop a cover letter and a curriculum vitae, checking the quality of work applications, preparing clients for interviews, developing networks and conducting relating job-seeking activities. Career interventions in this group can be conducted both with individuals and groups (DHET, 2016).

The third cluster, specialist career development practitioners, meets all the requirements of an advanced-level career development practitioner, but is also a specialist in one or more areas of career development. Areas of specialisation can include, but are not limited to, career counselling, executive coaching, career development research, course content development, career development practitioner trainers, psychometric testing, outplacement centre developers, and others the relevant professional body may determine from time to time (DHET, 2016). Specialised career development practitioners may be registered with professional bodies such as the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), the Institute for People Management (IPM), the Federation of African Professional Staffing, etc. Table 3.5 provides an outline of the research competency as indicated by the national career development framework.

Table 3.2. Specialised career development competencies relevant to academic advisors.

Competency:	Description:
Research	Conducting reliable and valid research and publishing research reports requires advanced knowledge of the career development field and related research methodology.
Areas of specialisation:	
The following areas of specialisation exist within this competency. The specialisations are not exhaustive. • Research into contextualised career theory. • Labour market research. • Research into career development services and practices. • Research, validate, and publish career-related information. • Research into careers and opportunities for people with special needs and/or living with disabilities.	

Not all academic advisors focus on career development in their practice. However, those that provide career advice as part of their job function will need to display many competencies within the career development framework and might do research on career advising practices as an area of specialisation. For these advisors, research in career development will be a necessary competency.

3.6 UFS COMPETENCY MODEL

Part of the business challenge when examining a competency model for academic advisors at the UFS was that the UFS has an existing competency framework for all UFS staff. Therefore, a competency model for academic advisors had to be aligned with the existing competency framework. The existing UFS competency framework is one where employees within

the UFS can follow either a leadership talent pathway or a specialist pathway (Department of Human Resources, UFS, 2016). Each of these two pathways is described by five levels of work, which have level-specific deliverables and describe the increasing layers of complexity as a role change. Additionally, each level of work has level-specific competencies following the specific level of work. Definitions and associated behaviours are level-specific rather than a job and/or hierarchy specific.

Within the UFS, employees fulfilling an academic advisor role may follow either the leadership- or specialist pathway, depending on the roles and responsibilities assigned to them. In this study, the focus was on academic advisors who provide academic advising services to students as a primary function of their everyday job. Therefore, the researcher reflected on competencies associated with the specialist and leadership pathways in that these advisors are typically appointed.

3.6.1 Leadership pathways

Although some academic advisors are following leadership pathways at the UFS, they are additional functions to managerial roles. Academic advisors in the leadership pathway, where providing academic advice is included in their job profile, might include programme directors, faculty managers, teaching and learning managers, and managers to academic advisors. The UFS applies the Peromnes grading system and these advisors are typically appointed between a Level 8 (chief officer) and a Level 5 (director). Academic advisors appointed on Level 9 (senior officers) will follow a specialist pathway at the UFS, but also need to display competencies associated with the first level of the leadership pathway.

This means that academic advisors in the leadership pathway would need the competencies identified on leadership levels one and two to perform in their position. It is, however, important to consider which of these competencies would be necessary for the primary function of providing academic advice. It can be argued that a deputy director providing academic advice to a student would need the same competencies as a senior officer when in the role of academic advisor. Competencies associated with management functions, such as allocating university resources and setting up operational plans, are not required for providing a student with academic advice, but rather a competency associated with the managerial functions of the specific position. Therefore, the focus was on Level 1 and Level 2 competencies discussed when

completing a job analysis of the academic advisor role. The table below provides an overview of these competencies:

Table 3.3 Leadership pathway for academic advisors at the UFS (UFS, 2016)

Leadership pathway			
Level	Definition	Pheromones level	UFS Advisor Positions
Level 1 – Leading others	Plans, coordinates, and monitors the work of a team without formal supervisory responsibilities. This may include junior management, supervisors, and employees that need to make routine or process decisions.	Senior officer (post level 9) Chief officer (post level 8)	Senior academic advisors Marketing managers in the faculty Faculty managers Project coordinators with advising function
Level 2 – Leading division	Manages and appraises the performance of individual contributors; plans work; assigns and/or coordinates; monitors work for technical and/or timelines. It includes positions in middle management that need to make interpretive decisions. Short to medium-term thinking, short- to medium-range planning, and the translation of the strategic plan into operational plans to reach objectives. Allocates university resources.	Assistant director (post level 7) Deputy director (post level 6)	CTL manager: advising, access, and success Faculty managers Teaching and learning managers

3.6.2 Specialist pathways

At the UFS, the specialist pathway is followed by individuals who meet or exceed performance expectations, in addition to demonstrating the potential to perform at the next specialisation level. Consequently, these individuals are passionate, independent experts working in collaboration with others on a need basis (UFS, 2016). Academic advisors at the UFS are often seen as specialists in their academic field, as well as in academic advising. The UFS competency model allocates the same definition for competencies in levels two and three of the specialist pathways, regarding an employee who is a specialist in his /her role as a specialist within the university as well.

Employees across levels one, two, three, and four are appointed in academic advising roles. Academic advisors on level one are, however, either appointed in temporary contracts or fulfil more of an information-sharing and referral role in academic advising. NACADA refers to these advisors as first-year advisors (McClellan, Moser, & Waterreus, 2008) and they do not have the same competency requirements as a professional academic advisor. Professional academic advisors are thus appointed on levels two, three and four in the specialist pathway. The table below indicates the appointment of academic advisors in the various levels of specialist pathways:

Table 3.4. Specialist pathway for academic advisors at the UFS

Specialist Pathway			
Level	Definition	Peromnes level	UFS advisor positions
Level 1 – Functional Support	Specialist in a specific support function and/or generalist with limited experience. Operative, relative to schedules, plans, and specifications. Automatic decision-making.	Assistant officer (post level 13) Senior assistant officer (post level 12) Graduates	Advising interns Junior academic advisors (first-year advisors) Peer advisors
Level 2 – Functional specialist within discipline/area of expertise Level 3 – Functional specialist within the university	Is the functional specialist in a specific discipline/area of expertise (level 2) Is the functional specialist in a specific function within the university. Skilled, technical, and academically qualified. Routine and/or process decisions. Short- to medium-term thinking, short- to medium-range planning, and the translation of the strategic plan into operational plans to reach objectives.	Officer (post level 11/10) Senior officer (post level 9) Chief officer (post level 8) Assistant director (post level 7) Lecturers Senior lecturers	Academic advisors: CTL Academic advisors: faculty Faculty managers CTL manager: advising, access, and success Programme directors (lecturers and senior lecturers)

Level 4 – Functional specialist nationally	Is the functional specialist in a specific function nationally. Professionally qualified, and experienced specialist. Medium-term thinking, medium-range planning, and the translation of the strategic plan into shorter-term plans and objectives. Academic staff: NRF-rating C3-C.	Deputy director (post level 6) Professors Associate professors	Teaching and learning managers Programme directors (professors and associate professors)
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3.6.3 UFS broad competencies

The Human Resources Department at the UFS identified five broad competency categories that apply to anyone in a formal or leadership role. These five competencies should therefore be represented as the competency model for academic advisors across all levels at the UFS. Table 3.3 provides an overview of these five identified competencies for both the leadership and specialist pathways (UFS, 2016):

Table 3.5. UFS competencies for leadership and specialisation pathways

Competency:	Description:
Business acumen (Resource management, continued learning, university awareness)	<i>Leadership pathway:</i> Demonstrates exceptional judgment and applies resource allocation and management skills to optimise the university's operations and quality of service. Applies forward-looking human capital management principles, and sound financial and material resource management principles, and employs technology effectively. <i>Specialist pathway:</i> Knowledge of formal and informal systems, situations, procedures, and culture inside the university to identify potential problems and opportunities. Proactively takes advantage of opportunities to learn; applies new knowledge and skills appropriately. The ability to understand and apply information to contribute to the university's strategic plan.
Results-orientated (Collaboration, client/student service and support, adaptability, judgment, decision-making, and problem-solving)	<i>Leadership pathway:</i> Guides and inspires others to achieve results and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the team/division/unit/operation/university. Implements effective control measures. Fosters a climate of reasonable risk-taking. <i>Specialist pathway:</i> Demonstrates the ability to analyse situations and/or problems. Make timely and sound decisions. Construct plans and achieve optimal results.
Strategic thinking (Innovation, Change)	<i>Leadership pathway:</i> Demonstrates a broad view of the mission, strategic priorities, and role within the broader community. Understands and integrates stakeholder perspectives and takes action to improve the delivery of benefits and services to clients

management, and analytical thinking)	and/or students. Proactively identifies change issues and resistance to change. <i>Specialist pathway:</i> Generates and promotes new ideas and uses them to develop new or improved processes, methods, systems, solutions, products, or services. Facilitates the implementation and acceptance of change within the workplace. Works systematically and logically to develop and evaluate options and implement the most appropriate solution/action.
Leading (managing diversity, developing others, and teambuilding)	<i>Leadership pathway:</i> Demonstrates commitment to employees and the university. Empowers and trusts others. Builds high-performing teams. Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the team/division/unit/operation/university. <i>Specialist pathway:</i> Providing inspiration and guidance to others. Looking to the future and supporting others in understanding vision and direction. Fostering an environment that will encourage professional and personal growth and the transfer of knowledge to future talent.
Building coalitions (building partnerships, conflict management, influencing, and diplomatic sensitivity)	<i>Leadership pathway:</i> Demonstrates the ability to build coalitions internally and externally. Identifies opportunities and takes action to build partnerships and relationships between one's area and other areas, teams, units, departments, or faculties, to achieve the strategic objectives. <i>Specialist pathway:</i> Implies understanding other people. Convincing others in an honest, respectful, and sensitive manner to get them to go along with one's objectives. Involves working to build and maintain friendly, trustworthy, and open internal and external relationships and networks with people who are, or might become, important actors in achieving strategic related objectives.

3.7 TRIANGULATION OF EXISTING COMPETENCY MODELS

In order to provide an overview of what literature has identified as core competencies for the academic advising job, the researcher completed a comparative study between the competency models and frameworks discussed above. The NACADA core competencies are

underpinned by three foundational components of advising, namely: the conceptual component, the informational component, and the relational component. However, with the rising need for proactive advising and the incorporation of data analytics into their advising practice, the UFS further included a technological component to advisor training development. Later, a professional component was also added to advisor training, as most of the relational elements focus on relationship building and service of students, and it is clear that the professional development of academic advisors also needs to be accounted for. Therefore, the UFS focuses on five main components of academic advising, namely the conceptual, informational, relational, technological, and professional components. This view was also guided by the work of McClellan in 2007, who expanded the advisor training content model of Habley (1987) by adding a technological and personal component to advisor training. McClellan (2007) argued that, although the model of Habley represents an excellent foundation for developing advisor content, it lacks sufficient breadth and clarity to address all of the training needs of academic advisors.

The comparison between existing competency frameworks relevant to the advising profession was done according to the five components of advising used by the UFS. Furthermore, the comparison reflects on elements of competencies, such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviours, as previously identified by literature as elements of professional competencies. In addition, the discussion identifies advisor competencies in these models specifically aimed at the managerial functions of advisors.

3.7.1 Conceptual component

The conceptual component refers to advising as a construct, the theory related to academic advising, as well as how advising fits into the institutional vision, mission, and strategy. First and foremost, academic advisors should have a clear understanding of what academic advising is, and how it is integrated into the higher education system (McClellan, 2007). Advisors should understand the history and role of academic advising in higher education (NACADA, 2017b). Additionally, advisors should be able to define advising in their institutional context (UFS, 2018) and understand the elements, and core values of academic advising (NACADA, 2017c).

The UFS (2018) and literature (McClellan, 2007; NACADA 2017) agree that advising theories, approaches, models, and strategies form the foundation of the advising profession. Advisors should understand the advising vision, mission, and institutional outcomes (NACADA,

2017c) and student learning outcomes for the specific institution (UFS, 2018), and strive to support the institutional advising strategy (UFS, 2016; McClellan, 2007). McClellan also notes that advisors should clarify advisor and advisee responsibilities and privileges. Lastly, advisors should know the specific student context (UFS, 2018; McClellan, 2007) and the challenges students face (UFS, 2018). They should also be able to identify special needs (DHET, 2016), and create equitable and inclusive environments for students within their context (NACADA, 2017c).

3.7.2 Informational component

The informational component reflects the information advisors should know, both internally and externally to their institution, that advisors should be knowledgeable about, as well as information that provides context to their advising role, such as student needs. Firstly, the UFS competency framework (Department of Human Resources, UFS, 2016) indicates that employees should know the operational plans and objectives of the institution and should actively contribute to the institutional strategic plan (UFS, 2016). Similarly, NACADA states that the advisor should be familiar with the vision, mission, values, and culture of the institution (NACADA, 2017c).

Current frameworks emphasise the importance of advisors being able to identify the key stakeholders who form part of the institutional advising network and support the strategic objectives of advising for the institution (DHET, 2016; NACADA, 2017c; UFS, 2016). Additionally, advisors should know how to navigate this advising network and refer students in need of support to these stakeholders (UFS, 2018; Educor, 2022). To steer the advising network, advisors should have knowledge of the formal and informal systems of the institution (UFS, 2016).

NACADA and Educor (2022) agree that faculty advisors especially have to be well-informed on curriculum, programmes, degree choices, modules, and other academic requirements and options (NACADA, 2017c; Educor, 2022). This would require academic advisors to also be sufficiently academically qualified (UFS, 2016). In conjunction with this, advisors should be knowledgeable and adhere to institutional policies, rules, procedures, and regulations (NACADA, 2017c).

External to the institution, advisors should have knowledge of the legal guidelines of academic advising practice, such as privacy regulations and confidentiality (NACADA, 2017b; DHET, 2016), social justice (DHET, 2016), and legislation related to employment, education, and

training (DHET, 2016). The framework for career development further elaborates that advisors who provide career advice should know where to find career-related information, including financial aid, postgraduate and post-school opportunities, writing centres, national certificates, rewrite centre schedules, labour market information, skills in high demand, salary scales, national qualifications framework, career pathing information, learnerships, internships, volunteer opportunities, and trends in occupational shifts (DHET, 2016). As career advising forms a crucial part of a developmental advising approach, this applies to most advisors.

Apart from the information internally and externally to the institution, advisors should have a good knowledge foundation of the population they serve. Advisors should have experience in study success and support (Educor, 2022), and continuously study theory related to the context and experiences of their students (DHET, 2016) so that they can identify gaps or challenges (Educor, 2022) through needs analyses (DHET, 2016) in students' learning experiences and provide the required support (Educor, 2022; UFS, 2018).

NACADA (2017) adds that advisors should understand the characteristics, needs, and experiences of the major and emerging student, as well as differences relating to gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and physical and mental capacity (DHET, 2016). Lastly, the career development framework (DHET, 2016) agrees that practitioners should be sensitive toward the special needs of students and be able to refer students to service providers that provide support in special needs and disability training.

3.7.3 Relational component

The relational element refers to advising competencies related to building lasting and trusting relationships with students, internal and external stakeholders, and colleagues. Firstly, NACADA (2017) indicates that advisors should develop a personal philosophy for themselves. Although NACADA identifies this competency as a relational element, the UFS (2018) has included this in their professional component of advising.

A large portion of advising comprises providing information and communicating with students and university stakeholders (McClellan, 2007). The Career Development Framework (DHET, 2016) therefore indicates that advisors providing career advice should have an understanding of the interaction of various life roles of adults. Advisors should have knowledge of

ethical issues regarding telephonic, email, and chatroom communication, advice, guidance, and information sharing, as well as issues relating to providing career information to individuals and groups (DHET, 2016).

Several skills are important for advisors to build lasting trusting relationships in their work, namely communication (NACADA, 2017b), listening, questioning, interviewing, and summarising (DHET, 2016; McClellan, 2007); planning an advising session or intervention (UFS, 2016; NACADA, 2017b; Educor, 2022); networking and establishing work relationships (UFS, 2016; DHET, 2016); cultural awareness (NACADA, 2017c; DHET, 2016); rapport-building (NACADA, 2017c; DHET, 2016); and referral skills (Educor, 2022; UFS, 2018). Others include teaching, transfer of information, and promoting student understanding and logic (NACADA, 2017c); facilitation (NACADA, 2017c; DHET, 2016) and presentation skills (DHET, 2016) and problem-solving (DHET, 2016), decision-making (NACADA, 2017c; Educor, 2022), meaning-making, and goal-setting skills (Educor, 2022).

The relational component does not only include knowledge and skills, but also includes a variety of attitudes and beliefs, values, personal characteristics, and abilities associated with good advising. The UFS competency framework (Department of Human Resources, UFS, 2016) highlights that the employee should strive for quality of service. The career development framework also accentuates the importance of excellence when providing career-related advice. In addition to excellence, advisors should be trustworthy (UFS, 2016), show commitment to the institution and other employees (UFS, 2016), and maintain an interactive environment encouraging mutual trust and open communication (Educor, 2022; DHET, 2016). They should also promote a community of practice (UFS, 2016) and a collaborative work environment (DHET, 2016).

When working with students, advisors should show empathy (DHET, 2016), empower and guide students to take responsibility for their academic success, and help them become independent reflective thinkers (Educor, 2022). Advisors should also be perceptive to the appearance, mood, attitude, and behaviour of students, and be aware of aspects of diversity, such as culture, values, skills, attributes, and circumstances (DHET, 2016).

In addition, Haley (2016) notes that many of the best practices in academic advising seem to require a significant aptitude for emotional intelligence. This researcher argues that emotional intelligence mediates that relational component of advising. Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee

(2002) describe emotional intelligence as two areas of competence, namely personal competence and social competence, each with the following associated capabilities:

Personal competence: Capabilities which determine how we manage ourselves. This includes self-awareness (emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence) as well as self-management (emotional-self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, and optimism).

Social Competence: Describes capabilities that determine how we manage relationships. This includes social awareness (empathy, organisational awareness, and service orientation) as well as relationship management (inspiration leadership, influence, developing others, change catalyst, conflict management, and teamwork and collaboration).

As relationship building is key to providing quality academic advice, it can be argued that many of the competencies in emotional intelligence are needed for good advising. Haley (2016) agrees that skills such as strong communication, problem-solving, and rapport-building require emotional intelligence, and are critical to the relational component of advising.

3.7.4 Technological component

Proactive advising approaches are becoming increasingly critical to identifying student needs in the advising process, and therefore the technological component is becoming increasingly important in the advising role (UFS, 2018). With innovation being an important competency at the UFS (2016), advisors are encouraged to integrate technology into their advising practices. Firstly, advisors should be familiar with information systems applicable to relevant advising roles (NACADA, 2017c; McClellan, 2007). Secondly, advisors should strive to research and develop new or improved processes, methods, systems, solutions, products, or services (UFS, 2016).

3.7.5 Professional component

Academic advisors should be knowledgeable about ethical principles, such as respect, honesty, sensitivity (UFS, 2016), and confidentiality (Educor, 2022) and adhere to ethical codes

associated with the practice of advising (DHET, 2016). The career development framework indicates that practitioners should also understand the limits and boundaries to their scope of practice as well as the copyright regulations. Furthermore, advisors should proactively take advantage of the opportunity to learn and grow (UFS, 2016; McClellan, 2007), and be knowledgeable about decision-making theories and models (DHET, 2016). These frameworks agree that, to maintain a professional advising practice (DHET, 2016), they would also need skills, such as strategic thinking and planning (UFS, 2016), decision making (UFS, 2016; NACADA, 2017b; DHET, 2016; Educor, 2022), research skills (UFS, 2016; Educor, 2022), problem-solving skills (UFS, 2016), persuasion (UFS, 2016), and case-management skills (DHET, 2016). McClellan (2007) adds that advisors should be knowledgeable about their values, stress and emotions, and engage in self-assessment, self-regulation and growth. Advisors must be self-aware and have good self-knowledge (McClellan, 2007).

3.8 SUMMARY

Identifying the key competencies associated with a job helps employers with focused selection, recruitment, training, and development, as well as performance management of individuals within the particular job. Competencies are often also the measure used for performance evaluation in a particular job role. A competency model for academic advisors, tailored for the South African context, can further help to compare the roles and responsibilities of academic advisors on different job levels within the organisation, and solidify the expectancy of an academic advisor.

Although there is currently no competency model for academic advisors in South Africa, a variety of models and frameworks are available that can provide a starting point to develop such. The researcher completed a literature review to compare these models, and skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours associated with professional advisors. These competencies were discussed in terms of the conceptual, informational, relational, technological, and professional components of advising. The competencies identified may be used as a reference to develop a contextualised academic advising competency model for the UFS.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to provide some insight into how this study was conducted. The main philosophical assumption of the study is explained. This is followed by an explanation of the sampling method, as well as the group of participants chosen for this study. Information on sample size and population size, and how this relates to guidelines provided in theory, are outlined. The demographical characteristics of the sample group are shared. Various methods employed to conduct this study are delineated, and reasons for using these methods are provided. The researcher describes the data analysis and validation methods employed, as well as the ethical considerations of this study. The section concludes with a summary.

4.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

A knowledge gap exists on the competencies needed for professional academic advisors in South Africa, and this study specifically, at the UFS. This study was therefore aimed to identify the core competencies and propose a competency framework for academic advisors within the South African milieu.

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This qualitative study was conducted within the domain of the constructivist/interpretivist research paradigm (Patel, 2015). The ontology of this study is based on the notion that no single reality exists on the competencies important for academic advisors, but rather that reality is created by the individuals who work within academic advising. Within this research paradigm, the purpose of this study was to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding academic advisors and to develop a competency framework for academic advisors in the context of the UFS. The researcher followed a qualitative approach to collect multiple perspectives on the competencies to include in a competency framework for academic advisors in the South African context.

According to Creswell (2009), “if a concept or phenomenon needs to be understood because little research has been done on it, then it merits a qualitative approach” (p. 18).

The epistemology of the study moved from the standpoint that individuals seek to understand the world in which they live and work and that the researcher must interpret this reality through data collection (Patel, 2015). Furthermore, individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences. The meanings of individuals are varied, leading the researcher to discover a complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. Constructivism aims at relying as much as possible on participants’ views of the situation being studied (Creswell, 2014), as the shared experiences of academic advisors play a key role in this study. Creswell and Clark (2011) explain that when participants share their understanding, they speak from meaning shaped by their personal history and interaction with others. Questions asked in the constructivist approach are broad and general, so that participants can integrate their meaning. Also, constructivism leads to the construction of theory (Creswell & Clark, 2011), in this case, a competency framework.

Furthermore, this study followed an inductive (bottom-up) research approach. This approach is characterised by theory as the endpoint. The researcher collected data from a variety of resources, including theory, frameworks, models, and interviews, and then triangulated through a process of building themes and data categories into a generalised model or theory (Patton, 2001; Creswell, 2014).

Firstly, a literature review was conducted to explore and compare existing competency models and frameworks relevant to academic advising. The researcher compared elements from existing competency models related to the advising profession and integrated them into a preliminary framework of advisor competencies.

Secondly, job analysis and critical incident interviews were completed on academic advisors who work in various departments at the UFS. The job analysis and critical incident techniques comprised semi-structured interviews. The researcher gathered detailed information from participants and then sorted information into categories and themes. The themes were developed into broad patterns, theories, or generalisations that were then compared with existing literature on the topic (Creswell, 2014). Schwandt (as cited in Creswell, 2014) argues that no qualitative study begins with pure observation and that the prior conceptual structure composed of their method provides the starting point for all observations. This is true, as a researcher cannot

study a topic they have absolutely no knowledge of as a point of reference. Thus, a literature review was conducted before gathering the data. However, the literature review did not inform the questions asked in the interviews, as this included a job analysis and critical incident technique.

Thirdly, qualitative data gathered from the interviews were analysed using qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is a method used in qualitative research to analyse written, verbal, or visual communication messages (Elo & Knygäs, 2008). This research method follows a systematic and objective process to describe and quantify qualitative phenomena. It is used to test a theory or create a deeper understanding of data by identifying underlying themes and categories and making replicable and valid inferences from data in their context, to provide knowledge, insight, and representation of facts (Mayring, 2000; Elo & Knygäs, 2008).

Content analysis can be used in an inductive or deductive way (Elo & Knygäs, 2008), and in the case of this study, the researcher used both approaches. The researcher first followed an inductive approach of examining the interview data, identifying 64 themes that arose from the interview transcripts. Following this, the researcher applied a deductive approach by sorting the themes into categories according to skills, attitudes, behaviours, and values as the elements of competencies, and then further clustering these into the five components of advising, as identified by the UFS (conceptual, informational, relational, technological, and professional). A deductive approach to content analysis is often used by researchers to test data against existing theories, frameworks, and models (Elo & Knygäs, 2008).

After completing the content analysis, data in the literature review and interviews were combined through a process of triangulation. Triangulation of data refers to using multiple data-gathering techniques to investigate the same phenomenon. This can be interpreted as a means of mutual confirmation of measures and validation of findings (Lune & Berg, 2017). Triangulation can represent a variety of data, investigators, theories, and methods (Lune & Berg, 2017).

In this study, the researcher gathered data from advisors in multiple contexts (such as faculty advisors, general advisors, advising managers, and access programme advisors), used multiple methods (literature study, job analysis, and critical incidents) to gather data, as well as studying various competency models from a variety of perspectives (Fielding & Fielding, as cited in Lune & Berg, 2017).

Data gathered from interviews and the literature study was combined into a single competency framework for academic advisors. The researcher aimed to not only combine data, but study them in relation to one another as well as in relation to the role of an academic advisor in the UFS context.

To validate the data, the competency model was shared with academic advisors at the UFS for verification. Lastly, the final competency framework was compiled and presented in the findings of this study (Chapter 6).

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study followed a qualitative research design. The focus of the study was to get a rich and detailed understanding of the subjective experiences, beliefs, and concepts around competencies needed for professional academic advisors. The researcher strived to gain in-depth knowledge of the competencies needed for academic advisors in the specific context of South African higher education since this topic has been under-researched, and because academic advising is currently a career that enjoys considerable focus in South African higher education institutions.

4.5 SELECTION OF TEST PERSONS

One of the most significant differences between quantitative and qualitative research designs is the size of the sample (Patten, 2017; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2016). The qualitative inquiry focuses on a smaller sample that is selected purposefully (Patton, 2001) rather than generalisation to the larger population (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2016). This study did not focus on empirical generalisations, but rather on in-depth comprehension.

To achieve this, the researcher used a non-probability sampling method, purposefully selecting academic advisors from all departments at the UFS to participate in the study. By using the purposeful sampling method, the researcher aimed to select information-rich cases that could be studied in-depth, and that illuminated the research questions under study (Patton, 2001; Coetzee & Schreuder, 2016). Academic advisors and advising management staff across various

departments and in a variety of advisor roles were used as participants in semi-structured interviews, as they were thought to have the best insight into what was expected of them in their positions (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2016). In addition, these participants could provide valuable information in answering the primary research question regarding the competencies critical for academic advisors at the UFS.

In addition to getting an in-depth understanding, the researcher strived to get as many perspectives within the UFS advising community as possible. Consequently, the strategy for purposeful sampling applied to select participants purposefully was maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2001). This purposeful sampling strategy allowed the researcher to capture and describe central themes of advisor skills that cut across a great deal of variation amongst advisors in different positions. The weakness of this method could have been that the researcher could have had a great deal of heterogeneity within a small group and individual cases might have been very different from one another. On the other hand, this was also advantageous, as similarities, therefore, indicated the core competencies of advisors across the UFS.

A total of 10 advisors on various levels, from various departments, and in a variety of roles were purposefully selected and asked to participate in this study. This included academic advisors from CTL, teaching and learning managers in faculties, programme directors whose primary role was advising, and faculty-appointed advisors. The sample size in qualitative research is not determined by a statistical ratio such as the guidelines noted by Sekaran (2003). Rather, the qualitative sample size is determined by the richness of data that can be collected from participants as the aim of qualitative research is not to generalise, but to get an in-depth knowledge of the construct researched. This study aimed at getting an in-depth understanding of the competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours) associated with the academic advising role at the UFS. Data gathered in interviews was also not the only source of information, but was used in conjunction with theory. To validate the data, the researcher shared preliminary findings with research participants again, so that they could verify if the findings correlated with their views.

The selected sample size was determined by the number of advisors, and the variety of advisors appointed in each faculty or department. The academic advisor population at the UFS consists of a network of 75 academic advisors. Whilst some of these individuals are specifically appointed to fulfil an academic advising role, others are appointed as faculty managers, teaching and learning managers, and programme directors. Although more individuals provide basic ad-

hoc academic advice to students at certain intervals during the year, these are the individuals for whom academic advising forms part of their job description, and therefore their performance management. Consequently, 10 participants were purposefully selected from this population group for critical incident interviews. Although small, the sample size was sufficient for the intended purposes of this study (Patton, 2001), as the researcher reached saturation of data after the 8th interview, when no significant new perspectives were added by advisors. Academic advisors from CTL were also included in the study to allow for variation in advisor views and roles.

4.5.1 Data saturation

Not reaching data saturation can hamper the validity of the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Guest, Bunce, & Johnson (as cited in Fusch & Ness, 2015) address the question of the number of interviews that would be enough to reach data saturation, by indicating that as little as six interviews can be sufficient, depending on the sample size. The sample size at the UFS consisted of 10 academic advisors across all faculties, which represented a cohort of 75 advisors across campus. Dibley (2011) indicates that data saturation in qualitative research is not calculated on quantity, but rather on the quality of the data. Data saturation is reached when enough information has been gathered to replicate the study; when the ability has been reached to obtain new information; when further coding is no longer feasible; and when the researcher is satisfied with the richness (quality) and thickness (quantity) of the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The researcher was satisfied with the richness of data collected, as well as the amount of data collected from the 10 participants. Although the study only had 10 participants, data saturation was reached at the 8th interview, when participants were no longer adding new insights and views to the data. In addition, the participants alluded to most aspects mentioned in theory as important competencies for advising.

4.6 DATA GATHERING

Data was gathered to address research questions that could not be addressed in a literature review. Dalton (as cited in Keller, 2016) identified specific steps for completing the process of competency modelling. The following diagram provides an overview of the process of

competency modelling implemented, as guided by the steps identified by Dalton (as cited in Keller, 2016):

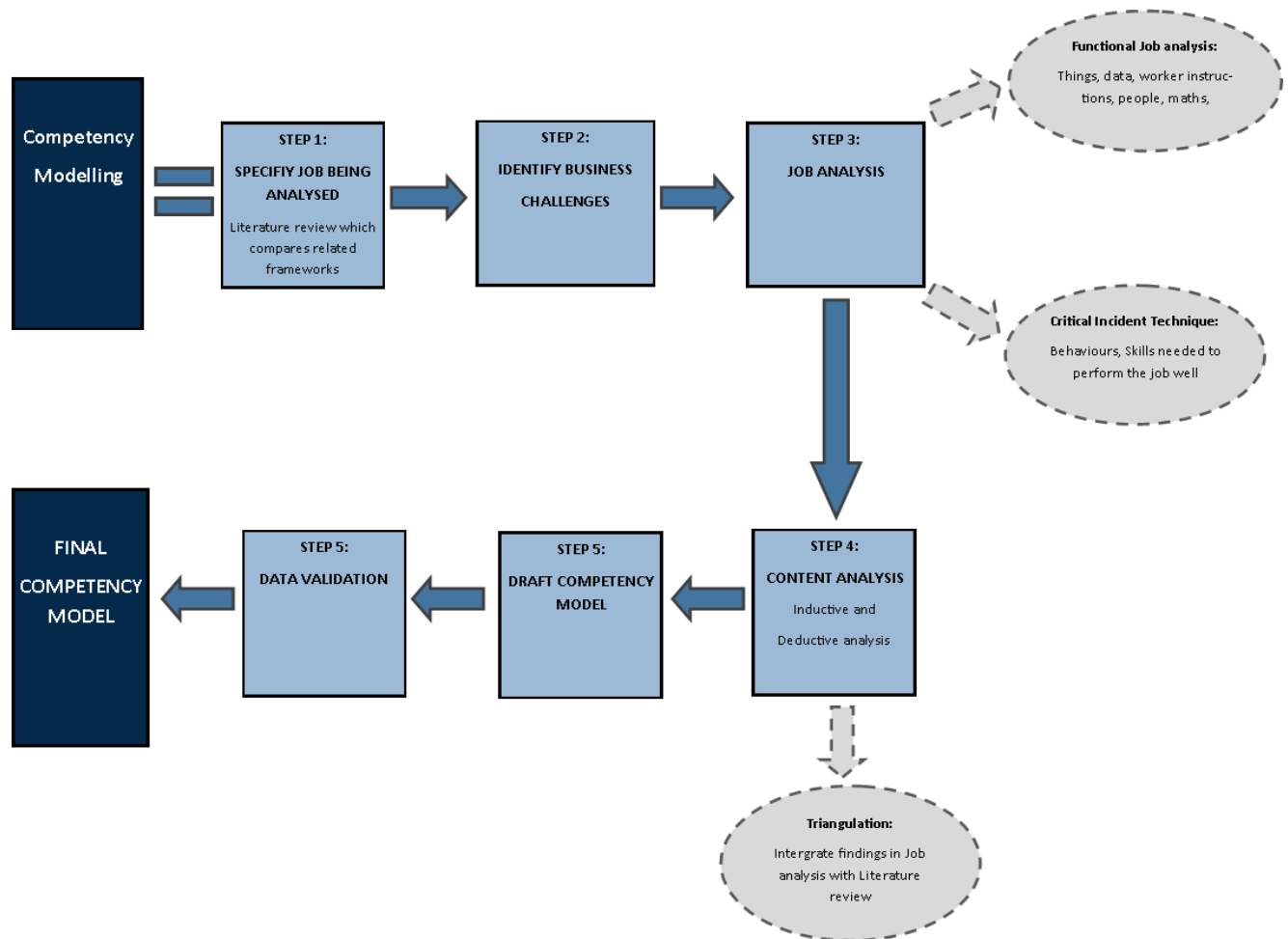


Figure 4.1. Process of Competency modelling (Dalton, as cited in Keller, 2016)

The literature review included an in-depth study on academic advising as a construct, as well as a practice. Academic advising was studied in relation to other similar practices, such as counselling, teaching, and career development. A variety of frameworks related to advising was studied. (Refer to Chapter 2 for more information on this step.) Following the literature review, business challenges were identified about the job of an academic advisor. Some of these challenges include the variety of roles those academic advisors fulfil in their jobs, as well as the variety of departments they reside in. However, all academic advisors at the UFS aim to achieve

the main objective of promoting student success. The following section provides an overview of the implementation of the rest of the steps, as identified by Dalton.

4.6.1 Job analysis and critical incident interviews

The purpose of a job analysis is to understand the behavioural requirements of work. By completing a job analysis on an academic advisor position, the researcher wanted to understand the importance of tasks related to advising, how they are carried out, and the human attributes necessary to carry them out successfully (Dalton, 1997; Landy & Conte, 2010). These authors define a job analysis as a systematic study of tasks, duties, and responsibilities of a job and the knowledge, skills abilities, experience, and personal characteristics needed to perform it (Dalton, 1997; Landy & Conte, 2010). Industrial psychologists use job analysis to better understand what a particular job entails. A job analysis further provides direction to industrial psychologists on how to select the right candidate for the job and the behaviours to be rewarded during remuneration and performance appraisals. The researcher used interviews as an instrument to conduct job analyses on academic advisors at the UFS.

The interview is a well-known method for data gathering in qualitative research and provides a more natural way of interacting with people than questionnaires (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2016). The aim of the interviews was not to present data that could be generalised to the larger population, but rather to gather rich information that provided the researcher with the necessary information to answer the research questions at hand (Creswell, 2014; Creswell, 2009). Semi-structured, personal interviews were conducted with 10 academic advisors at the University of the Free State. Each interview was conducted face-to-face. This type of interview is characterised by an interview schedule with a list of key topics prepared in advance (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2016). Questions in interviews were derived from the critical incident technique and theory around a functional job analysis. A possible disadvantage of this interview method is that face-to-face interviews are time-consuming and costly, and the interviewer could potentially influence how questions are answered with their behaviour and appearance. In contrast, this method has the advantage of allowing the interviewer to get in-depth information, as well as allowing the participants to ask for clarification if they do not understand a question (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2016). An audio recording was made of each interview, and the interviews were transcribed afterwards. All interview recordings and transcripts are kept on a password-protected computer.

The interviews aimed to gather as much information as possible on the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours associated with academic advising as a profession. Theoretical guidelines on how to complete a functional job analysis were used to guide interview questions. Interview questions included questions about the amount of advising done in the specific position, as well as the purpose of the specific position, key responsibility areas of the academic advisor, the experience needed for the job, knowledge needed to complete daily tasks, as well as skills, behaviours, and values associated with good performance in the specific position. The interview protocol used is shared in Appendix E.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data in this study were analysed through qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. Researchers quantify and analyse the presence, meanings, and relationships of such words and concepts, then make interpretations about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part. Audio recordings of the 10 interviews were transcribed, after which the text was organised into themes. The process of content analysis was guided by the steps identified by Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017):

4.7.1 Inductive analysis

The first process of the data analysis involved an inductive approach where interview data from the functional job analysis and critical incident questions were coded through content analysis. All interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim by the researcher so that written text could be closely examined. The transcripts were uploaded onto the NVIVO computer system for the coding process. The content was read and re-read to make sure the researcher understood what participants added, and in instances where the researcher was not sure of the meaning of the data, participants were asked for clarification. The researcher studied the data and identified 64 initial codes that emerged from participant responses. In response to the second research objective of this study, the codes were then categorised into themes, such as skills, knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, values, and personal characteristics associated with good advising practice

which were identified as components of competencies. A list of codes with their frequencies is attached as Appendix F. The results are discussed in this format in Chapter 5.

4.7.2 Deductive analysis

Following the inductive approach, the researcher also engaged with the data deductively by building theme structures from the qualitative data gathered using the critical incident technique and functional job analysis. The 64 codes identified in the data were allocated to the following themes, as these were identified as elements of competencies: skills, knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, values, and other personal characteristics.

The researcher then triangulated data from the job analysis with competencies identified by existing competency models and literature and categorised themes according to the five components of advising, as identified by literature, since these are currently also the components that form the basis of professional academic advising training at the UFS. A draft competency framework for academic advisors was compiled and validated (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). The draft competency model reflected the professional competencies identified by literature and presented in Chapter 2 of this study, as well as additional competencies identified by the 10 UFS academic advisors during the job analysis process. Integration of these two sources is provided in section 6.4 of Chapter 6.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations relating to both qualitative and quantitative research. Whilst research aims to gather data for the greater good, in ethical consideration, it stands in contrast to participants' rights. Ethics keeps the balance between doing good and avoiding harm. Using tried and tested ethical principles can help to protect the rights of participants (Orb *et al.*, 2001).

Due to the nature of the research, ethical considerations appear different for qualitative research than for quantitative research. Ethical failure in qualitative research is much less common than in quantitative research. Qualitative research investigates people and their behaviour in their natural settings. Part of qualitative research is the relationship between the researcher and the participant. For qualitative research, researchers need to engage with participants to get access to the data they require. A participant's willingness to participate and to

share his or her experiences will be influenced by this social interaction with the researcher. Should this encounter not go well, it can inhibit the collection of data. The researcher needs to be prepared to be confronted with ethical dilemmas that they did not anticipate.

Three types of problems can occur during a qualitative study. Firstly, as mentioned above, the relationship between the researcher and the participant. Secondly, the researcher's subjective interpretations of the data could be clouded by the researcher's preferences, experiences, beliefs, and values. And thirdly, the design of the research itself (Ramos, 1989, as cited in Orb *et al.*, 2001).

The process of data collection: As stressed before, the relationship between researcher and participant needs to strike a good balance for the participant to willingly disclose the information required. The researcher was familiar with the participants in this study, as she also works as an academic advisor at the UFS. This was beneficial to this study, as participants felt comfortable sharing their perceptions and views with the researcher. However, the researcher had to be aware of familiarity and had to ensure that it did not influence the way questions were asked during the interview. To mitigate this, an interview schedule was used to guide interview questions, and the researcher recorded all interviews verbatim. This relationship encouraged disclosure and trust, and the participants were also made aware of any potential ethical issues.

Beneficence: Beneficence refers to doing good for others and preventing harm. Part of beneficence is understanding the potential consequences of a participant's identity being revealed. Patten (2017) states that participants must be protected from both physical and psychological harm. Confidentiality and anonymity can be breached by the legal system when data is subpoenaed for a court case. This is another reason why all data and steps taken to attain data must be noted so that a clear audit trail can be established. In an attempt to mitigate possible harm due to breach of confidentiality, the biographical details of specific participants did not include their departments, as this would help the reader identify who the participants were. However, one participant might be easily recognisable in this study, as there is only one appointed manager at CTL. This risk was discussed with the participant before the interview commenced but the participant consented to still take part in the study.

Justice: The principle of justice has to do with equal share and fairness. Justice prevents the exploitation and abuse of participants (Orb *et al.*, 2001). Whilst trying to implement the principle of justice, it should not further burden already burdened participants.

Confidentiality and anonymity: Confidentiality refers to the participant's right to privacy (Patten, 2017). Several considerations need to be kept in mind when working with qualitative research as participants are sharing their personal experiences. When qualitative research is conducted with the idea of it being published, pseudonyms for participants are highly recommended. Also, should the participant be part of a very small community, selective distribution concerning the region should be considered to make sure that the participant cannot be easily identified (Orb et al., 2001). Anonymity means that the subject remains nameless. Participants in this study were not anonymous to the researcher, but strict guidelines of confidentiality were followed in that data is shared anonymously and participants will not be identifiable to others (Berg, 2009).

Autonomy: With qualitative research, autonomy is protected by informed consent—striking a balance between over-informing and under-informing. Participants can also exercise their right to voluntarily take part in the study. Thus, participants also have the right to cease their participation in the study at any time. Consent has been described as a negotiation of trust that needs ongoing renegotiation. (Orb et al., 2001). All participants consented to take part in the study before the commencement of the study, and the research proposal and ethical clearance documents were shared with them before the interviews. Initially, the researcher asked 12 participants to take part in the study, after which two participants retracted their participation in the study. The researcher continued with the 10 participants who consented to take part in the study.

Implications for researchers: Conducting qualitative research in your workplace or somewhere familiar already allows for several issues and ethical considerations to arise (Orb et al., 2001). The researcher stands to gain better results due to being familiar with the situation and/or being trusted by the participants. It is also true that the familiar researcher may get less information. Participants may feel obligated to provide information and as a result, hold back certain information. Conducting research somewhere else may take longer and require more effort, but the results may be more objective (Orb et al., 2001). In the case of this study, the researcher also works as an academic advisor, and shares a department with some of the participants in this study. The researcher gathered sufficient information from the participants and triangulated all data with literature and existing competency frameworks to ensure the inclusion of a variety of perspectives. In addition, the researcher reached data saturation on the information gathered from the participants.

Credibility: When findings of the qualitative research are presented back to the community on which it was based, do they feel that the findings are accurate and representative of their experience? Several steps can be taken to ensure more credible findings, such as engaging with the participants over a longer period, spending extra time examining divergent cases, and comparing findings with different sources and researchers. (Treharne & Riggs, 2015). To verify the credibility of the data collected in this study, the researcher shared the draft competency framework with academic advisors who participated in the interviews for validation. Changes and recommendations from these academic advisors were then further taken into consideration and added to the final competency framework proposed.

Transferability: Transferability asks the question of whether the findings apply to other contexts. By providing detailed information on participants' responses as well as the researcher's findings, transferability can be evaluated. When findings are in line with the experiences of the individual evaluating the findings, this individual will generally see the findings as transferable (Treharne & Riggs, 2015). Since all data was collected from academic advisors at the UFS, the transferability of the data may be a shortcoming in this study. To bridge this gap, however, the data collected by the critical incident technique and functional job analysis were compared and triangulated with literature on existing competency frameworks related to advising in South Africa, and internationally.

Dependability: Dependability indicates that, should someone else undertake the same research, they need to be able to produce similar findings. Other researchers can also follow the audit trail generated by the original researcher to see if they reach the same conclusions (Treharne & Riggs, 2015). The researcher aimed at collecting multiple perspectives from multiple academic advisors in a variety of positions and departments at the UFS to help obtain an overall perspective of academic advisors at the UFS. All interviews were also documented should the researcher want to revisit comments made during the interviews. To further mitigate this, the researcher engaged with the data multiple times during the study and verified if the same conclusions were then reached.

Confirmability: Confirmability refers to making sure the results are the product of the participant's responses and not the researchers' biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:290, as cited in Treharne & Riggs, 2015). The researcher tried to stay neutral during the interviews, without adding possible biased views to the data. Furthermore, the

researcher engaged in a process of data validation to ensure that the interpretations of the data were correct.

Authenticity: Research should include a wide range of differing viewpoints on the topic. The researcher used the purposeful sampling method to ensure that participants add a variety of different views on academic advising at the UFS.

Respect: In qualitative research, the researcher's respect for their participants should be one of the main considerations while conducting the research, as it demonstrates esteem for participants and their contribution (O'Grady, 2016). Actions that were taken to indicate respect for participants included, but were not limited to, courtesy, listening sensitively to the needs of participants, and being truthful. The researcher strived to be respectful of the participants' views at all times.

Informed consent: Researchers require permission to collect data from individuals at all times. Permission to interview advisors at the UFS was obtained from the UFS (Berg, 2009), as well as the participants themselves. Creswell and Clark (2011) indicate that obtaining consent from the relevant organisation protects the rights of the individuals participating in the research study, as well as assessing the risk and potential harm of the research to these individuals. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethical Clearance Committee of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences before starting to collect the data (Refer to Appendix D). In addition, informed consent was obtained from participants before any interviews took place. In obtaining consent from the participants, the researcher informed participants of the general purpose of the research, what they could expect from the research, the potential benefits to them and others, and the potential harm. They were also guaranteed that they could withdraw at any time without penalty, and were informed of how the data would be collected and shared (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Berg, 2009; Patten, 2017).

Securing data: Securing data refers to the rigorous handling and storing of records and data. Berg (2009) indicates that researchers must take intentional precautions so that information does not accidentally fall into the wrong hands or become public. All information gathered from participants during the interviews is stored securely on a password-protected computer. No data, apart from the findings of this study, were or will be shared with anyone except the researcher.

4.9 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of how this qualitative study was conducted. Methodologies and processes were discussed. This included sampling methods, the number of participants, data collection, data analysis, and reporting. The section concluded with a discussion of the ethical considerations taken into account when the study was conducted. The next chapter provides an overview of the results as well as a discussion of the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to present the results of this study, as well as discuss the results following the competencies identified by the literature in Chapter 3. Firstly, the researcher discusses the results obtained through the process of completing a job analysis for academic advisors at the UFS. Secondly, the discussion integrates findings from the semi-structured interviews and the literature study completed on competencies associated with academic advising. This discussion is structured according to the five components of academic advising as identified by the UFS and discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. Lastly, the reader is guided into Chapter 6, where the final competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS is shared.

5.2 RESULTS OF JOB ANALYSIS

As described in the research methodology in Chapter 4, competency modelling includes firstly specifying the job being analysed, followed by a job analysis. Academic advising was specified through a literature review in chapters 2 and 3 of this study, followed by the job analysis performed on 10 academic advising positions at the UFS. The job analysis was completed through semi-structured interviews, which included both the functional job analysis and the critical incident technique. This was followed by an inductive qualitative content analysis, the results of which are shared below. After providing the reader with a descriptive overview of the participants in the interviews, the researcher discusses the findings.

5.2.1 Participant profiles

A total of 10 semi-structured, individual interviews were conducted with academic advisors on the Bloemfontein and South campuses of the UFS. Each interview took approximately one hour to complete. Nine of these participants are situated at the Bloemfontein campus, and one on the South campus. No academic advisors from the QwaQwa campus were interviewed due to the accessibility to these staff members at the time of the interviews.

In the interest of keeping the identities of advisors who participated in this study anonymous, the researcher provided each participant with a unique pseudonym. Pseudonyms provided to participants also reflected the different perspectives of advisors within the different roles they fulfil in the university community (i.e., Central Advisor 1, 2, 3, and 4; Faculty Advisor 1, 2, and 3, Faculty Manager 1, Teaching and Learning Manager 1, and General Manager 1).

Of the 10 participants, the genders included nine female and one male advisor. In addition, the racial profile consisted of five black and five white advisors. The demographical characteristics significant to this study are not gender and race, but rather the specific advising role of the participant, the proportion of the participants' job dedicated to advising, years in advising, as well as the level at which the participant advises, as these aspects would influence their perspectives on advising competencies. Table 5.1 provides an overview of the participants according to these characteristics.

Table 5.1 Participant profiles

Name	Gender	Advising role	Advising%	Years advising	Advising level
Faculty Manager 1	Female	Faculty manager	80-100%	≥10 years	Managerial
Faculty Advisor 1	Female	Faculty advisor/marketer	60–80%	≥10 years	Senior advisor
Teaching and Learning Manager 1	Female	Teaching and learning manager	20-40%	4-5 years	Managerial

Faculty Advisor 2	Female	Faculty advisor	40-60%	3-4 years	Senior advisor
General Manager 1	Female	Advising centre manager	80-100%	5-8 years	Managerial
Faculty Advisor 3	Female	Faculty advisor	60-80%	≥10 years	Senior advisor
Central Advisor 1	Female	General advisor	80-100%	2-3 years	Senior advisor
Central Advisor 2	Female	General advisor	20-40%	Less than a year	Grant coordinator and advisor
Central Advisor 3	Male	General advisor	60-80%	5-8 years	Senior advisor
Central Advisor 4	Female	General advisor	80-100%	5-8 years	Senior advisor

Table 5.1 indicates that the sample represented four central academic advisors and three faculty advisors. From leadership positions, one general academic advisor, one teaching and learning manager, and one faculty manager were included in the sample. This ensured that the researcher collected a variety of views between curriculum advisors, general academic advisors, junior and senior advisors, as well as advisors and advising managers.

Concerning advising roles, two of the advisors indicated that their job consisted of 20-40% academic advising responsibilities, whilst another indicated that 40-60% of her position involves

advising. Three of the 10 academic advisors indicated that 60-80% of their job includes advising responsibilities, and the last four indicated that 80-100% of their job revolved around academic advising responsibilities.

Of the 10 participants, one was appointed as an advisor the previous year, another has been advising between two and three years, whilst a third indicated having been advising between three and four years. One advisor has been advising for between four and five years. On the side of longer advising experience, three of the advisors indicated that they have been advising for more than 10 years, and another three indicated that they have been advising for between five and eight years.

Participants were purposefully selected to represent a variety of faculties and departments at the UFS so that different views could be taken into account to increase the generalisability of the institution. To maintain confidentiality, faculties are described in general, and not according to specific participants in this study. The following table indicates the faculty representation of participants.

Table 5.2. Faculty distribution of participants.

Faculty:	Participants:
Law	2
Humanities	1
Economic and Management Sciences	3
Education	1
Natural and Agricultural Sciences	0
Health Sciences	1
Theology	1

University Access Programme	1
Total:	10

Table 5.2 indicates the faculty distribution of participants. Two participants represented the Faculty of Law, while one participant advises in the Faculty of the Humanities. Three participants represented the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, while Education, Health Sciences, and Theology were each represented by one advisor. The last participant represents all faculties in the University Access Programme.

With regards to advisor training, all 10 academic advisors who participated have undergone the Academic Advising Professional Development programme (AAPD), which is currently used to train professional academic advisors nationally. This programme is offered at the UFS, and three of the participants in this study have acted as facilitators in the programme. The AAPD comprises a four-day academic advising training programme for full-time advisors, which consists of the five training components identified for academic advising, namely the conceptual, informational, relational, technological, and professional components (UFS, 2018).

5.2.2 Identification of codes

All interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim by the researcher so that the written text could be closely examined. All interview transcripts were uploaded onto the NVIVO computer system for the coding process. The researcher studied the data and identified 64 initial codes that emerged from participant responses. The researcher engaged iteratively with the codes, evaluating each instance against the meaning of each code as defined by the literature. Examples of the codes can be found in Appendix F, including the frequencies of the codes and the meaning of each code as defined by literature.

In response to the third research objective of this study, codes were then categorised into the subcomponents of a competency emergent from competency literature as being skills, knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, values, and personal characteristics associated with good advising practice. This then followed a deductive analysis where data was further categorised

according to the five components of academic advising as identified in Chapter 2. The codes identified in the interviews were triangulated with existing competency models related to advising and literature. The results are discussed in this format, as this forms the basis of existing competency frameworks for advising.

5.2.3 Code frequencies

Although the nature of this study is qualitative, frequencies in which advisors mentioned specific themes can provide valuable insight into how important these themes were regarded by this group of participants. A summary is provided on each theme of the frequency of codes. This adds an extra layer to qualitative data, as it can indicate how valuable the particular codes were to the participants in this study.

5.2.4 Codes identified in the job analysis

The researcher analysed the interview data from the job analysis to identify key knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and behaviours associated with good advising practices at the UFS. The following section discusses these results according to these identified themes.

5.2.4.1 Knowledge

This theme includes knowledge systems and information that advisors identified as necessary for the advising role. The most mentioned area of knowledge by participants were rules and regulations, which were mentioned 23 times. This included rules and regulations around appeals, which were mentioned five times. Secondly, the knowledge of higher education was mentioned 20 times. In conjunction with this, the participants mentioned 13 times that academic advisors should know the field of study in which they advise, as well as be knowledgeable of access requirements (mentioned twice) and registration information and processes (mentioned seven times). Furthermore, participants alluded to the role of advisors in curriculum and educational planning 17 times and referred to another nine instances regarding the importance for advisors to have curriculum knowledge about the courses and programmes they advise in.

Nine references were made specifically to curriculum knowledge being important in advising, while another nine references referred to the knowledge of student success skills.

Career advising as an important area of knowledge was mentioned 15 times, and assistance with degree choice specifically was mentioned in another four instances. Understanding student context was noted 10 times as being important. This view of advising was further exemplified in that it was mentioned 22 times that advisors need some form of knowledge in social sciences, relating advising particularly to psychology and social work. The following section takes a qualitative look at specific knowledge systems identified during the interviews as being important to professional academic advising.

Rules and regulations: Advisors help students navigate their educational journey, and should therefore know university and higher education policies, as well as the rules and regulations of the institution and faculty they advise in, specifically rules with regards to progression and student appeals, readmission, and exclusion. As mentioned by Central Advisor 3: *“Before you go anywhere with this student, you should consider what [does] the rules say. Before you even start engaging with that student on the way forward”*. Central advisor 4 agreed: *“but look, this is the rule that is there, so how can we now help you?”*. To add, Faculty Advisor 2 associated the bad behaviour of an advisor with not adhering to the rules and regulations, *“not adhering to progression rules,”* and *“not applying university policies, misguiding the students”*. Some of the policies mentioned as important included: progression regulations (Central Advisor 3), policies on assessment and plagiarism (T & L Manager 1), the assessment policy, and the residential period (General Manager 1). This also includes knowing the access requirements for degrees, as well as being informed on access and probation programmes. Eight of the participants referred to the importance of being knowledgeable about the institutional and faculty rulebooks, whilst three indicated the importance of policy and assessment documents (Central Advisor 1). Two advisors indicated the importance of keeping up with changes in the rules, and another indicated that an advisor should know the general rules of the institution. One advisor commented, *“Because that’s where our protection lies. Know our documents well”* (Teaching and Learning Manager 1).

Laws and governance: Participants agreed that laws and governance form part of the essential knowledge framework for professional advisors. Central Advisor 4 made the only reference to this: *“your external things in terms of legalities, POPI acts, human rights, the general external information sources that any higher education institution functions by. External resources*

like the POPI, human rights, legal acts, constitution, all of that. Your white papers, everything related to higher education”, while Central Advisor 1 indicated that laws “inform your advising practice”.

Higher education environment: Although all participants did not agree that the field of knowledge is needed for the advising job, all participants alluded to the importance of advisors having experience in higher education and knowing the higher education environment. This was mentioned 20 times, ranging from experience in working in higher education to being knowledgeable about the specific university. One advisor commented that: *“You will not be able to cope with this job if you don’t have much knowledge on what is happening on the campus itself”* (Central Advisor 3), while another noted that *“Something is happening every 5 seconds that we should know about”* (General Manager 1). However, this advisor indicated that this *“systematic knowledge”* can be learned on the job (General Manager 1). One of the faculty managers indicated that *“it would be very difficult to appoint someone from outside the university”* whilst a teaching and learning manager indicated that you get to know your working environment *“after appointment”* through training. But this teaching and learning manager agrees that advisors should at least have a tertiary qualification. An advisor from CTL agreed that academic advisors should have *“some form of background in working in higher education, any institute of higher learning”* (Central Advisor 1) whilst another CTL advisor alluded to two to three years of experience working with people, especially in higher education.

Knowledge of the field they advise in: Advisors commented that academic advisors should have good knowledge of the field of study they advise in. One advisor stated: *“it will help if you come from the same field, but not crucial”* (Faculty Manager 1). In addition, a teaching and learning manager noted that *“It will differ from faculty to faculty. In our faculty an academic advisor, it is good that our academic advisor understands and is from [the faculty]”*. This same participant also mentioned: *“[i]t’s a nice to have if the academic advisor knows something about the field”*.

Degree knowledge: Firstly, participants agreed that a professional academic advisor should have a higher education qualification. Six participants mentioned that a bachelor’s degree is needed; however, one advisor indicated that they think advising can be done without specialisation in a degree. Faculty Manager 1, Teaching and Learning Manager 1, and Faculty Advisor 2 agreed that advisors need to have a *“b. degree”* whilst Faculty Advisor disagreed by saying: *“I think it’s unfair for a new person to come into this, obviously the University asks for a 3-year degree, a bachelor’s degree, but honestly, I don’t think you need a degree”*.

Curriculum and educational planning: From this group of participants, curriculum and educational planning stood out as the most important function of academic advisors. One of the faculty managers indicated that advisors “*sit with the student and go through the curriculum, explain the prerequisites, the time [he] has to complete the degree, the rules and regulations*” (Faculty Manager 1). Teaching and Learning Manager 1 indicated that advisors remind students to “*check [your] results against what is required in your degree. So that if you fail, please make contact so we can devise a new plan. So that you still complete within your residential period*”. Others referred to the role academic advisors play when students change their degrees or have to transfer to other institutions. One advisor mentioned: “*My job is to lead the student through [his] career path*” (Faculty Advisor 2). This advisor stated that the advisor has to make sure students are registered for the correct subjects and that they know “*what the implications are if they do not follow the rules and regulations according to the policies of the University*” (Faculty Advisor 2).

Curriculum knowledge: Advisors need to understand the curriculum they work in. This point was especially emphasised by the faculty advisors who participated in the study. One advisor indicated that knowing the curriculum of the area you work in helps that “*you don’t give wrong advice*”. Another indicated that advisors work out student curriculums, especially if the student “*is not progressing as they should, and you must make a plan for them*” (Faculty Advisor 3). A CTL advisor commented that advisors “*should know in-depth the content of their programmes* (Central Advisor 4) whilst another agreed that an advisor should know “*everything about the programme*” they work in (Faculty Advisor 3). This includes NQF levels (General Manager 1), subject requirements, degree requirements, and application procedures (Faculty Advisor 1).

Social Sciences: Advisors indicated that the role of an academic advisor is focused on “*helping the student*” (Teaching and Learning Manager 1) and “[*helping*] students gain social and academic capital while they are in the system” (General Manager 1). Academic advisors ensure that they “*are connected and [mostly] importantly support them*” (General Manager 1). Two advisors compared the role of an academic advisor to that of a social worker and indicated that there are some similarities in the role. The first indicated that: “*it’s a little bit like a social worker*” whilst the second commented on the difference advisors make in a student’s life. The participant noted: “*I don’t think it’s [really] different from social work.*”

Registration: Four participants identified registration as a key aspect of the academic advisor’s role, and registration was mentioned seven times during the interviews. Teaching and

Learning Manager 1 mentioned: “With regards to registered students there are advising during registration, both in January and July” while Faculty Advisor 1 alluded to her role in registration: *“Registration period, what to take what not to take. I think that is the key”*. In addition, Faculty Advisor 2 explained her role as to *“[Make] sure everything is ready like for registration, open days and knowing that I have the necessary information for whatever they are asking”*. It is clear that knowledge about the registration processes is an important part of the responsibilities of academic advisors at the UFS; however, no specific knowledge or skills were mentioned concerning registration, except for knowing the important information and processes.

Advising models and theories: Knowledge as an advisor starts with understanding advising as a concept. In conjunction with the concept of advising, advisors need to understand models and theories that support the advising practice. One advisor indicated that professional advisors should know career development models (Central Advisor 4) and indicated that advisors need to be able to *“integrate student development theory into practice”*. Added to developmental challenges, students find it difficult to transition into university, and from one academic year to the next. Knowledge of student development theories such as Marcia's theory of identity development can assist advisors in this (Central Advisor 4).

Career advising: Academic advisors often provide career advice to students. One advisor commented that advisors have to know how academics marry into the career component (General Manager 1) and use resources that help with that alignment. Advisors consider school subjects and students' performance in each subject and then align them with the dreams and aspirations of the student to find a career fit (General Manager 1). This advisor noted that advisors *“[T]ry and create an array of programmes that the student can choose from and that would lead into the student's dreams and aspirations also keeping in mind that careers are ever-changing”*. Advisors help find connections between programmes and possible careers. As General Manager 1 mentioned: *“An advisor would journey with a student through the significant moments that lead to the student being there”*. One advisor noted that advisors need to keep *“students' history of school subjects, their career aspirations, their social factors etc.”* (Central Advisor 4) in mind. From the developmental approach, academic advising is more than a *“paper signing exercise”* (General Manager 1). Advising is not a once-off interaction, but rather a longstanding relationship of trust. Advisors consider students' interests and try to establish if the chosen degree is *“really what they want”* (Faculty Advisor 1). Faculty Advisor 1 commented that *“The sad part is that most of the students are in degrees because the parents want them to study that degree”*. Furthermore,

“some bursaries are specific to certain degrees” (Faculty Advisor 1), limiting students in their career choices. Another advisor mentioned that advisors *“guide the student to get to know himself a bit better before you can advise them what to do.”* A CTL advisor noted that it is important to *“help the student find out what was their initial aim”* and then find out *“[H]ow do you get the student to still eventually get where they want to be, even if it is not this university”* (Central Advisor 4). This indicates the role advisors have of being knowledgeable about possible career pathways and resources and sharing these resources with students so that they can make informed decisions about their careers that are aligned with their personal goals and aspirations.

Advising cycle: Two participants also indicated that advisors should know which academic activities happen when during the year. This includes important committee meetings (Faculty Manager 1) and the advising cycle (Teaching and Learning Manager 1). Faculty Manager 1 commented: *“but also how it flows through the year. Jan/Feb/March registration times. They must know that before graduation, certain student records need[s] to be in order. Certain important meetings, committees”*. In addition, Teaching and Learning Manager 1 noted: *“Basically different kinds of academic that are determined by what is happening during the year with the student. Where in their cycle they are.”*

Student population context: Advisors need to understand the context and challenges specific to the student they support. Central Advisor 2 referred to understanding the cultural background of students: *“working with students, and working in a multicultural environment, and also be able to be sensitive to other people. Because now they come with all sorts of issues, so you need to be very sensitive to that”*. Central Advisor 3 agreed that students need to be viewed holistically: *“[e]lements that play a role in one’s life like society, they come from cultural backgrounds. All those elements coming together creates one individual. The most important thing I need to know is the core of the students that we have. Because students change every year... You need to understand why students do what they do”*. Faculty Advisor 3 commented: *“To understand a student’s background, to understand where they come from. If one could just get basic information as well, from somewhere”*, while Central Advisor 4 concluded: *“It is all about supporting the students in their needs.”*

Student success skills: Advisors play a role in helping students develop skills needed to be successful at university, and therefore need knowledge on how to transfer these skills. Skills mentioned by participants included *“time management skills”* and *“financial management”* (Central Advisor 2), *“coping with stress”* (Central Advisor 3), *“dealing with content or problems”*

with learning" (Faculty Manager 1), study skills (Central Advisor 4), and examination preparation (Central Advisor 3; Central Advisor 4). Central Advisor 4 mentioned: " *I help with academic success skills such as time management, how to study, how to plan for exams*".

Support network: As noted by General Manager 1, advisors refer to themselves as a "one-stop-shop" and should have the "knowledge skills and attributes that are built of everything they are surrounded by". A key component of advising is that the academic advisor is often the "core person to contact (General Manager 1)" within student support, and therefore must be knowledgeable about the institutional support network, should they refer students. Teaching and Learning Manager 1 also explained: "the *different contact persons at the different support departments, at Kopsie wellness, at CTL, knowing who to contact. If you want to refer a student to UFS 101, those developmental modules. You need to be able to have your network of support ready to know how to assist your student.*"

Coaching (Developmental process): The advisor/student relationship is seen much as a coaching relationship where the focus is student success (Faculty Advisor 3; Central Advisor 2) and supporting students holistically to cope with challenges they face internally and externally (Central Advisor 3; General Manager 1). The process is voluntary for students, and advisors help students develop action plans to deal with the challenges they face (Teaching and Learning Manager 1). Most participants in the interviews viewed advising through a developmental advising lens, rather than a prescriptive lens (see Chapter 2) where advisors allow students to make their own decisions and learn from their actions to pursue their own goals (Teaching and Learning Manager 1; Central Advisor 2; Central Advisor 3; General Manager 1; Faculty Advisor 1; Central Advisor 4). One of the advisors explained the core of advising as "*to assist or help the students through their university life and to navigate through the University life and help with the academic aspect*" (Central Advisor 2). Another mentioned that advising has "*everything to do with the students being able to cope better with the challenges they come across in the university, external and internal*" (Central Advisor 3). One advisor indicated that advising aims to "*get the student to be successful*". Faculty Advisor 3 mentioned: "*Even though sometimes they come in and they have bad records and personal problems, to assist them and throughout that and in spite of that complete their degree successfully*". This shows that advising is often similar to a coaching process where advisors help students identify developmental needs and find solutions to their problems. A teaching and learning manager alluded to this process

We will help you if you want help, so the student will still have the ability to decide how they want this help. In how much detail they want to be helped. The advisor should put it out in steps. Step one [do] this, second, do this. Attend a workshop. Or visit them. Or attend a study workshop. Give feedback on when you attended the workshop. Put out a plan of action for the student to follow. (Teaching and Learning Manager 1)

The word “*guiding*” was also often used by participants to explain their role. Advisors “*guide students through their study year*”, “*direct the student*”, and “*follow up on the student*”. Furthermore, advisors help students evaluate their situation through open questions, to identify “*what the actual problem is*” (Central Advisor 1) and find solutions. Advisors further build a relationship with students where “[T]hey know they can come to you whenever they have problems” (Faculty Advisor 2). In addition, advisors motivate students (Faculty Advisor 2; General Manager 1) and “*give them the aspiration to go through*” with their plans (Faculty Advisor 2).

Scope of practice: Advisors should know the boundaries of their scope of practice. Participants indicated that there is a clear differentiation between career counselling and career advising. Advisors “*advise students with regards to the job opportunities with different degrees*” (Faculty Manager 1) and take interest into account in the conversation (Teaching and Learning Manager 1). However, where students are still unsure, advisors refer to career counselling for more assistance. One advisor indicated that advisors “*can’t test the students*” and know their boundaries about career counselling versus advising. Even faculty advisors often help students find career opportunities. One faculty advisor noted:

Show them career opportunities. The jobs we do are interrelated. I cannot be a psychologist, but still, sometimes students come in and cry but you need to know how to handle them and to refer them to the right people so they can get the correct help that they need. (Faculty Advisor 2)

5.2.4.2 Skills

Problem solving stood out as the skill most mentioned during the interviews with 39 references. Second to this, research skills were mentioned 30 times, and communication skills 28 times. In addition, advisors mentioned the duties advisors have regarding data management and

data integration 24 times, as well as the importance of being skilled in using institutional systems, which was mentioned 23 times. Administrative skills were mentioned 21 times during the interviews, and 17 references indicated the need for language skills in advisors, while interpersonal skills were referenced 16 times. In addition, referral skills were mentioned 13 times, computer literacy 11 times, and active listening skills 10 times. This was followed by critical thinking skills (which were referred to nine times), and report writing and presentation skills which were mentioned eight times during the interviews. Participants also respectively cited conflict management and networking skills four times during the discussions.

Problem solving: Participants agreed that advisors help students solve problems and find solutions daily (Central Advisor 2). A manager in advising stressed this by commenting *“advisors are literally solving problem after problem and trying to reason with the student”* (General Manager 1). Another manager described problem-solving skills as *“very important”* for advisors and noted that *“sometimes it is complicated situations”*. An experienced advisor indicated that advisors need the ability to *“discern between all this information”* on the periphery, identify what the real problem is, and then approach the problem from *“various angles”*. This is indicative that advisors need advanced problem-solving skills to be able to implement formal problem-solving strategies. She indicated that her job as a faculty advisor is *“problem solving, every minute of the day”* (Faculty Advisor 1). One advisor leaned towards creative problem solving when indicating that advisors need to be innovative to provide *“new ways of doing things and solve problems that we have”* (Teaching and Learning Manager 1).

Self-awareness: First of all, advisors need to be aware of their own emotions, and how they affect others. Only one advisor referred to this skill in the interviews. Central Advisor 3 remarked: *“You have to be aware of your emotions and how you feel.”*

Awareness of others: Central Advisor 3 also referred to awareness of others and remarked that *“You need to be able to evaluate what one needs to hear. It might be comfortable, or it might not be comfortable”*. This advisor was the only advisor that referred to this skill.

Intrinsic motivation: Apart from self-awareness and awareness of others, advisors also need to be intrinsically motivated. Only one comment by a faculty advisor referred to intrinsic motivation. A faculty advisor (Faculty Advisor 3) commentated that *“You must be committed to what you are doing so that you can find a solution. You mustn’t just be there to get money.”*

Research skills: Although research skills were not described in existing competency frameworks as a necessity for advisors, the participants (and especially those from CTL) were aware of the importance of scholarly work and reporting to help advance the field of academic advising in South Africa. Advisors noted the importance of advisors staying abreast of developments in the advising field, as well as contributing to conferences and publications. Central Advisor 3 mentioned that advisors often “*contribute towards writing*” in the form of an article or abstract. An advisor in the access programme indicated that research takes about 20% of his time during the week: “*I would definitely give it 20% without having to consider. I have a research day once a week.*” This advisor also commented that a good advisor will also be someone who “has conducted and still conduct research”. General Manager 1 emphasised: “*[w]ith the developments of the field, research and scholarly work, is also critical within this field*”. Although a faculty manager also agreed that “research for further development” is important, a faculty advisor disagreed that she does not view research as a critical component of her job.

Communication skills: Advisors often communicate with parents, stakeholders from other departments, and students in oral or written format. General Manager 1 noted the following: “... *communication skills [are] very important. Somewhat written skills, but oral communication is quite important in advising.*” In another comment, this manager mentioned that the “critical skills” of advising are building relationships and communication skills. Advisors see these skills as critical to advising. One advisor (Faculty Advisor 3) stated:

You must also have very good communication skills to be able to get the student to realise what you want to say to him and understand easily. It's not just communicating to send a message, but it's sometimes communicating complicated messages. Being tactful. To me, it is a higher communication.

This is congruent with advising theory and publications as advisors often have to be the ones sharing sensitive information and giving bad news to students concerning their academics. It takes skill and sophistication to deliver these kinds of messages in a clear, hopeful, and motivating manner.

Data management and analytics: There is an element of working with data in academic advising, as advisors track student success and keep caseloads of students. Advisors need to keep records safe, and monitor student data, especially in proactive intrusive advising approaches (refer to page 24). General Manager 1 agreed: “*To some extent, data integration is a component*

that one needs to take into cognisance. You cannot divorce the data that plays a role in the student's life here". Student progress is monitored, and advisors need to identify and use the correct data sources to reach out to students. In addition, advisors also integrate data from a variety of sources to form a holistic picture of the student's situation. General Manager 1 described this as follows: *"In terms of systems the IR office is very important as it communicates the impact of the work ... assessment tracking which includes the academic progress of the students."* Furthermore, participants referred to the case management system, recording of data as well as the need to integrate various data sources in the advising conversation, such as student biographical data, school performance, application data, semester grades, final grades, access to and use of support services, credit load, and online learning activity.

Technological skills: None of the participants indicated that advanced technological skills are needed for advisors. However, intermediate *"computer skills"* were mentioned as being necessary for the job. Furthermore, advisors need to use accessible platforms such as social media to distribute information and connect with students (Faculty Advisor 3). Central Advisor 2 commented: *"[c]omputer skills...excel, word, PowerPoint and internet explorer, outlook, you will be able to make it... read emails, check Facebook, online advising"*. Faculty Advisor 3, amongst others, also mentioned WhatsApp and Facebook, but did not indicate any specific technological skills needed for advising. It seems systems knowledge is more important to this group of participants than technological skills. However, Faculty Advisor 1 disagrees with her comment: *"... computer skills. Systems you can be taught"*.

Systems: Participants indicated that advisors need to be able to navigate institutional systems and learner management systems to advise students. Systems mentioned as essential for advising included: PeopleSoft, Blackboard, Office, Outlook, and student verification documents, (Teaching and Learning Manager 1; Faculty Advisor 3; Central Advisor 2; Faculty Manager 1; Central Advisor 4), and data analysis software for pro-active advising (General Manager 1). General Manager 1 explained: *"PeopleSoft is something we live and breathe. Case management we have used Excel, but we are currently moving to more advanced systems ... Something like Gradebook currently does this for us"*. Teaching and Learning Manager 1 added: *"Info on PeopleSoft... [A]lso Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint. Blackboard. Just the normal systems, you use in everyday business"*.

Administrative skills: Participants noted that organisational skills (Central Advisor 3), preparation for sessions, scheduling advising appointments, and keeping records are important

to advising administration (Central Advisor 3; Central Advisor 2; Faculty Advisor 3). Central Advisor 3 mentioned: *"I find myself doing more administration work"*, while General Manager 1 added: *"And then the admin and scheduling are the components that are critical"*. Faculty Manager 1 agreed that *"administration skills are critical to advisors, as advisors could face legal charges if their records are not well kept, and their administration is not in order"*. This manager further noted: *"Very good admin skills. If there's an enquiry, you need to have a very good filing system, you have to make sure your feedback is in place"*. A large component of an advisor's job includes administration. Faculty Advisor 3 refers to the excess of administration she needs to manage daily by commenting: *"I usually come in before work so I can try and attend to my admin, but I mostly do not finish...Filing, phone, looking at student records, student verification documents"*.

Language ability: Advisors need to be able to communicate clearly to people with different home languages, as well as from different cultural backgrounds. Central Advisor 2 commented: *"You do need it. You need to be able to communicate clearly with the different languages and the different cultures"*. Central Advisor 3 explains that language ability in this context is more than using the correct grammatical rules, but also refers to the *"choice of words"* and *"the way you use the language"* to convey your message. One advising manager indicated that English on an intermediate level is important for advisors to communicate effectively in their context either in written form or verbally (Teaching and Learning Manager 1). Seven of the participants indicated that being multi-lingual is a necessary competency for academic advisors in the South African context. Central Advisor 1 remarked: *"I think you need to know at least a good three or four languages. Be good in two, or be excellent in one, because of the student population that we are dealing with"*.

Analytical reasoning: Advisors often have to be able to make deductions or analyse different parts of information to find the best solutions for students. One advisor mentioned: *"It requires [that] analytical reasoning to think what is happening in the third semester and then innovate from that"* (Central Advisor 2). Another advisor commented: *"I think you must be analytical. The verification document will help you a lot. Sometimes you see a lot of things and you can immediately see why a student didn't perform"* (Faculty Advisor 3).

Critical thinking: Advisors often gather information from a variety of resources, synthesise the information, reflect, and apply their experience to decision making. Participants, especially managers, agreed with this notion. Central Advisor 3 mentioned: *"you might need good*

critical thinking abilities” while General Manager 1 indicated that advisors should have logical behaviour, *“connect information and make sense of it”*, and another manager agreed that *“it’s very important”* (Faculty Manager 1). Teaching and Learning Manager 1 added that advisors need to be able to ask critical questions. *“An academic advisor will need to be able to deal with higher order thinking and starting to think in how to deal with the specifics situation”* this manager noted.

Referral skills: Referrals comprise a key component of academic advising. Advisors ensure that students are connected with and assisted by institutional support services. One advisor indicated the importance of *“making proper referrals”* (Central Advisor 3) while another mentioned the importance of making quick effective referrals:

[I] immediately help get an appointment, if the student is cracking because they have too much debt, for financial support. Social support if they don’t have food. Try and connect them as urgently as possible to those support services. A good advisor would know the core person to contact within each of those offices. If a student is hungry, call student wellness. If there’s a death in the family, if there’s a suicide, get them to a counselling service. (General Manager 1)

Faculty Manager 1 further noted that advisors need to *“make sure that the student is referred to the right person for support and assistance”*. It is therefore important that advisors firstly, know when they need to refer students to support stakeholders, secondly, be knowledgeable about the campus support network, and thirdly, have the skills to make proper referrals professionally.

Leadership skills: Leadership skills were mentioned as important only once during the interviews. General Manager 1 commented: *“There’s also a component of leadership that one should have. An advisor is always at the head of everything”*.

Strategic thinking: Strategic thinking is not only limited to advisors in management positions. Advisors are often in spaces where they have to develop strategies for student support during registration and the academic year. This requires strategic thinking skills. One advisor described his work as *“implementing strategic advising”* whilst General Manager 1 indicated that when appointing a new advisor, they would look for *“someone who has a strong knack for strategic thinking. [That can think strategically] and can balance the research and the practice in terms of strategic thinking”* (General Manager 1). However, this skill was regarded as being more critical

for managers in advising than others. Both a faculty manager and the CTL manager alluded to strategic thinking and planning as being important to their roles. The CTL manager indicated *“looking at strategic work within academic advising, so institutionally just keeping a finger and looking at student support and how advising taps into that overall, and operationally making sure that everything is happening”* (General Manager 1), whilst a faculty manager indicated: *“strategic planning, all kinds of management issues”* (Faculty Manager 1).

Professionalism: Advisors shared their view of advising as a profession. One advisor claimed: *“I think now in South Africa academic advice is not a profession, but that is where we are heading to. They are going to make it professional so that you can pay a membership fee”* (Central Advisor 2). Faculty Advisor 1 agreed: *“[p]rofessionalism, you are involved in their lives, but you still need to keep professional distance”*. Faculty Advisor 2 also referred to professionalism when indicating that a good academic advisor would have *“self-respect”* and *“honour the appointment with a student”*.

Conflict management: Advisors often manage conflict with students. Faculty Advisor 1 commented that *“We need to solve conflict a lot”* while another two indicated that advisors often deal with students who are *“unsatisfied with their marks”* (Teaching and Learning Manager 1). This manager further noted: *“So and then afterwards to defuse the student”*. Faculty Advisor 1 agreed: *“We need to solve conflict a lot ... You need to know the steps that you need to take, there’s that kind of conflict that occurs.”* Conflict was referred to by the participants for individual and group settings.

Rapport-building: Rapport-building skills are critical to any helping profession, and these advisors share this sentiment. A manager of an advising centre reiterated: *“Having that sense to build rapport with anybody, be it, students or colleagues, depending on who you are working with. ... Critical skills should be to be able to build relationships”* (General Manager 1). A faculty advisor agreed that *“That’s the most important and critical part. This is where the student can feel that they haven’t settled in, and [they] way in which you approach the student also helps build the relationship in them knowing they have someone they can go to if they have problems.”* (Faculty Advisor 2).

Networking: Advisors work collaboratively with other departments to offer student support. Advisors mentioned how they need to be able to work collaboratively with other departments and colleagues. Central Advisor 4 mentioned: *“And you need to be able to work with*

colleagues. *In my job, I need to be able to work with the faculty*". Central Advisor 3 described his relationship with colleagues when noting: *"I communicate with them constantly"* whilst Central Advisor 1 further noted the importance of networking with her comment: *"Be very active, so if there's an opportunity to support and engage with students and staff, whether it's internally within the institution or externally"*.

Marketing: Three of the advisors indicated that they have some form of marketing responsibility as an advisor. Faculty Advisor 1 indicated that a large portion of her job is to market the degrees in her faculty: *"The other 30% is marketing, and I run the Facebook and webpage of the faculty"*. Faculty Manager 1 also indicated that part of her responsibilities is to *"sometimes go to schools for marketing"*. An advisor in the access programme also indicated that he often travels to satellite campuses. He noted: *"I have six campuses that I have to travel to ... I would hand out things like prospectuses and explain the processes that need to be taken for the students to be transferred"*.

Presentation and facilitation skills: Advisors often engage with groups of students, and present information, orientation, and training sessions. This requires presentation skills. One advisor indicated that advisors *"at least have to be able to engage in public speaking"* (Central Advisor 3). Central Advisor 1 indicated that part of her job was *"to coordinate workshops"* and that training is *"part of an advisor's responsibility"*. As an advising centre manager (General Manager 1) explained:

There's a component of advising that one tends to encounter some group advising work. And in our work, it is very important to have facilitation skills and background. Even one to two years of experience makes a huge difference. The person has already overcome the nerves that come[s] with facilitation. It gives you the confidence to stand in front of a group. I would say one to two years of experience is a significant component. There's that 10% of our work that tends to be facilitation. Small groups of eight and even large groups of 200 people. One needs to have exposure to both to optimally facilitate the groups.

A faculty advisor disagreed that presentation skills are not required, but can be beneficial in group advising and information sessions. However, another advisor indicated that group advising and presentation are large components of their job.

Project management: Following an evidence-based approach to advising, academic advisors often need to manage projects that promote student success. This is where basic project management skills are needed. One advisor stated that the advising role at CTL involves having to “*implement, monitor and evaluate advising projects and initiatives*” (Central Advisor 4). The same advisor also indicated that it is about “*developing, managing and evaluating projects to assist students to succeed.*” However, this skill was not mentioned by any other advisor during the discussions.

Reporting skills: Five advisors mentioned the importance of reporting skills, which included the roles of CTL advisors, access programme advisors, and faculty advisors. Whilst the faculty advisor mentioned that they give reports in faculty meetings, CTL advisors mentioned the importance of “*monitoring and evaluation*” and “*reporting on advising statistics*” (Central Advisor 4). The access programme advisor also mentioned the importance of being able to draft documentation with evidence of results.

5.2.4.3 Attitudes

The attitude mostly mentioned by participants was caring for students, which was mentioned 28 times, of which six times referred specifically to motivating students. Participants in the interviews agreed that advising is a developmental process and referred to this nature 23 times during the interviews.

Furthermore, the importance of values was discussed 26 times, and trustworthiness, specifically, was discussed seven times. The need for empathy was mentioned 11 times during the interviews, assertiveness and patience were alluded to six times each, followed by work ethic, unconditional positive regard, teamwork, finding purpose in your work four times each, and resilience three times. Lastly, advisors mentioned twice that an advisor should be approachable, and twice that they should be open-minded. Each of these codes is discussed next, with references from the interview transcripts.

Caring for students: Mentioned 28 times, caring for students was seen as crucial. Most advisors mentioned that caring for and creating a safe space for students is critical to the job. General Manager 1 mentioned that advisors should be “*someone who is caring, and embrace*

people” while Central Advisor 2 and Faculty Advisor 3 agreed that advisors need to “*be motivating*” and “*patient*”. As Central Advisor 3 summarised it:

You can't think with your head at all times, your heart must also be in it because you are dealing with human beings here. So, you must have a good heart. That is one thing that I have noticed. If you don't have a good heart you would never be able to do the job here. Never. You must have a good heart.

Caring for students also includes going the extra mile to help them. One advisor indicated that one should be willing to help even when students get into trouble. She noted: “*Take the extra mile for the student, they are our core business. They are the people that we are here for.*” (Faculty Advisor 2).

Values: Advisors mentioned that academic advisors should have strong value systems through which they operate. Values such as “*integrity*” (Central Advisor 2; General Manager 1), “*confidentiality*” (Central Advisor 2), “*honesty*” (Central Advisor 2), “*respect*” (General Manager 1), “*diligence and loyalty*” (Faculty Advisor 2), “*excellence*” (General Manager 1), “*ethics*” (General Manager 1), “*equity*” (Central Advisor 4), “*confidentiality*” (Teaching and Learning Manager 1), and “*a sense of collaboration*” (General Manager 1) were mentioned as important values for advisors.

Service orientation: One aspect that is prominent in South African students is the social challenges they face at home. Students often feel the responsibility to provide for their families despite relying on government funding for their studies themselves. Faculty Advisor 2 linked this with developing students. “*Whatever they do they must know that it's not for ourselves, it is giving back to the community and society whatever you have gained from the organization*”. Although only mentioned once, this is a valuable contribution.

Unconditional positive regard for students: The advisor is there to “*connect the student, to empower and to support them.*” (General Manager 1). This participant mentioned that students need to “*feel that they are accepted*”. In addition, Central Advisor 4 indicated that a bad advisor will judge a student who “*screwed up*” but a good advisor would “*actually find out what happened. What were the circumstance? Was there a specific reason? Did the student go through something difficult? And find out what can we do from here*”. This refers to advisors vouching for

students and helping them find solutions to their problems, irrespective of the circumstances or mistakes the student might have made.

Trustworthiness: First and foremost, advisors work with sensitive information and data. Therefore, advisors should be trustworthy in how they use this data (Central Advisor 2). General Manager 1 mentioned that *“Every time you see a student, they trust that you know better and that you have their best interest at heart”*. Faculty Manager 1 touched on trustworthiness by indicating that *“whatever you promise a student, do it”* and later mentioned that an advisor should be *“someone trustworthy”*. This advisor further reiterates that an advisor must be *“[A] person that takes responsibility for his actions, someone trustworthy, that can work with people confidentially”*.

Empathy: Seven of the 10 advisors mentioned empathy as being important for advisors. These ranged from comments such as *“Advisors should also be someone who is very empathetic”* (Central Advisor 3), to *“I think empathy with students. An ear to listen, the skill to listen. It is very important”* (Teaching and Learning Manager 1). Faculty Advisor 3 mentioned that you *“must be able to have sympathy and empathy and show that in a positive way”* and further commented: *“You must be able to relate to students, put yourself in their shoes”*. Central Advisor 4 mentioned that empathy, together with compassion, is key to being a good advisor.

Assertiveness: Assertive advisors can say what they need or believe. Faculty Manager 1 mentioned: *“Sometimes you have to be firm, but not rude”*, whilst Teaching and Learning Manager 1 indicated: *“[Y]ou hear a lot of stories. You need to be assertive and say yes or no. Where to stop.”* A CTL advisor added that *“students need somebody that’s a bit more strict or authoritative with them”* (Central Advisor 1). Faculty Advisor 2 added that advisors need to be *“firm in whatever decision [you] take”*.

Patience and tolerance: Advisors need to *“be patient and understanding”* (Central Advisor 2). One of the faculty managers commented that *“an excellent advisor would be patient”* as well as *“calm and tolerant”* (Faculty Manager 1) whilst other advisors (Faculty Advisor 1; Central Advisor 4) also mentioned this as important.

Work ethic: Whilst some participants mentioned working alone and neglecting their work as negative behaviours of advisors, Central Advisor 2 commented:

“I think if you are dedicated to your work and give it your best and you do show that you are giving your best. Sometimes students give [a] thanks if they did

what you said, and they had success. Doing your things on time and submitting on time, looking at your job profile, doing what you are meant to do. Having evidence that you did do this.

This indicates the importance of a good work ethic for advisors. Excellence is also a value of the UFS.

Teamwork and collaboration: Advisors mostly function in teams and refer students to one another in those working teams. Therefore, an important part of this job entails being able to function in a team. Two advisors indicated that you *“must be a team player”* (Central Advisor 1; Faculty Advisor 2) whilst another indicated that *“[I] work mainly collaboratively”* with other advisors (Central Advisor 1).

Resilience: Advisors often have stressful jobs, and therefore this characteristic might be key to this profession. Faculty Manager 1 indicated that they *“usually look at their resilience”* when appointing intern academic advisors. Although self-care and stress management were mentioned a few times by other advisors, this was the only direct mention of the concept of resilience; however, it is important to note, as research often notes stress and burnout as critical to the advising job. Faculty Advisor 3, however, mentioned that advisors *“must be a positive, energetic person”* and that advisors *“need a lot of energy”*.

Open-minded: Two CTL advisors mentioned that advisors need to be open-minded. One advisor commented: *“You don’t know what to expect. You need to be open-minded. You need to be a thinker”* (Central Advisor 3), whilst the other central advisor (Central Advisor 1) indicated that an advisor should be *“somebody who is open. Open to also learn from the student”*.

5.2.4.4 Behaviours

The behaviour mentioned most frequently in this study was academic monitoring of students, which was referred to 10 times, followed by self-care and stress management which were mentioned nine times. Other behaviours mentioned once or twice included sharing information, preparing for sessions, and going the extra mile for students.

Academic monitoring of students: Academic monitoring of students forms a large part of the responsibilities, especially of advisors allocated in faculties (faculty managers, teaching and learning managers, faculty marketers, and curriculum advisors). A faculty manager indicated that advisors “*look at the student’s record to see if [he] is on track*” and monitor “*if they didn’t meet the admission requirements*” (Faculty Manager 1). A teaching and learning manager alluded that monitoring also happens on a modular level when a specific module has a larger-than-normal failure rate. Monitoring is done through warning letters, recommendations, consultations, and referrals of students at risk (Teaching and Learning Manager 1; Faculty Advisor 2).

Self-care and stress management: Advisors tend to work with issues that are stressful and often have to work under pressure (Central Advisor 2). Central Advisor 3 explained that “*you also need to have that element in knowing how to take care of yourself. Because you are dealing with so much. For you to be able to cope in assisting people with their respective problems ... you must know how to take care of yourself, otherwise, you would not be able to cope*”. Another participant (Faculty Advisor 3) agreed that advising “*takes a lot of you emotionally*” and that advisors “*have a huge load*” while Central Advisor 2 agreed that “*some issues are stressful*”.

Information sharing: Advisors often have to share information and bad news with students about their academics. General Manager 1 commented on how important it is that advisors can “*help the student move through it*”. Advisors need to be able to explain information clearly. Teaching and Learning Manager 1 agreed that communication with students is a “[*very high*] priority” for advisors.

Preparation and planning: Preparation for advising sessions is key to good advising practices. Only General Manager 1 directly referred to the preparation of sessions. Advisors need to view the students’ records and educational history, student application data, and academic progress (General Manager 1). This manager further noted that a bad advisor “[*W*]ouldn’t prepare”.

This concludes the aspects of professional competencies identified by the group of UFS advisors interviewed. The following section discusses these results in relation to existing competency frameworks and other literature on advising competencies.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Overall, data collected from academic advisors during the job analysis very closely replicated what was found in the literature and discussed in chapters 2 and 3 of this study. This can be an indication that the advisors at the UFS are very aware of their roles and responsibilities and the knowledge and skills needed for advising. It can also be attributed to the AAPD short learning programme that all of these advisors attended, since the findings closely replicate the content of the AAPD (UFS, 2018).

However, investigating competency models outside the scholarly practice of advising, such as the career development framework, has added specific competencies related to advising practices such as career advising. In addition, research on the South African advising context can also add an extra dimension to the existing international advising competency models such as the model of NACADA, as it will help clarify specific competencies related to the South African context and challenges.

The following sections aim to integrate results from the literature study and the job analysis performed to identify competencies to include in a competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS. The results are discussed according to the five components of advising, as identified in the literature study (Chapter 2).

5.3.1.1 *Conceptual component of advising*

The conceptual component of advising includes elements related to advising as a construct and practice, as well as theories and models related to advising. The conceptual component further outlines how advising forms part of the organisational structure (NACADA, 2017c; Nutt, 2003; UFS, 2018). The table below provides a comparison of competencies identified in the literature review and the job analysis for this component. An indication is given in brackets of which sources identified this competency, as well as the number of references that were made to this competency by advisors. A discussion on how literature compared with the views of participants in the job analysis is presented after the table.

Table 5.3.1 Conceptual component: Comparison between literature and job analysis

	Literature review	Job analysis (Advisor feedback)
Knowledge	Construct, history, elements, and core values of AA (NACADA, 2017c). Advising vision, mission, and student learning outcomes for the institution (NACADA, 2017c). Knowledge of higher education, institutional vision, mission, and strategy (NACADA, 2017c). How advising is integrated into the higher education system (NACADA, 2017c; McClellan, 2007). Define advising in their institutional context (NACADA, 2017c). Organisational strategies, operational plans, and values (UFS, 2016). Institutional advising strategy (NACADA, 2017c). Advising theories, approaches, models, and strategies (UFS, 2018; NACADA, 2017c). Student development theories (McClellan, 2007). Student-specific context (UFS, 2018). Challenges students face, student special needs (UFS, 2018; DHET, 2016; McClellan, 2007). Create an equitable and inclusive environment for students (NACADA, 2017c). Cultural awareness and diversity around gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and physical and mental capacity (DHET, 2016).	Knowledge of higher education (20). Student support network (7). Advising models and theories (7). Student population context (10).

	Special needs and disability training (DHET, 2016).	
Experience		Higher education experience, and experience working with students (20).

The results show consensus that advisors form part of the organisational strategy and should be aware of the institutional vision, mission, and objectives, as well as operational plans. Literature places academic advisors at the centre of student success initiatives (McGill et al., 2020) and therefore emphasises that the advising needs should be carefully integrated into the university vision, mission, and strategy (NACADA, 2017c; UFS, 2018), as student success is at the core of any higher education institution (UFS, 2019; McGill et al., 2020). Therefore, the literature study emphasised that universities must establish which institutional advising model is best to integrate academic advisors into the student support network and higher education system (NACADA, 2017c; McClellan, 2007) and support the organisational strategy as advisors confirmed during the interviews.

Furthermore, various literature sources in this study claim that advisors should be knowledgeable on the history and concept of advising, as well as the elements of advising, and the core values associated with it (NACADA 2017; UFS, 2016; UFS 2018). The findings confirm existing assumptions in that advising theories, approaches, models, and practices form the foundation of the advising profession. Furthermore, contextual to South Africa, consensus between literature and advisors revealed that advisors should understand student challenges and needs, such as developmental challenges and financial needs (McClellan, 2007; UFS, 2018; DHET, 2016), and should therefore be informed about studies and reports that inform this understanding, such as student engagement data and South African higher education reports. Additionally, literature and advisors agree that South African advisors need to be able to create equitable and inclusive environments for South African students from a variety of cultures, languages, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, physical and mental capacity, and socio-economic backgrounds (NACADA 2017; DHET, 2016).

What stood out as prominent from the interviews, was how strongly the UFS advisors follow a developmental approach to academic advising. Even faculty advisors referred to the

advising relationship as “close to coaching” and indicated that advising interactions are about forming a trusting relationship that is focused on student success. Students are assisted to make their own decisions and learn from their actions in the advising relationship. This view of advising further strengthens the argument that UFS advisors can benefit from social sciences training and even exposure to coaching models.

Lastly, academic advisors also noted that academic advisors should have experience in the higher education environment, as well as experience in working with students when appointed. One advisor commented: *“You will not be able to cope with this job if you don’t have much knowledge on what is happening on the campus itself”*.

5.3.1.2 Informational component

The informational component reflects that information advisors should be aware of, internal and external to their institution, as well as information that provides context to their advising role, such as student needs (NACADA, 2017c; Higginson, 2000; UFS, 2018). The table below provides a comparison of competencies identified in the literature review and the job analysis for this component.

Table 5.3.2. Informational component: Comparison between literature and job analysis

	Literature review	Job analysis (Advisor feedback)
Knowledge	INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE Rules and regulations (NACADA, 2017c). Policies, and access requirements (NACADA, 2017c; Educor, 2022; McClellan, 2007). Advising cycle (UFS, 2018). Universities' processes and procedures (NACADA, 2017c). Curriculum knowledge. Institutional advising network (DHET, 2018; Educor, 2022). KNOWLEDGE EXTERNAL TO THE INSTITUTION Laws and governance policies, legal guidelines of advising practice (NACADA, 2017c; DHET, 2016). Legislation on employment, education, and training (DHET, 2016). Social justice guidelines (DHET, 2016). Career-related resources such as career websites, funding opportunities,	Rules and regulations (23). Policies, procedures (4), access requirements, appeals (5), registration process and information (9), access requirements (2). Knowledge of the higher education environment (20) and know the field of study they advise (13). Advising cycle (3). Curriculum knowledge (9), degree choices (4). Support network (7). Laws and governance (1). Knowledge in social sciences (22). Advising practices – career advice (15).

	financial aid, and school opportunities (DHET, 2016). KNOWLEDGE OF THE STUDENT POPULATION Characteristics, needs, and experiences of the student (NACADA, 2017c). Life roles of adults (DHET, 2016).	Student population context (10).
Attitudes	Experience in study success and support (Educor, 2022; DHET, 2016).	Student success skills (9).
Behaviours	Curriculum and educational planning.	Curriculum and educational planning (17), and academic monitoring of students (13).
Educational requirements	Graduate training and academic advising programmes (Habley, 2008; Padak & Kuhn, 2009; Shaffer, 2016).	Degree knowledge (7).

As the results indicate in Table 5.3.2, advisors should be competent in developing and maintaining an institutional support network for students as key role players in promoting student success (McGill et al., 2020). The job analysis confirmed that this might often need the competencies of relationship building, negotiation, and network and marketing skills of advisors. Literature agreed that academic advisors should be able to identify which key stakeholders will form part of the advising network and support strategic objectives for advising at the institution (DHET, 2018; Educor, 2022).

Other important aspects mentioned in the literature were the rules, regulations, and policies of the university and faculties the advisors operate in (NACADA, 2017c; Educor, 2022), which were also confirmed by advisors as crucial, as these comprised the informational elements most mentioned during the interviews. Alongside these are the admission requirements, curriculum, and knowledge of the field that the advisor is advising in, as noted by advisors. Academic advisors further identified curriculum and educational planning as the most important functions of academic advisors at the UFS. This view was shared by advisors who were situated

in faculties in different advising roles. Although curriculum planning was only emphasised by faculty advisors as a job function, both faculty advisors and general advisors indicated the importance of understanding the curriculum and related academic requirements. In addition, to understand how systems and documents are integrated, academic advisors should have experience in the higher education environment, and be academically qualified to advise students on degree requirements.

An interesting element emerging from the data was how being academically qualified for advising is viewed by different sources. Whilst literature on advising and advisors agree that advisors should have an appropriate bachelor's degree, the job analysis identified social sciences or a psychology background as helpful for academic advisors. Interestingly, it was mentioned 22 times by the advisors during the job analysis that social sciences could be beneficial for advisors. This argument is rooted in academic advising to help students gain social and academic capital, connect them to support services, and provide holistic support. Advising, therefore, requires skills, such as empathy, listening, questioning, and rapport building, which are developed in these professions.

In contrast, the literature provided more clarity on what advisors should know to provide career advice than what was mentioned in the interviews. Literature indicates that career advisors should be knowledgeable regarding career-related resources, such as career websites, funding opportunities, financial aid, and school opportunities. UFS advisors mentioned knowledge of career advising, but did not elaborate further. This might indicate that this service has not been solidified at the UFS as an advising practice, and further exploration of how this practice fits into the advising structure may be beneficial. Schoeman (2021) agrees that career advising is not always formalised and consciously integrated into assisting students.

In terms of understanding students' needs, there was consensus between literature and advisors that advisors should have a good understanding of their student context, and understand the unique characteristics, needs, and experiences of their students (NACADA, 2017b). These include physical and mental capacity as well as understanding the role that disabilities play in the academic journey of students (DHET, 2016).

During the job analysis, UFS advisors expressed their belief that academic advisors should also have knowledge of student success skills and be able to transfer these skills to students. With 70% of South African students being the first in their families to enter university,

students need advice and assistance on how to navigate higher education successfully (Universities South Africa (USAF), as cited in Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021). Therefore, being competent in developing and transferring skills will become an increasing necessity for advisors in the South African context. Experience of study success and support were also identified as important by DHET and Educor (Educor, 2022; DHET, 2016), which are both South African resources.

Another competency relevant to the South African context, and the UFS is service orientation. UFS advisors must have a strong service orientation to deal with the everyday challenges of UFS students, as basic needs are often at the core of advising needs. Student engagement data can help inform this understanding, as well as a strong collaboration with student support units, such as counselling, food schemes, and social work services. As one faculty advisor mentioned: *“Whatever they do they must know that it’s not for [ourselves], it is giving back to the community and society whatever you have gained from the organisation”*. This is a clear indication of the spirit of ubuntu, which means ‘humanity to others’, and is true to South Africa.

5.3.1.3 Relational component

The relational component includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for planning and conducting advising sessions effectively, building and maintaining trusting relationships with advisees, and acting ethically (NACADA, 2017b; Higginson, 2000; UFS, 2018). The table below provides a comparison of competencies identified in the literature review and the job analysis for this component.

Table 5.3.3. Relational component: Comparison between literature and Job analysis

	Literature review	Job analysis (Advisor feedback)
Skills	Problem solving (McClellan, 2007; DHET, 2016). Listening, questioning and summarising (DHET, 2016; Haley, 2016; McClellan, 2007). Planning skills (UFS, 2016.; NACADA, 2017c; Educor, 2022). Conflict management (UFS, 2016). Communication skills (McClellan, 2007; NACADA, 2017c). Decision making (NACADA, 2017c; Educor, 2022). Goal setting (Educor, 2022). Marketing (persuasion), networking, and establishment of relationships (UFS, 2016; DHET, 2016). Facilitation and presentation skills (NACADA, 2017c; DHET, 2016). Teaching and transfer of information (NACADA, 2017c; DHET, 2016). Rapport-building (NACADA, 2017c; DHET, 2016; Haley, 2016; McClellan, 2007). Referrals (UFS, 2018; Educor, 2022).	Problem solving (39). Listening skills (10). Administrative skills (21). Record keeping (24). Conflict management (4). Communication skills (28). Interpersonal skills (16). Critical thinking (9). Networking (4). Presentation and facilitation skills (8). Rapport-building (6). Referral skills (13). Research skills (30). Report-writing (8).
Knowledge	PRACTICE SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE	Student success skills (9).

	Student success skills (DHET, 2016; Educor, 2022). Career advising (Schoeman, 2021; DHET, 2016). Career-related information and resources (DHET, 2016). Coaching (DHET, 2016). Cultural awareness and diversity (NACADA, 2017c; DHET, 2016). Scope of practice (DHET, 2016).	Career advising (15). Understanding student context (10). Coaching (23). Scope of practice (4).
Attitudes	PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES Compassion (UFS, 2016). Empathy (DHET, 2016). Confidentiality (DHET, 2016). Teamwork and collaboration (DHET, 2016). VALUES Trustworthy (UFS, 2016; Educor, 2022; DHET, 2016). Respect (UFS, 2016). Organisational values.	Assertiveness (6). Caring for students (28). Empathy (11). Positive regard for students (3). Trustworthy (7). Work ethic (4). Patience and tolerance (6).
Behaviours	Commitment (UFS, 2016). Information sharing with students and stakeholders (DHET, 2016).	Relatedness (2). Information sharing and student feedback (6).
Other	Academically qualified (UFS, 2016). Advising philosophy (NACADA, 2017c).	Bachelor's degree (7). Social sciences (22).

The competency most mentioned during the interviews was problem solving, with 39 references during the interviews. Advisors alluded to how important it is for advisors to be able to assist students with finding solutions to their problems, as well as adapting and dealing with problems themselves. The National Framework for Career Development also refers to this skill (DHET, 2016).

Furthermore, the literature indicated that advisors need to be able to plan and conduct advising sessions effectively. This includes scheduling and planning sessions. It also includes applying advising models (UFS, 2016; NACADA, 2017c; Educor, 2022). Advisors also referred to the importance of record-keeping and managing data during advising interactions.

Aside from planning, placing an advising philosophy in the competency framework remains arguable, although the findings showed agreement on the importance thereof. Although NACADA (2017) identifies this competency as a relational element, the UFS (2018) has included this in its professional component of advising.

Importantly, a large portion of advising is providing information and communicating with students and university stakeholders. The Career Development Framework (DHET, 2016) therefore indicates that advisors should have knowledge of ethical issues regarding telephonic, email, and chatroom communication, advice, guidance, and information sharing, as well as issues relating to career information to individuals and groups. Relating to this, communication skills were alluded to 28 times by the UFS advisors, which included reference to written and oral communication skills. Advisors often communicate with a variety of stakeholders including students, parents, staff members of departments, and external stakeholders. This could explain why one advising manager called this skill “critical” to academic advice. Advisors and literature further agreed that delivering bad news is a skill specific to advising and requires a higher level of communication skills. However, it can be argued that this skill can be developed in time and does not have to be fully developed when appointing academic advisors.

Another measurable attribute linked to dealing with sensitive information is assertiveness, which was also mentioned by faculty and many general academic advisors. Advisors need to be able to communicate in an authoritative, yet sensitive manner.

There seems to be a consensus between literature and UFS advisors on the skills needed to build trusting relationships in advising. As a manager of an advising centre reiterated: “*Critical*

skills should be to be able to build relationships.” Interestingly, the literature focuses more on the specific skills needed to build lasting relationships, such as listening, questioning, summarising, rapport-building, and referral skills (refer to Table 5.3.3), whilst advisors focused more on attitudes needed to build lasting relationships, such as patience and tolerance, empathy, caring for students, willingness to go the extra mile and unconditional positive regard for students. The attitudes and values of academic advisors are therefore regarded as important to individuals in the advising profession.

Values are critical to building lasting relationships in advising. Competency frameworks included in this study (Chapter 3) highlighted values, such as trustworthiness, respect, teamwork and collaboration, assertiveness, compassion, and empathy as important. The job analysis added work ethic, patience, and tolerance to the list. Many of these values (such as trustworthiness and respect) can be related to ethical principles in any helping profession. This might indicate the importance of also teaching advisors ethical principles, and how to apply them in their advising. Literature alludes to the importance of ethical codes and conduct of academic advisors, but this has been categorised under the professional component of advising in this study, as ethics form part of professional practice. In terms of appointing academic advisors, psychometric instruments such as the Value Scale or the Career Value Scale can be employed to help determine job fit based on advisor values.

To conclude the relational competencies, research skills, and report writing did not emerge in the literature review, however, both were noted by academic advisors during the interviews. With advising being situated in an institution of higher learning and advising as a scholarly practice still evolving in South Africa, it makes sense that these skills are also needed for academic advisors in the South African context. In addition, advising is also a data-driven practice, and with proactive intrusive advising approaches becoming more prominent, advisors will follow a research-based approach to advising initiatives.

5.3.1.4 Technological component

The technological component of advising includes skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to advise students effectively by using the technological tools available (McClellan, 2007; UFS,

2018). The table below provides a comparison of competencies identified in the literature review and the job analysis for this component.

Table 5.3.4. Technological component: Comparison between literature and job analysis

	Literature review	Job analysis (Advisor feedback)
Skills	Data management and analytics (DHET, 2016).	Data management (24). Computer literacy (11).
Knowledge	Formal and informal institutional systems (McClellan, 2007; UFS, 2016; NACADA, 2017c), and online advising systems (McClellan, 2007). Online advising resources (McClellan, 2007).	Institutional systems (23).
Attitudes	Innovation (UFS, 2016), use of technological tools (McClellan, 2007).	
Other	Ethical issues regarding telephonic, email and chatroom communication, as well as career information (DHET, 2016).	

The results did not deliver as many elements in the technological component as in the first three mentioned. However, data management and using analytics are becoming important as proactive-intrusive advising approaches increase. Thus, technology is taking the foreground in advising to help address academic challenges during massification in South African institutions of higher learning. To implement these approaches, academic advisors will need both an understanding of how university systems and data management works, as well as somewhat of a technological aptitude to implement proactive intrusive interventions (McClellan, 2007). However, not much attention is given to this when discussing competencies in either the literature

studied, or the interviews conducted with UFS advisors. Competencies related to proactive intrusive approaches need further exploration to identify essential advisor competencies for the 21st century advising approaches. However, literature has identified that advisors need to be innovative, and have a clear understanding of informal and formal institutional systems. In addition, advisors need to be trained on ethical issues regarding telephonic, email and chatroom communication, as well as career information (DHET, 2016). Advisors agreed and added that basic computer literacy is needed to manage these systems effectively. Interestingly, innovation is mentioned as an important value at the UFS (2016), and advisors who want to develop in line with the latest advising trends will need to display this value in their everyday work.

5.3.1.5 Professional component

The professional component of advising refers to the competencies that allow advisors to maintain excellence in their advising practice and help them to specialise and grow in their profession (UFS, 2018). Table 5.3.5 provides a comparison of competencies identified in the literature and the job analysis for this component.

Table 5.3.5. Professional component: Comparison between literature and job analysis

	Literature review	Job analysis (Advisor feedback)
Skills	Research (UFS, 2016; Educor, 2022). Strategic thinking and planning (DHET, 2016; UFS, 2016). Decision making (UFS, 2016; NACADA, 2017b; HET 2017; Educor, 2022).	Research skills (30). Reporting (8). Leadership skills (12). Project management (2).
Knowledge	Advising training and development (Habley, 2008). Ethical codes associated with advising practice (DHET, 2016). Scope of practice (DHET, 2016).	
Attitudes	Introspective analysis and self-observation (McClellan, 2007). Awareness of own values, stress, emotions, and commitment (McClellan, 2007). Seek personal development and growth (McClellan, 2007). Self-regulation (McClellan, 2007).	Optimism (3). Professionalism (6). Resilience (3). Open-minded (2). Self-awareness (1) self-regulation (1).
Behaviours	Advisor stress and burnout (Maller & McGill et al., 2021). Adhere to ethical codes (DHET, 2016).	Stress management and self-care (9). Professionalism (6).

Personal characteristics	Quality of service and excellence (UFS, 2016).	Growth mindset (2). Approachable (2).
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Although not mentioned in any existing competency framework related to advising (Chapter 3), academic advisors alluded to research skills 30 times and report writing eight times. This indicates that advisors at the UFS have some form of research and reporting responsibilities, and therefore see skills related to this as important. However, research skills are also a competency needed for any staff member at an institution of higher learning, and this might not be limited to the advising profession, but rather the context in which advisors work.

Another competency mentioned by advisors, but not in the literature, is project management. Advisors must often plan and implement projects that promote student success, and these skills can differentiate between an advisor that performs well and one that does not.

Moreover, the literature identifies that career practitioners need to know the ethical codes associated with advising, as well as understand the scope of practice of advisors (DHET, 2016). In addition to this, advisors alluded to the importance of the professionalism of academic advisors. Typically, understanding professional scope, ethical standards, and professional behaviours are associated with careers of a professional nature.

An array of literature exists on advisor workload, high levels of stress, and burnout (McClellan, 2007; Maller & McGill et al., 2021; Heubner, 2011). This is an indication of the prevalence of a high-stress environment that advisors often have to work in. Apart from literature, advisors confirmed this notion in the interviews when they alluded to stress management, self-care, and resilience being important competencies to have as an advisor.

With regards to personal characteristics and values, literature identified optimism, excellence, and quality of service as important values, whilst advisors added open-mindedness and being approachable as important characteristics for academic advisors at the UFS. Other skills associated with professional behaviours that were identified in the data included reasoning skills, strategic thinking, and strategic planning.

5.3.1.5.1 Competencies associated with advising leadership

Leadership was mentioned as a necessary skill for advising once, and therefore it is necessary to identify if this competency applies to all academic advisors or only advisors in leadership positions. The first step was to identify who the advisors were that referred to leadership skills. General Manager 1 indicated that an element of leadership is needed for all advisors, as an advisor “[is] always at the head of everything”.

In addition to leadership, certain codes identified in the data can also be associated with managerial positions in advising. This may include reasoning skills, conflict management, strategic thinking, and strategic planning. It is recommended that future research focus on the differentiation of skills between academic advisors and advising managers. Both these cohorts were included in the cohort for this study, as the researcher wanted to gain insight into the views of a variety of advisors at the UFS. However, the data indicated that differentiation might be needed for these two groups to some extent.

5.3.1.6 Abilities related to advising

An interesting element that the data of this study raised was that of abilities associated with good advising. This was not initially part of the aim of this research project, but as the researcher was completing the inductive data analysis, it became apparent that some of the codes identified by advisors were not only associated with skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours as the view of competencies in this study, but they also form part of specific abilities, such as emotional intelligence, language ability, and reasoning ability. Abilities can be measured through psychometric tests and being able to identify abilities related to a specific position can help the recruitment, selection, and placement of individuals that display a high level of job fit. This in turn leads to better performance and quality service. The table below provides an overview of codes identified in the literature and during the job analysis which form part of the mentioned abilities.

Table 5.4. Abilities identified in the relational and professional component

	Literature review	Job analysis
Emotional Intelligence	Empathy (DHET, 2016). Self-regulation (McClellan, 2007; Shaffer et al., 2010).	Self-awareness (2). Awareness of others (1). Intrinsic motivation (1).
Language Abilities	Listening (Keller, 2016; DHET, 2016; Haley, 2016; McClellan, 2007). Speaking.	Language skills (17). Presentation and facilitation skills (8). Multi-lingual (9).
Reasoning Ability	Problem solving (UFS, 2016). Conflict management (UFS, 2016).	Problem solving (39). Analytical skills (2).

5.3.1.6.1 Emotional intelligence (EI)

It seems that many of the best practices in academic advising, such as empathic listening, motivational interviewing, and student support require a significant aptitude for EI as well. Literature and interviews in this study emphasised the importance of advisors displaying empathy and caring for students. This is also seen as an important aspect of EI. In addition, the results have indicated that advisors need to be able to build rapport, manage relationships with students, parents, and colleagues, build a student support network, and communicate effectively in a written or oral format. This also forms part of social skills as an element of EI. Advisors further identified elements of personal competence, such as self-awareness, self-control, initiative, and optimism as competencies necessary for advising. In addition, social competencies, such as awareness of others, empathy, service orientation, conflict management, teamwork, and collaboration were also indicated in the results as important for advising. Manz (2020) indicates that very little research has been conducted on EI and academic advising; however, EI is important for building relationships that form the foundation of good advising.

5.3.1.6.2 Language ability

There is consensus amongst sources that academic advisors should have good communication skills and be able to communicate effectively in verbal and non-verbal forms (DHET, 2016; Haley, 2016; Keller, 2016). Language ability in education is often defined as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Linde, 2015). The results of the study referred to most of these aspects and multilingualism as being critical for academic advisors.

5.3.1.6.3 Reasoning ability

With problem solving being identified as the most critical skill for advising, and conflict management also being highlighted by the results, it seems that reasoning ability is another key ability for academic advisors. A deeper investigation into the prevalence of these three abilities in South African advisors could help unfold how psychometric tests related to these abilities can enhance the recruitment and selection of academic advisors in the South African milieu.

5.4 VALIDATION OF DATA

Firstly, the researcher followed a validation process by gathering information from several different sources to triangulate as much information as possible from both existing literature and a variety of academic advisors on various levels at the UFS. This was done to get a variety of views on the interview questions. Secondly, all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and listened to multiple times at different times to minimise bias as much as possible. Thirdly, the researcher used the method of member-checking when transcribing the data. Participants were asked if the researcher was unsure what they meant by a certain comment in the interviews, and participants were allowed to clarify.

Another validation method used was checking if the findings of other related studies correlated with the findings of this study. Although few studies exist on competencies for professional academic advising, some were identified that could be used in the comparison. The findings of this study echoed what other researchers have identified.

5.5 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overall summary of the competencies identified in the literature and the job analysis as being critical for academic advisors at the UFS. Although participants indicated a variety of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours associated with good academic advising, there were many agreements on the competencies that are important for advising.

In Chapter 6, these competencies are triangulated with the literature. A final competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS is then compiled and proposed.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study by providing a short overview of the study and its research aims, summarising the key research findings about the research aims and objectives, as well as providing the value and contribution thereof. A competency framework for advisors at the UFS is presented, and the researcher reflects on the limitations of the study, and present recommendations for future research.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THIS STUDY

Supporting the strategic goals and mission of the university, academic advisors play a critical role in student success and retention rates, which is still a problem in South Africa (Strydom 2016; Keller, 2017; Otto, Rosenthal & Kinle, as cited in Keller, 2016). Voller (2013) states that institutions that are serious about student learning, persistence, and graduation rates must provide training and professional development for their academic advisors. With student success and retention being one of the core drivers of organisational strategy at a university, establishing effective advising practices will form an integral part of the successful attainment of the organisational strategy of the university.

This further accentuates the importance of the professionalisation of academic advising. The conceptualisation of the core competencies that form the basis of the profession can aid in the recruitment, selection, training, performance management, and professional development of advisors at South African institutions.

The main aim of this study was to identify core competencies and propose a competency framework for professional academic advisors at the UFS suited for the South African advising context. The researcher aimed to address this gap through a process of competency modelling in response to the following research questions and aims:

6.2.1 Research aim of the study

The research aim of the study was: To develop a competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS.

6.2.2 Primary research question

The primary research question was: What should a competency framework for professional advising practices at the UFS look like?

6.2.3 Secondary research questions

The primary research question was supported by the following secondary research questions:

- What is unique to the South African advising context?
- What core competencies does the literature identify for professional academic advisors?
- What are the competencies associated with effective professional advising practices at the UFS?

6.2.4 Research objectives for the study

To answer the research questions the following research objectives were set:

1. To investigate the context of academic advising in South Africa through a literature review.
2. To investigate what core competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours) the literature associates with professional academic advising practices.
3. To identify the core competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours) associated with professional academic advisors at the UFS.
4. To develop a competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS.

The primary research question in this study was: What should a competency framework for professional advising practices at the UFS look like? The researcher addressed this question

as the last research objective, and proposed a competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS. The competency framework is presented later in this chapter (section 6.5).

Chapter 2 addressed the first research objective of investigating the context of academic advising in South Africa by reviewing the existing literature. This included conceptualising academic advising, and exploring the history of academic advising nationally and internationally. Academic advising as a profession (section 2.7), academic advising in relation to other practices (section 2.8), and academic advising in the South African context (section 2.10) were also explored.

To address the second research objective, a variety of existing competency frameworks associated with academic advising in its various forms were explored (Chapter 3). The researcher outlined various competency frameworks and then integrated advising competencies and literature, identifying knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values associated with good advising practice.

The job analysis then addressed the third research objective, focusing on professional advising competencies in the UFS context. The job analysis identified knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours associated with professional advising at the UFS. The results were discussed in Chapter 5. Findings from the job analysis and literature study were triangulated to develop a competency framework suited for academic advisors at the UFS. This competency framework is shared in section 6.4. The key findings of this study are shared in the following sections.

6.3 KEY FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

6.3.1 Professionalisation of academic advising in South Africa

When debating professional competencies for an occupation, a conversation about professionalisation will always come to the fore. The debate about academic advising as a profession has been an ongoing conversation nationally and internationally. The researcher investigated the position of academic advising in South Africa in terms of professionalisation. In addition, advising was investigated with regard to other practices as part of the entry point of the competency modelling process. Both these elements of contextualisation are briefly outlined in this section.

6.3.1.1 *Advising as a profession*

The literature review indicated that although academic advising has been conceptualised in South Africa, and is evolving as a standardised practice, it cannot yet be viewed as a profession. The research identified the main reasons as follows:

- The lack of clearly defined functions of academic advisors nationally. The role of advisors still differs from institution to institution, as well as department to department.
- The lack of normative theory on advising in South Africa. More research on professional competencies and role clarification of academic advisors can assist in a clearer conceptualisation of the practice.
- Advisors are appointed without professional standardised training (Shaffer et al., 2010). Although a professional training programme exists, advisors are not compelled to attend the training.
- Limited formal learning pathways and certification for professional advisors, and the lack of research on essential features of academic advising in South Africa (Shaffer et al., 2010). To professionalise academic advising, graduate and post-graduate learning pathways need to be developed for advisors.
- Lack of implementation of development, regulations and ethical codes for advisors (Shaffer et al., 2010). It is advised that the South African Advising Association develop regulatory codes and ethical standards for advisors to help articulate norms and behaviours associated with professional advising in South Africa. Furthermore, it is advised that membership to ELETSA as the regulatory body be made compulsory for South African academic advisors. Professional advising codes and norms can provide valuable insight into the solidification of advisor competencies for recruitment, selection, and development.
- Absence of an acknowledged advising curriculum based on accredited theories and a broad and deep research base, as well as delineated advising approaches that serve as the base portion of the curriculum (Shaffer, 2016).

- The lack of individual autonomy of advisors (Padak & Kuhn, 2009). A clearer distinction of roles and responsibilities of advisors can lead to greater advisor autonomy.

From the job analysis, it seemed that academic advisors at the UFS view academic advising as developing into a profession. One advisor claimed: *“I think now in South Africa academic advice is not a profession, but that is where we are heading to”*. Although advising can only be classified as a practice in South Africa to date, intentional efforts such as the Kresge Foundation-funded Siyaphumelela initiative advanced defining and developing academic advising in South African higher education, while the UCDG grant is making significant progress in advancing research and developing advising in South Africa.

6.3.1.2 Advising in relation to other practices

When investigating academic advising as a profession, the researcher applied the lens of developmental advising, as the UFS draws its advising definition from this view (Strydom, 2016). Advising is viewed as an ongoing process with a series of interactions between an advisor and student where the advisor guides students to self-actualise, realise and connect their educational and career aspirations.

It is from this view, which is adapted from NACADA, that advising is often seen in disciplines such as coaching, counselling, and career development. This study, therefore, investigated advising in relation to these disciplines, and the literature review also drew from these disciplines.

The theory indicated that the main distinction between advising and counselling revolves around the separation of academic, career, and personal matters, as discussed on page 35. In addition, the literature identified the need for academic advising and career development practices to collaborate in supporting students and integrating them into the world of work. While there is clear integration between career development and career advising, the literature indicates a clear distinction between career advising and career counselling, as discussed in section 2.9.2.

6.3.2 Advising in the South African context

As the second objective of this study, the researcher aimed to investigate what was unique in a South African advising context. This was done by reviewing the literature and is discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. The main arguments from this literature study are shared in the following section.

Identifying a clear set of competencies for academic advisors might aid in hiring announcements, job descriptions, successful hires of academic advisors, and intentional development strategies for academic advisors (Woolf & Martinez, 2013). With the UFS playing a leading role in the development of academic advising as a profession in South Africa, this study aimed to identify the core competencies needed for academic advisors in the South African context. The UFS competency framework can serve as a point of reference for other South African institutions when they develop competency frameworks for advisors.

Core competencies were studied concerning the five components of advising as recognised by the UFS, namely conceptual, informational, relational, technological, and professional components. This was done by comparing existing competency frameworks related to the advising practice and additional literature.

The literature first indicated that academic advisors should be well integrated into the higher education system, strategy, vision, and mission. Furthermore, academic advisors should have a clear understanding of advising as a concept and the advising curriculum, and have a theoretical framework for advising.

What makes South Africa unique is that advisors must have knowledge of the specific socio-economic and financial challenges students face, and advisors must know how to create an inclusive and equitable environment when working with students. Furthermore, more than half of South African students are older than 23 years of age. Research indicates that this cohort of students is more likely to discontinue their studies due to personal reasons, are likely to have work and family responsibilities, are focused on work-related skills, have poor confidence in their abilities, and have financial concerns.

Also, the vast majority of South African students come from low socio-economic backgrounds and receive government funding to study. These bring very specific considerations to advising, especially in career advising conversations. South African advisors are not only faced

with academic challenges, but also with students not being able to afford necessities, such as books, travel, and accommodation. Food security and financial stress are everyday issues that South African advisors have to deal with. As a result of these factors, networking with relevant stakeholders and being informed about support services and offices are central to being a good advisor. As one of the participants mentioned: *“They are a one-stop-shop. They have almost all the knowledge, skills and attributes that are built-in pieces of everything that they are surrounded by”*. Furthermore, financial management and dealing with stress are key elements in student learning outcomes in the South African advising context.

With data indicating the under-preparedness of SA students, the developmental approach to advising is brought to the forefront, therefore skills development is a key area of expertise for South African advisors. Another area of expertise crucial to advising in South Africa is inclusion and diversity training. South African higher education institutions host a multitude of students from a large variety of cultural backgrounds and ethnicity, and advisors have to know how to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for these students, who very often require support in basic needs.

6.4 COMPETENCIES ASSOCIATED WITH ACADEMIC ADVISING

This study defined competencies as a combination of observable and measurable knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal attributes, which contribute to enhancing employee performance that ultimately results in organisational success (University of Nebraska, 2022; Zapf, 2013). Approaching advising practice from a competency viewpoint can help clarify advising roles and responsibilities, develop advising standards, and improve the selection, recruitment, training, and development of South African advisors. It will further help provide guidelines towards the development of a formal advising curriculum fit for the needs of the South African context.

It was from this view of competencies that the researcher completed a literature review of competencies associated with the practice of academic advising. Literature and existing competency frameworks related to advising were studied and triangulated using the five components of advising identified by the UFS (2018). These frameworks included the NACADA advisor competency framework, the EDUCOR advising centre competency list, and the National Framework for Career Development. As this study was based on the UFS, the UFS core

competencies were also investigated. The literature review was then followed by a job analysis of academic advising as a position. The job analysis was completed by conducting 10 semi-structured interviews with academic advisors at the UFS using the questions from the functional job analysis and critical incident technique. The results of the literature study on competency frameworks and the job analysis were then triangulated to develop a competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS.

The UFS already has a broad competency framework for all employees at the institution. This competency framework identifies five broad competencies, namely business acumen, results-orientation, strategic-thinking, leading, and building coalitions. All five of these competencies are outlined for staff on different Peromnes levels and are generic. Employees at the UFS can either follow a specialist or leadership pathway at the UFS and then strive to develop competencies in the relevant pathway. Although these are recognised competencies for the UFS as an organisation, they do not inform academic advising as a practice, nor do they assist in clarifying the roles and responsibilities of academic advisors, which is a requirement at the moment, considering the position of advising currently in South Africa. The competency framework proposed in this chapter focuses specifically on academic advising-related competencies and may aid in the recruitment and development of academic advisors at the UFS. The following section discusses findings from the triangulation between literature and the job analysis completed on academic advising at the UFS.

6.5 COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR ACADEMIC ADVISORS AT THE UFS

The researcher compared data collected from the literature study and the critical incident and job analysis done on advising at the UFS. Results were combined to draft a competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS according to the five components of advising. Dalton (1997) supports this method by stating that competency models should not merely include the viewpoint of employees, but should be developed through a research-based approach that includes a planned methodology (refer to section 4.6). The competency framework is discussed below.

CONCEPTUAL COMPONENT

The conceptual component of advising includes elements related to advising as a construct and practice, as well as theories and models related to the practice. The conceptual component further outlines how advising forms part of the organisational structure.

Competencies associated with the conceptual component:

AA concept: history and role of academic advising; advising as a concept (definition, elements, core values of advising); student learning outcomes.

Advising strategy: institutional vision mission and strategy; institutional definition for advising; institutional advising vision, mission, and strategy; institutional advising models; institutional student support network.

Theoretical framework: theories related to advising; advising theories, approaches, and models; theoretical frameworks related to advising practices.

Higher education context: knowledge of higher education; advising curriculum; student context and challenges; student special needs; higher education experience, experience working with students.

INFORMATIONAL COMPONENT

The informational component of advising outlines the information that is crucial for advising both internal and external to the organisation. It further includes information about student context and needs.

Competencies associated with the informational component:

INFORMATION INTERNAL TO THE INSTITUTION

Institutional strategy: operational plans and objectives for the institution; vision, mission, values, the culture of the institution; identify key institutional stakeholders; network with key stakeholders; formal and informal systems of the institution.

Academic requirements and options: (admission requirements, application procedures, access and probation programmes, curriculum, programmes, degree choices, progression, credit load,

re-admission, and exclusion); policies, rules, procedures, and regulations; information around transfers and degree changes; information and processes related to student registration.

Institutional context: campus structures; governance structures; associations; organisation and campus life itself; environmental factors; institutional advising cycle; student engagement data.

INFORMATION EXTERNAL TO THE INSTITUTION:

Laws and governance: legal acts relevant to advising (i.e., constitution, white paper; legal guidelines for academic advising practice, privacy regulations, confidentiality, social justice, human rights, employment legislation, education, and training).

Information on advising practice: career development information (career-related information, financial aid, postgraduate information, post-school opportunities, writing centres, national certificates, rewrite centre schedules, labour market information, skills in high demand, salary scales, national qualifications framework, career pathing information, learnerships, internships, volunteer opportunities, trends, and occupational shifts); student success skills information; curriculum and educational planning; academic monitoring of students.

Formal training: relevant academic qualification (Bachelor's degree, social sciences, higher education); tertiary qualification; training in a helping profession such as psychology or social work; AAPD.

INFORMATION THAT PROVIDES CONTEXT TO THEIR ADVISING ROLE:

Student population context: study success and support; student population theory; gaps and challenges in student learning; student characteristics, needs, and experiences; information on inclusivity (gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, physical and mental capacity); student needs; disability support:

Student background and challenges: socio-economic background of students; cultural awareness; student background; theories that inform understanding of student's population. Student needs in terms of skills development.

Student success skills: successful skills for university; knowledge on transferring success skills (i.e., time management, financial management, coping with stress, content learning; study skills; examination preparation).

RELATIONAL COMPONENT

The relational component includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for planning and conducting advising sessions effectively, building and maintaining trusting relationships with advisees, and acting ethically.

Competencies associated with the relational component:

Planning and conducting advising sessions: planning of advising sessions and interventions; administrative skills; planning skills; record-keeping; report-writing.

Relational skills: relationships with internal and external stakeholders; communication and information sharing problem solving; active listening; questioning and summarising; cultural awareness; conflict management; interpersonal skills; networking; teaching and facilitation; presentation and facilitation; rapport building; referral skills.

Personal attributes: compassion, empathy, confidentiality; assertiveness; developing students; positive regard for students; teamwork and collaboration; perception of student moods, attitudes, and behaviours; cultural awareness; caring for students; innovation.

Advisor values: quality of service; trustworthiness; commitment to institution and employees; encouraging natural trust and open communication, the community of practice, and collaborative work environment; service orientation, patience, and tolerance; relatedness; optimism; inclusivity.

Advising practice: developing advising philosophy; career advising (application of career advising models, educational and career planning, goal setting); coaching (developmental advising approach); student success skills development (time-management, financial management, coping with stress, dealing with content, and learning, study skills, exam preparation).

Ethical standards: ethical issues regarding telephonic, email, and chatroom communication, advice, guidance, and information sharing, sharing of career information with groups and individuals; scope of practice; conflict of interest.

TECHNOLOGICAL COMPONENT

The technological component of advising includes skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to advise students effectively by using the technological tools available.

Competencies associated with the technological component:

Advising systems: Strive to develop new and improved processes, methods, systems, solutions, procedures, and services. To achieve this, advisors should know formal and informal systems (i.e., Peoplesoft, Blackboard, HEDA).

Technical abilities: computer literacy, data analytics, and student tracking; caseload management; data management; innovation.

PROFESSIONAL COMPONENT

The professional component of advising refers to the competencies that allow advisors to maintain excellence in their advising, specialise in advising, and grow in their profession.

Competencies associated with the professional component:

Professional skills: advanced problem solving skills; research skills; conflict management; persuasion; reporting skills; strategic thinking and planning; leadership skills; ethical decision making; project management; formal advising training; resilience; stress management and self-care.

Professional knowledge: advising training and development; knowledge of the field; understanding the boundaries of the scope of practice; ethical code of conduct; continuous learning; decision-making theories and models.

Professional attributes and values: self-awareness; self-regulation; awareness of others; resilience; professionalism; quality of service; excellence; strong work ethic.

Abilities: reasoning ability (analytical skills); emotional intelligence; language ability; critical thinking.

Managerial skills to advising: reasoning skills; conflict management; strategic thinking; planning; leadership skills; assessment and evaluation; project management.

Advisors need to have a strong foundational knowledge base of the higher education environment, the programmes in which they advise, the access and progression requirements, rules and regulations of their department and the organisation, as well as the systems that inform their practice. Furthermore, advisors should know the processes related to advising such as registration, and develop a strong network for student support.

The data showed a preference for a developmental approach when supporting students, through building trusting relationships, identifying areas for growth and development, and displaying empathy and care. This provides some support for the argument that social sciences are an important knowledge foundation for advisors to have. Furthermore, the data identified the most important skill for academic advisors as problem solving. Advisors must also have good communication and language abilities, and manage administration and data related to advising interventions. Advisors have somewhat of a strategic role at the university and therefore must display higher-order thinking skills such as critical thinking, professionalism, and conflict management. Advisors also often work with sensitive data and information, and ethics and sensitivity have been identified as crucial elements in advising.

Lastly, the advising job is done wholeheartedly, and the human element is always critical in the advising relationship. Participants identified values, such as social responsibility, trustworthiness, unconditional positive regard, work ethic, patience, assertiveness, teamwork, and open-mindedness as key to being a good academic advisor.

6.6 VALUE OF THE STUDY (IMPLICATIONS)

The main aim of this research study was to identify the core competencies and propose a competency framework for academic advisors within the South African milieu. This may inform job descriptions and announcements, recruitment, selection, employment, and performance management of academic advisors. In addition, it may provide managers with potentially useful information on which competencies they should grow and develop for effective professional advising. Providing a competency framework can help analyse and improve advising practices at the institution and should benefit the professional development practices of advisors.

In addition, the study provided a framework, which may inform the professional training and development of academic advisors at the UFS, and in South Africa. This may provide a

deeper insight into the institutional expectations of academic advisors in various advising roles at the UFS. Furthermore, the proposed framework might also offer a frame of reference to academic advisors for self-assessment and evaluation, to guide their learning, career development, training, and evaluation (NACADA, 2017c). A contextualised competency framework may help clarify the roles and responsibilities of advisors, identify strengths and areas for staff development, and advance scholarship in the field.

6.7 LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

The sample size was small, which can limit the generalisation of the study to the broader South African context. To generalise results to the broader population, academic advisors of other institutions, who work in different contexts, should be included. The aim of this study was not a generalisation, but rather an in-depth understanding of the UFS community.

Another possible limitation of a study with a small sample size includes a constraint in reaching data saturation. Not reaching data saturation can hamper the validity of the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Although the study only had 10 participants, data saturation was reached at the 8th interview, when participants were no longer adding new insights and views to the data, and when the researcher was satisfied with the richness and amount of data collected. Refer to section 4.5.1 for more information on data saturation in this study.

A third limitation of the study is transferability. Since the study was contextual to the UFS, academic advisors from other institutions might feel that certain competencies needed for their context have been omitted or are redundant to their job roles. Although this study can inform national practice, the aim of this study was not generalisation to the South African advisor population, but rather developing an in-depth understanding of competencies associated with good advising practice at the UFS.

All 10 participants in this study have completed the Academic Advising Short Learning programme at the UFS, which might have informed their perceptions of competencies needed for academic advising and influenced their views of advising. However, since this is an accredited advising training programme, this might also have enriched these participants' views on academic advising as a profession and resulted in a deeper understanding of academic advising as a profession.

In addition, the researcher works within the advising network and is a presenter of the AAPD. Furthermore, all participants of this study know the researcher, which might have influenced how they responded to questions in the semi-structured interviews, as well as how the researcher interpreted the results. However, in qualitative research, the researcher is seen as a research tool, and there is always an interpretive nature to the results (Creswell, 2014). To help mitigate participant and researcher bias, the semi-structured interviews consisted of a standard list of questions asked to all participants.

Only the Bloemfontein and South campuses of the UFS were included in this study. Due to QwaQwa campus advisors not being available during the time of data collection, this campus was not included in the sample. Findings are thus not generalisable to advisors of this campus. However, the UFS adopted a multi-campus model, and one could therefore argue that advisors at the QwaQwa campus would need the same competencies as advisors at the other two campuses.

Another limitation of this study related to the sample was gender representation. The sample consisted of nine females and one male, which means the perspectives of male advisors were underrepresented. Currently, the majority of academic advisors at the UFS are still females.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the research timeline of this study, and a time lapse was present between data collection, transcribing of interviews, and interpretation and reporting of the results. This could limit the richness and understanding of the data. To mitigate this, the researcher engaged with the transcripts reiteratively and listened to recordings of the semi-structured interviews.

The last possible limitation is that some of the competency models and frameworks used in the literature review were not specifically designed with academic advisors in mind. This might limit the predictive nature of the findings for academic advisors.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study was conducted on a group level (academic advisors) and an organisational level (the UFS). A competency framework was thus proposed which can be generalised to the

UFS advisor population. However, to standardise a competency framework for academic advisors in South Africa, a gap exists to conduct a study with a nationally representative sample.

Secondly, the findings indicated a difference between academic advisors and advisors in leadership or management roles. However, the aim of this study was not to differentiate between these two groups of advisors. An opportunity for future research includes a deeper investigation into competencies specifically associated with the managerial roles of advisors versus that of advisors not in leadership positions.

With this study focusing on competencies through the lens of knowledge, skills, behaviours, attitudes, and values, a long list of competencies associated with these forms part of the competency framework. For this reason, the researcher used the concept competency framework instead of competency model. In contrast, literature often looks at competency models as being a model consisting of less than twenty main competencies associated with a specific job or role. Future research clustering this framework into a few main competencies associated with advising can help align competencies with key performance areas and performance management of advisors.

The findings identified competencies associated with good advising practice, but no differentiation was made concerning the level of competencies required for effective advising. Future research mapping competencies against advisor professional pathways and levels could help differentiate between the training and professional development of newly appointed and senior academic advisors.

Although competencies have been identified as associated with career advising practices in this research study, advising was not formally integrated into other career development practices and structures such as the Competency Framework for Career Development Practitioners in South Africa. Further studies can thus be conducted conceptualising advising within this framework.

Lastly, this study, although exploratory, may expand the conversations about abilities associated with academic advising. Research identifying specific abilities related to good advising practice might assist in integrating the correct psychometric measures for the selection and placement of academic advisors, as well as identify areas of development for academic advisors.

6.9 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Academic advising is a fast evolving career in South Africa, and national efforts to establish an advising network with knowledgeable and professional advisors raised the need to identify competencies associated with professional advising practices. Efforts by national projects such as the Siyaphumelela initiative and the University Capacity Development Grant focus on establishing advising networks in institutions of higher learning, recruiting professional advisors, and training and developing professional academic advisors with the competencies relevant to the South African context. The UFS provides a professional development programme for academic advisors nationally, with a conceptual framework drawn from international advising literature, as well as teaching and learning theories and literature. The need thus exists to solidify the understanding of competencies associated with professional advising in the national context, which will, in turn, inform future professional development efforts for academic advisors.

This study was conducted at the UFS with the main aim being to develop a competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS, which can serve as a reference point for other South African institutions of higher learning. In addition, the conceptualisation of the core competencies that form the basis of the profession may aid in the recruitment, selection, training, performance management, and professional development of advisors at the UFS. A solidified competency framework for the South African context may also provide useful information to managers of advisors about the competencies they can grow and develop in their advising teams, thereby improving advising practices. The competency framework may also inform future training and development efforts for professional advisors at the UFS.

When investigating academic advising in the South African context, it is important to consider the socio-economic circumstances of students, as it directly impacts how advisors will approach and conduct advising. Student retention and engagement data should be taken into consideration as well as student needs specific to the African context along with African ideologies. A developmental advising approach was prominent in how UFS advisors view advising. This accentuates the need for viewing academic advising as a holistic process connecting students to student support networks and providing the resources and skills for students to be successful in higher education. This also exemplifies the social nature of professional academic advising, placing advising in relation to occupations, such as counselling, coaching, and teaching.

The findings of this study echoed this view of advising as a professional practice that includes an array of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours. Although this study debated that academic advising cannot yet be classified as a profession in South Africa, national efforts are moving in that direction. For academic advising to move closer to being classified as a profession, graduate training programmes in advising need to be developed, as well as more programmes offering academic advising training, solidifying the universal curriculum and specialised body of knowledge in advising.

However, the data findings indicated that the practice of advising is a specialised high-impact practice, and requires great responsibility. Consequently, good advising practice needs professional skills, such as rapport-building, problem-solving, record-keeping, critical thinking, decision-making, and applying ethical standards.

The competency framework proposed for academic advisors at the UFS included competencies associated with the five components of academic advising, namely the conceptual, informational, relational, technological and professional components. Furthermore, the results of this study identified further possibilities for exploring specific abilities related to professional advising practices, such as emotional intelligence, language ability, and reasoning ability. Other future research possibilities include investigating competencies related to professional advising practice on a national scale so that the results can be generalised and used to inform a national competency framework for academic advisors contextualised for South Africa.

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APPENDIX A: COMPETENCY FRAMEWORKS

Career Development Framework

Competency	Description
Effective Communication	Involves verbal or written interaction. Effective communication enables rapport and relationships to be built and fosters productive and collaborative work environments.
Knowledge, Skills, Values, and attitudes associated with competency	
The competency requires a career development practitioner to: • Conduct a needs assessment with regard to the type of assistance a client requires; • Have good listening and attention-giving skills; • Have effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills; • Possess good written communication skills; • Be perceptive regarding a client's appearance, demeanour, mood, attitude, and behaviour; • Possess questioning and summarising skills; • Show empathy; • Be able to establish rapport with a client;	

• Be able to use a range of software products to convey a message; and • Possess presentation skills.	
Competency	Description
Demonstrate ethical behaviour	Ethical standards guide the conduct of CDPs. The ethical practice serves to develop credible, consistent, and responsible service to people and, in so doing, protects the public and also CDPs. Most professions are guided by an ethical code by which the conduct of their members can be considered.
Knowledge, Skills, Values, and attitudes associated with competency	
The competency requires a career development practitioner to: • Adhere to the ethical codes and standards relevant to the profession as specified by the appropriate professional body; • Understand the current legislative regulations relating to assessments, counselling, and protection of personal information; • Demonstrate ethical decision-making practices and apply ethical standards in day-to-day behaviours when dealing with clients; • Follow legal and ethical principles regarding confidentiality and disclosure of information; • Abide by the legal and ethical principles and practices regarding reproducing copyrighted materials and use of standardised assessment instruments; • Have an understanding of ethical issues regarding telephonic, email, and chatroom communication, advice, guidance, and information sharing;	

• Have an understanding of ethical issues regarding individual career information, advice, and guidance sessions; and • Have an understanding of ethical issues regarding group career information, advice, and guidance sessions	
Competency	Description
Demonstrate professional behaviour	Professional behaviour reflects professionalism; a trait that both clients and colleagues expect to be apparent when striving for excellence in all that one does and includes showing respect and integrity in behaviour with sound self- and case-management skills interacting. Professional behaviour for a CDP refers to. Professional behaviour includes the establishment and management of stakeholder relationships and industry networks.
Knowledge, Skills, Values, and attitudes associated with competency	
The competency requires a career development practitioner to: • Develop a client management system; • Maintain client records; • Understand the boundaries and limitations of his/her scope of practice; • Develop and maintain professional working relationships; • Engage in lifelong learning to continually improve skills and knowledge; • Use planning and time management skills; • Be able to evaluate one's performance and/or career practice;	

• Access a database of stakeholder networks; • Develop a network of stakeholders who can be approached when in need of assistance, advice, or information; • Develop and maintain a database of stakeholder networks at the national, regional, and community levels; • Evaluate the service provided to clients; • Follow case and/or project management procedures; • Organise and manage services provided; and • Supervise personnel as appropriate.	
Competency:	Description:
Manage Diversity	Career development was born out of the social justice movement at the beginning of the 20th century and social justice remains a core value of career development services. Social justice recognises the uniqueness of individuals, i.e. every individual is different. Dealing with people from diverse backgrounds is integral to the work of CDPs. Diversity impacts the career development of people in various ways including living with disabilities, personal characteristics, beliefs and values, gender expectations, and access to opportunities.
Knowledge, Skills, Values, and attitudes associated with competency	
The competency requires a career development practitioner to: • Understand individual differences related to gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and physical • and mental capacities;	

- Recognise diversity in terms of culture, values, skills, attributes, and circumstances;
- Identify how aspects of diversity impact career choice;
- Identify special needs concerning career choices;
- Stay up-to-date with issues on diversity;
- Develop a database and network of education providers who specialise in special needs/disabilities training; and
- Develop a database and network of employers for special needs clients/clients living with disabilities.

Competency:	Description:
Use career information effectively	A fundamental reason for people accessing CDPs is to obtain information on occupations and jobs, learning pathways, study options, and employment opportunities. Labour market information provides a foundation for assisting people to make informed study decisions. In-depth knowledge of and ability to use labour market information is crucial in providing career development services and employment.
Knowledge, Skills, Values, and attitudes associated with competency	
Competency requires a career development practitioner to: • Know where to access and have access to career information; • Know where to access and have access to information on financial aid; • Know where to access and have access to information on post-school education and training opportunities;	

• Know the entry requirements for post-school education and training programmes and courses; • Know where to access and have access to information on national benchmark test (NBT) writing centres; • Know where to access and have access to information on the national senior certificate (NSC) rewrite centres and schedules; • Know where to access and have access to labour market information; • Know where to access and have access to the national list of skills in high demand; • Know where to access information on salary scales; • Critically assess the quality of the information that is being used; • Thoroughly understand the national qualifications framework; • Know how to enter into a particular career through access to and understanding of career pathing information; • Access work availability information including internships, learnerships, apprenticeships, youth wage subsidy opportunities, and volunteer opportunities; • Refer clients to recognised papers and e-resources on career-related information; • Understand legislation pertaining to employment, education, and training; • Monitor trends in occupational shifts; and • Guide individuals and groups to develop educational plans.	
Competency	Description:

Deliver an effective career development service	Converting knowledge into a meaningful career development engagement is a competency often taken for granted. A CDP must be able to effectively draw upon his/ her knowledge to deliver meaningful career development place in diverse settings. In certain settings, the CDP will framework and, therefore, standardised instruments will only be used by registered practitioners who will operate under SCDP and need to work with groups and in other settings, the CDP will need to work with individuals, making use of appropriate resources and technologies. Regulations of the psychology profession underpin this competency service. The delivery of career development services takes
Knowledge, Skills, Values, and attitudes associated with competency	
This competency requires a career development practitioner to: • Provide career information and advice, using appropriate and available means/resources/technologies; • Deliver career information sessions; • Facilitate individual and group career information sessions; • Conceptualise a career development programme for clients; • Design a career development programme for clients; • Deliver a career development programme for clients; and • Evaluate a career development programme with clients.	
Competency:	Description:

Advance employability of clients	A critical role of a CDP is to improve a client's opportunity of being employed or promoted. This includes providing information on employability, CV writing, and editing, coaching for interviews, advising on job search strategies, and other interventions that make a person more employable, using their existing skillset.
Knowledge, Skills, Values, and attitudes associated with competency	
The competency requires a career development practitioner to: • Know how to access state, parastatal, and private employment opportunities; • Assist clients to register on national, regional, state, and private unemployment databases; • Have knowledge of job-hunting techniques; • Assist individuals to identify their work-related interests, skills, knowledge, and values; • Possess CV writing skills; • Prepare clients for interviews; • Understand the importance of work on the human psyche; and • Develop a network of recruitment agencies, both generic and specialised.	
Competency:	Description:
Use career information effectively	A fundamental reason for people accessing CDPs is to obtain information on occupations and jobs, learning pathways, study options, and employment opportunities. Labour market information provides a

	foundation for assisting people to make informed study and employment decisions. In-depth knowledge of and ability to use labour market information is crucial in providing career development services.
Knowledge, Skills, Values, and attitudes associated with competency	
The competency requires a career development practitioner to: • Know where to access and have access to career information; • Know where to access and have access to information on financial aid; • Know where to access and have access to information on post-school education and training opportunities; • Know the entry requirements for post-school education and training programmes and courses; • Know where to access and have access to information on national benchmark test (NBT) writing centres; • Know where to access and have access to information on the national senior certificate (NSC) rewrite centres and schedules; • Know where to access and have access to labour market information; • Know where to access and have access to the national list of skills in high demand; • Know where to access information on salary scales; • Critically assess the quality of the information that is being used; • Thoroughly understand the national qualifications framework;	

- Know how to enter into a particular career through access to and understanding of career pathing information;
- Access work availability information including internships, learnerships, apprenticeships, a youth wage subsidy opportunities, and volunteer opportunities;
- Refer clients to recognised papers and e-resources on career-related information;
- Understand legislation pertaining to employment, education, and training;
- Monitor trends in occupational shifts; and
- Guide individuals and groups to develop educational plans.

Competency	Description
Understand career development	Career development has a long history during which an extensive theory base has been built, that distinguishes career development from other fields. This theory base provides a way of understanding individual and group career development and should inform practice.
Knowledge, Skills, Values, and attitudes associated with competency	
This competency requires a career development practitioner to: • Describe a range of decision-making theories and models; • Describe a range of career development theories and models; • Understand the process of lifelong career development;	

- Understand the strengths and limitations of career theory;
- Utilise theories that are appropriate for the population being served;
- Apply career development theories to practice;
- Understand the interaction between multiple life roles;
- Understand and explain career transition;
- Understand how economic principles impact career development practices;
- Understand how government policies impact career development practices; and
- Know information, techniques, and models related to career planning and placement.

Competency:	Description
Facilitate non-standardised self-exploration career assessments	Psychometric and non-standardised assessments are established and recognised processes of acquiring qualitative and quantitative information about clients seeking help. Whilst non-standardised self-exploration assessments and techniques can be facilitated by all professionally trained psychologists, and techniques he/ she can apply to relate to /her competency level. psychometrists and counsellors. The CDP must know which career assessment CDPs, and standardised psychometric assessments may only be used by suitably categorised HPCSA registered.
Knowledge, Skills, Values, and attitudes associated with competency	
This competency requires a career development practitioner to: • Describe the nature and use of different types of non-standardised self-exploration assessments and	

- techniques, including questionnaires, checklists, interviews, inventories, tests, observations, surveys,
- and performance assessments;
- Refer clients to SCDPS who are professionally trained and registered to offer standardised psychometric assessments, when required;
- Identify, select and facilitate a selection of paper format and computer format non-standardised self-exploration career assessments and techniques for which he/she has been professionally trained;
- Discuss and explain the results of a selection of non-standardised self-exploration assessment instruments for which he/she has been professionally trained;
- Select non-standardised self-exploration assessment techniques and non-standardised self-exploration career assessments that are appropriate for group facilitation, as well as those appropriate for individual facilitation;
- Use only those non-standardise self-exploration techniques and assessments for which they are properly and professionally trained; and
- Refer clients to non-standardised self-exploration computer-based assessments when required.

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT LETTER



Email message that will be used to invite participants to take part in study

Dear Academic Advisor at the University of the Free State

I am currently completing a master's degree in Industrial Psychology at the University of the Free State, and I would like to invite you to participate in the research study.

The study aims to develop a competency framework for academic advisors at the UFS, and your input can be very valuable. Should you be willing to part in the study, I would like to schedule an appointment with you in which I will conduct a semi-structured interview that will inform this study. Interview will take approximately an hour. Attached to this email, you will find the complete consent form, which can provide you with more information on the study.

The study has been approved by the ethics committee of the University of the Free State. The study is not for any purposes of the academic advising office at the Centre for Teaching and Learning, but for academic purposes of completing mini-dissertation in Industrial Psychology.

Please respond to this email with a suitable date and time, should you be willing to participate in this study. Should you need further information on the interview procedure, you are welcome to contact me at: 051 401 9191, email: aucampjj@ufs.ac.za.

Yours sincerely

Ninette Aucamp



APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM



RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

DATE

October 2018 – October 2019

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

A Competency framework for Academic Advisors at the University of the Free State

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):

Ninette Aucamp 2003014822 051 401 9191

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

*Economic and Management Sciences
Department of Industrial Psychology*

STUDYLEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

*Mr Lyle Markham
051 401 2337*

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This study aims to identify the core competencies and propose a competency model for academic advisors within the South African milieu.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

The research is being conducted by Ms Ninette Aucamp, as part of a mini-dissertation for completion of a structured masters degree in Industrial Psychology at the University of the Free State.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.



Approval number:

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

The study is conducted on academic advisors at the University of the Free State. The researcher aims to identify the core competencies for academic advisors in the South African milieu. As an academic advisor at the UFS, you have been purposefully selected to take part in the study, based on your knowledge and experience in academic advising. Your input will provide valuable insight into the focus of this study.

The researcher already has the contact details of all participants, as she works as an academic advisor at the UFS herself. Approximately 12 academic advisors will be contacted directly by the researcher using email. They will be invited to take part in the study. Should they agree, an appointment will be scheduled for a semi-structured interview. Written informed consent will be signed by each participant before commencement of the interview.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in the study will include a semi-structured interview that last about an hour. The purpose of the interview is to gather your understanding of what knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes should form part of a competency framework for academic advisors. After analysing the data, the researcher will share the identified competencies with you for further comments and input. This process will serve as validation of data.

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. You will also be provided with the interview questions in advance, so that you can be prepared for the interview, and decide what information you would like to share.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Findings in this study will help inform academic advisors at the UFS and in South Africa on what competencies can be developed as an academic advisor. Furthermore, it can help inform institutions on the recruitment, selection, appointment, and development of academic advisors.



WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Data collection will take place during work hours, and taking part in the interview might take an hour of your work day. In order to minimize loss of work time as much as possible, the researcher will schedule an time for the interview that is convenient for you, and accommodates your work responsibilities. There are no other associated risks in taking part in this study. Although the researcher works at CTL as an academic advisor, and thus form part of the academic advising network, this study is not for the purposes of CTL, but for the purpose of completing the masters degree in Industrial Psychology. However, results of this study will provide valuable insight into the field of academic advising. Your participation in this study will not have any direct impact on your job as an academic advisor at the University, and data gathered during the study will have no influence on your performance, as data will be treated as confidential.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Your data will not be identifiable, as pseudonyms will be used in raw data. All data will be stored on a password protected computer, and hard copies of documents will be stored in a locked cabinet. In addition, the researcher will link any person or department to the data in such an extent that that person/department is identifiable in the results. Records of the data will not be made available to any person other than the researcher, and the supervisor of this study. Anonymous data collected in this study may be used in other purposes such as a research report, journal publication, conference presentation etc. In this case data will be treated as anonymous, and the research will only report on the overall findings. Participants will not be identifiable in this case. During the triangulation of the data, the same anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained than in the interviews. Academic advisors will not be informed on who the other academic advisors are that are taking part in the study.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in the home office of the researcher. For future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After five years, raw data will be destroyed through shredding the physical documents. Electronic data will be permanently deleted from the password protected hard drive used to store the data.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Hard copies of data will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in the home office of the researcher. For future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After five years, raw data will be destroyed through shredding the physical documents. Electronic data will be permanently deleted from the password protected hard drive used to store the data.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

No payment, reward, or other incentives will be offered for participation in this study. There will also not be any financial cost for participants. There are no foreseeable side-effects or other forms of harm

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

APPENDIX D: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

27-Nov-2018

Dear Mrs Jeanetta Aucamp

Ethics Clearance: A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR ACADEMIC ADVISORS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

Principal Investigator: Mrs Jeanetta Aucamp

Department: Industrial Psychology Department (Bloemfontein Campus)

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Economic & Management Sciences, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Committee of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: UFS-HSD2018/1372

This ethical clearance number is valid from 27-Nov-2018 to 26-Nov-2021. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours Sincerely

Dr. Petrus Nel

Chairperson: Ethics Committee Faculty of Economic & Management Sciences

Economics Ethics Committee

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APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The following interview protocol was used in the semi-structured interviews:

JOB ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

- What is the main purpose of the job of an academic advisor at the University of the Free State?
- What are the key responsibility areas of an academic advisor?
- Describe to me what your main areas of responsibilities look like in your job.
- What experience is needed for an academic advisor?
- Describe what knowledge you think an academic advisor should have.
- What skills do you think an academic advisor should have to provide good academic advice to students?
- What are typical behaviours that you associate with a good academic advisor?
- What are typical values that you associate with a good academic advisor?

FUNCTIONAL JOB ANALYSIS

- What kind of things does an academic advisor need to complete their job?
- What data does an academic advisor use, collect, and have access to in their daily job?
- Who do academic advisors provide instructions to?
- What type of reasoning does an academic advisor need to be able to do?
- Explain what mathematical abilities an academic advisor should have to be successful in their job.

- Explain what language abilities are needed for an academic advisor.
- Thinking of the advising function in your position: How would you describe percentages of the following functions? Dealing with people, dealing with data, doing research, working with systems
- What kind of systems, tools, and equipment do you use to perform your job?
- What makes the academic advising job unique from other jobs?

CRITICAL INCIDENT TECHNIQUE

- Scenario: A student emailed you for an advising appointment. This student failed most of his or her modules in the first semester. What would an excellent advisor/bad advisor do in this situation?
- Scenario: A student came for registration but has no idea what he or she wants to register for. What would a good/bad advisor do in this situation?
- Scenario: a student has appealed to register for a module for the third time in their faculty. This is a core module of the course. The appeal was not granted. The student has a breakdown in the advisor's office. What would a good/bad advisor do in this situation?
- What kind of behaviours could get you a pat on the back, a promotion or a well done as an advisor?
- What kind of behaviours could get you into trouble in this department as an advisor?
- Imagine you have to appoint an academic advisor in your department. What would you include in the job profile/advert?
- What kind of person would you be looking for when appointing an advisor in your department?

APPENDIX F: FREQUENCIES AND MEANING OF CODES IDENTIFIED IN THE INTERVIEWS

Table F.1. Frequencies and meaning of codes identified in interviews

Name	Description	Files	References
ATTITUDES		10	113
Approachable	Being friendly and easy to talk to (Cambridge, 2022).	2	2
Assertiveness	The quality of being confident and not frightened to say what you want or believe (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2022)	5	6
Caring for students	Being kind towards students, and offering emotional support (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2022). Can sometimes be seen as having empathy or being service-orientated.	10	28
Motivate students	To make students eager to do something (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2022).	4	6
Coaching (Developmental Process)	Specialized instruction and training are provided to enable individuals to acquire or enhance particular skills, or to improve performance (APA, 2022). Academic coaches will help students set goals and acquire academic success.	9	23
Growth Mindset	Believing that your most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. This view creates a love for learning and resilience that is essential for accomplishment (Dweck, 2015). Advisors explain this as being open-minded and open to learning. Open-mindedness can be viewed as the willingness to consider	2	2

	ideas and opinions that are different to your own (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2022).		
Optimism (Resilience)	The quality of being full of hope and emphasizing the good parts of a situation, or a belief that something good will happen (Cambridge, 2022). Optimism is also seen as fostering resilience in students and showing them that there is still hope.	3	3
Patience and Tolerance	The ability to wait, or to continue doing something despite difficulties, or to suffer without complaining or becoming annoyed (patience), as well as the willingness to accept behaviours and beliefs that are different from your own (tolerance) (Cambridge, 2022).	4	6
Unconditional Positive regard for student	A Term used by humanist psychologist Carl Rogers to describe a technique used in his non-directive, client-centred therapy. It includes showing complete support and acceptance of a person no matter what that person says or does. This means the advisor supports the student, whether they have expressed “good” or “bad” behaviours.	3	8
VALUES			
Values	Internalized cognitive structures or principles guide choices on what is right or wrong, and how to act in a given situation (Cambridge, 2022; Oysermann, 2015). It is done by evoking a sense of basic principles of right and wrong, a sense of priorities, and a willingness to make meaning and see patterns. Like other cognitive constructs, values can be studied at the individual level or the group level (Oysermann, 2015). Values therefore will often guide the decision-making and behaviours of advisors (Oysermann, 2015).	10	26

Trustworthy	Trustworthiness can be seen in psychology as an attitudinal response stemming from three qualities: 1) ability (having the skill needed to do something), 2) benevolence (being willing to help), and 3) integrity (the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that you refuse to change (Plaisance, 2014; Cambridge, 2022)	5	7
Work ethic (set of standards for behaviour at work)	An attitude of determination and dedication towards one's job. A person with a work ethic displays high moral principles and works hard (Indeed, 2022).	3	4
BEHAVIOURS		9	46
Academic Monitoring of students	The process of observing students' academic progress in one or more subjects over a while. It is used to identify students who are struggling, excelling, or underachieving (Wallace, 2014).	5	13
Monitoring of probation students	The proactive intrusive approach where at-risk students are monitored and provided academic support by advisors.	2	3
Information Sharing	Sharing information with students with regards to their admission, registration, academic progress, and feedback such as appeal outcomes etc. Advisors often share institutional information, or faculty or curriculum-based information.	3	8
Student Feedback	Providing students with feedback on their academic progress and processes related to advising.	3	6
Preparation for Sessions	Preparing for academic advising sessions. This could include following up on previous appointments with the student, doing research, checking the student's	1	2

	record, scheduling the appointment, signing the advising contract, and printing materials and information.		
Self-care and stress management	Self-care has been defined as providing adequate attention to one's own physical and psychological wellness (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001). Beyond being an aspirational goal, engaging in self-care has been described as an "ethical imperative" (Norcross & Barnett, 2008) and is part of the APA's Ethics Code of 2002 (Doran, 2022).	5	9
Curriculum or Educational Planning	Assisting students to consider educational objectives relating to their career plans and personal developmental goals, as well as tentatively selecting their modules.	7	17
Conflict Management	Conflict Management is viewed by literature as a competence rather than a skill. However, dealing with those can be alleviated by having Conflict Management skills as a competency. Having this skill is crucial in being a leader. (Peoplebuilders, 2022)	7	11
Critical Thinking	Critical thinking can be viewed either as a general skill, or the ability to think, or it can be viewed as a domain-specific skill. This means that you can be good at critical thinking in one area of expertise and not so good at critical thinking in another domain. (Kaminski, 2019). Critical thinking with reflective thinking can also be placed within the competence of Strategic thinking within the UFS framework.	8	9
Leadership	Leadership can be viewed as a culmination of a few leadership competencies, which include Integrity, Trustworthy, Communication, Self-discipline, and teamwork. The UFS defines leading in their competency framework as: Managing Diversity, developing others, and Team Building (UFS, 2016)	6	12

Innovation	Innovation can be defined as the ability to create something new based on the knowledge that has been attained. The result will be radically different from that which is already in existence (Exforsys, 2006). Innovation skills are usually a combination of one's ability to think creatively, problem-solving ability, as well as functional and/or technical abilities. Fairly speaking, innovation skills are one's ability to apply a blend of knowledge, skills and attributes in a specific context (Cleverism, 2022; Exforsys, 2006). An innovator is someone who introduces new ideas and changes by thinking differently (The University of Sheffield Careers Service, n.d.)	1	1
Reasoning Ability	Reasoning skills generally refer to critical thinking skills like analysis, evaluation and synthesis. However, they also include wider skills like more abstract thinking, creative thinking, information processing and problem-solving. (Ref – Google sheet). The UFS competency framework would indicate Strategic Thinking as a similar competency to reasoning skills, taking into account innovation, change management, and analytical thinking. However, elements such as problem-solving and judgement or decision-making, often viewed as part of reasoning skills, are viewed as the competency "Results orientated in the UFS competency framework.	6	13
Research Skills	The ability to search for, locate, extract, organize, evaluate and use or present information that is relevant to a particular topic. Academic research specifically refers to the process of detailed and methodical investigation into some area of study (National University of Ireland, 2022).	9	30

APPENDIX G: TURNITIN REPORT

A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR ACADEMIC ADVISORS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

by Ninette Aucamp

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, Huibrecht Christiana Lombard, hereby confirm that I have edited the under mentioned document to the best of my ability, according to the tenets of academic discourse.

A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR ACADEMIC ADVISORS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

by

NINETTE AUCAMP

Although I always strive to consistently maintain the highest quality in respect of document editing, I have no way of ensuring that source documents are indeed replaced with my edited version. I also do not have control over changes subsequently made to documents. The final responsibility for documents therefore always rests with the commissioning author.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "H. Lombard".

Mrs H C Lombard

MA (Language Practice) (*Cum Laude*)