Guidelines Binding Study Advice (BSA) procedure

Updated May 2025

1 Introduction

These guidelines must be read in conjunction with AUC's Academic Standards and Procedures (AS&P) article 3.7. In the event of any conflict or inconsistency between these guidelines and article 3.7 of the AS&P, article 3.7 of the AS&P shall take precedence.

Continuation past the first year when eventual graduation is unlikely or delayed, does not benefit either the student or the higher education institution. The intention of the Binding Study Advice (BSA) is to provide redirection for students unlikely to succeed, such that they may explore other opportunities for success.

2 Binding Study Advice (BSA) at AUC

2.1 Students are referred to AS&P article 3.7 for information on who issues the BSA, the BSA Committee, and AUC's BSA standard.

2.2 The expectation is that, with very few exceptions, all students admitted to AUC will re- enrol after their first year, that they will achieve 30 EC per semester and 60 EC per year, and they will graduate in three years (six semesters). If a student fails a course and completes fewer than 30 EC per semester, they are offered extra support and together with their tutor, a mutually agreed academic progress plan is put in place. Students who have not fulfilled a credit load of at least 54 EC in their first year at AUC are considered unlikely to succeed, and in absence of proven mitigation, will be issued with a negative BSA.

3 Timeline for communications, indications on study progress, actions, and issuing of BSA

3.1 October/November

A general informational communication is sent or published to all first-year students outlining the BSA process.

3.2 January

First-year students (and second year students who received a BSA postponement at the end of their first year) receive, in writing, the first *indication of their study progress*. 'Green', 'amber' or 'red' indications are issued based on their results from the first 16-week period (as registered in SIS at the time of sending the indication).

- '**Green**' indicates 24 or more EC were achieved. If this level of performance is maintained, the student is on track to achieve 60 EC in their first year and receive a positive BSA.
- '**Amber**' indicates 18 EC were achieved. As long as the student does not fall behind any further, they can achieve 54 EC in their first year and receive a positive BSA (AS&P article 3.7.4). Students receiving amber indications are required to meet with their Tutors to complete an academic progress plan as necessary, discuss and where possible document any negatively impacting personal circumstances (see section 4), and to start thinking about what they will need to do if they do fall farther behind (how they would justify their request for mitigation consideration and therefore what information they need to start collating in a mitigation dossier). Failure to do so may negatively affect their chances of receiving dispensation/postponement, if they do fall further behind.
- '**Red**' indicates fewer than 18 EC were achieved. Even if the student passes six courses during the rest of their first year, they are at risk of achieving only 48 EC or fewer and receiving a negative BSA. Students receiving red indications are required to meet with their Tutors to complete an academic progress plans as necessary, discuss any negatively impacting personal circumstances (and ensure these are recorded and documented, see section 4), make a realistic assessment of their chances of catching up their credit deficit, and start to their dossier for their request for mitigation consideration. Failure to do so may negatively affect their chances of receiving dispensation/postponement, if they do not manage to repair their credit deficit and qualify for a positive BSA.

3.3 Students who deregister from AUC **before the 1st February** (via Studielink) are exempted from a BSA (AS&P article 3.7.10)

3.4 **May/June**
Students meet with their Tutors to discuss their individual progress and their course registrations for their third semester.

3.5 **By end of June**
First-year students (and second year students who received a BSA postponement at the end of their first year) receive, in writing, a second *indication of their study progress*. At this stage, they will be categorized as either 'green', 'amber' or 'red' based on the results from their first semester as registered in SIS at the time of sending the indication.

- '**Green**' indicates 54 or more EC have been achieved and the student will receive a positive BSA.

- **'Amber'** indication - Student has 48 EC and needs to pass their final 4-week period course in order to receive a positive BSA. If they fail that course, the Dean of AUC is very likely to issue a negative BSA as they will not meet AUC's BSA standards. On receipt of their 4-week period exam results, should they not have passed and received the required number of EC,s the student will be notified and will be given 2 weeks from receipt of this advice to submit their request for mitigation (dossier).

- **Red'** indication – the student has fewer than 48 EC and on the condition all grading has been submitted, will not meet AUC's BSA standard. The student will have 2 weeks from receipt of this advice to submit their request for mitigation (dossier).

3.6 **Applying for Mitigation Consideration**
If the student finds themselves in Red as described in 3.5, they may submit a request for mitigation consideration with the hope of a BSA postponement or dispensation recommendation. This provides the student more time to meet the BSA requirements. The student will need to provide all of the relevant information (their dossier), as part of their application for the BSA committee to make a full assessment and recommendation to the Dean. This submission should be made within 2 weeks of receipt of their 2nd advice letter. The BSA committee can then make one of the following recommendations to the Dean:

- Yellow' indication - Student has fewer than 54 EC but the BSA Committee has decided to recommend dispensation/postponement to the Dean of AUC on the basis of the student's dossier. On the understanding the Dean agrees with that recommendation and confirms their decision as such, the student will be allowed to continue into their second year of studies. The student will then be required to meet with their Tutor to complete an academic progress plan as necessary, discuss any personal or other extenuating circumstances so that appropriate counselling and support can be offered, and make realistic plans to catch up the credit deficit.

- 'Red' indication - Student has fewer than 48 EC and on the condition all grading has been submitted, will not meet AUC's BSA standard. The BSA Committee has not recommended dispensation/postponement on the basis of their dossier. The Dean of AUC intends to issue a negative BSA. The student will receive a "Proposed negative BSA recommendation" email.

3.7 Atthe end of the students' first year: BSA Committee hearings

3.7.1 Students who received a "Proposed negative BSA recommendation" notification, will have the option to request a hearing which will be organized by the BSA committee. During this hearing, the student will be able to present their case for dispensation/postponement to the BSA committee. The BSA committee will then make its recommendation to the Dean of AUC for final decision making.

3.7.2 The hearing is not for reporting (for the first time) new circumstances that should have already been notified previously to the Tutor and should have already been in the student's dossier. The student can use the hearing to substantiate, for example, that it was not possible to report the circumstances in a timely fashion, or that not meeting the BSA standard was a direct consequence of new and very recent circumstances that could not be notified earlier, or that the reported circumstances in their dossier had a much greater impact on their study progress than expected.

3.7.3 The BSA Committee hearings will take place before the end of the second week in August.

3.8 At the end of the students' first year: BSA decision

3.8.1 Based on all the results from their first year, students who receive a positive BSA will receive their final advice letters in July.

Students who have gone through the assessment via the BSA committee, will receive their final advice letters by 31 of August. See section 7 for information on appealing a negative BSA decision.

3.8.2 The full process and associated timeline for this part of the process can be found on the AUC Student Information site.

4 Personal circumstances (PC's)

4.1 Article 2.1 of the implementation decision on the WHW (Uitvoeringsbesluit WHW 2008) gives a list of personal circumstances to be taken into consideration when a student is at risk of receiving a negative BSA. These personal circumstances (hereafter PC's) are: illness; physical, sensory or other impairment; pregnancy; special family circumstances; certain specified leadership/representative positions * other personal circumstances specified in a program's Academic Standards and Procedures, and other personal circumstances that, if not taken into consideration by the higher education institution, could lead to serious injustice.

4.2 In general, students are expected to report PC's to their Tutor within two weeks of when circumstances began or became known to the student. A description of the PC's and any documentation provided is recorded by the Tutor in the student's dossier.

- **Illness**. The student must notify their Tutor of their illness as soon as possible and indicate that the illness is preventing or has prevented them from completing graded assignments/exams. The notification should be accompanied by a statement from the attending physician or other medical professional, stating the duration and period of the illness. (The attending physician should not be asked to give an opinion on whether the illness might impair the student's (medical) ability or disability to study, as making this assessment is (in the Netherlands) grounds for a doctor to refuse giving such a statement. Only confirmation of the duration and period of the illness is required. The student can however approach an independent physician (not their own doctor) for an assessment of the impact of their illness on their ability or disability to study.)
- **Impairment**. Students with physical, sensory or other serious functional impairments should notify their Tutor when they start their studies at AUC or as quickly as possible after the onset of the impairment. Where possible, the notification should be accompanied by a declaration from a medical professional or other qualified specialist confirming the impairment and its effect on the student's ability to carry out standard day-to-day activities (including education). (In the Netherlands, the student's own doctor may refuse to give such a declaration, in which case the student can approach an independent physician for an assessment.)
- **Pregnancy**. Pregnancy should be notified to the Tutor as quickly as possible. The notification should be accompanied by a declaration from a midwife, gynecologist or attending physician that the student is/was pregnant.
- **Special family circumstances**. The student must notify their Tutor of the circumstances as soon as possible and indicate that the circumstances are preventing or have prevented them from completing graded assignments/exams. Where possible, the notification should be accompanied by documentation confirming the circumstances.
- **Other personal circumstances**. The student must notify their Tutor of the circumstances as soon as possible and indicate that the circumstances are preventing or have prevented them from completing graded assignments/exams. Where possible, the notification should be accompanied by documentation confirming the circumstances. If a student is eligible, for example, for extra facilities according to the VU or UvA because of their top athlete status, then this should be notified to the Tutor as quickly as possible together with the documentation confirming the top athlete status.

4.3 On the basis of the information in the student's dossier. The student needs to demonstrate a causal relationship between the PC's and their poor academic performance. In their assessment, the BSA Committee will consider whether the timing of the PC's were particularly unfortunate with regard to its negative impact on the student's

study progress, how long the PC's lasted, the scale of the negative impact of the PC's on the student's academic performance, and if the student's academic performance deteriorated after the start of the PC's. The Board of Examiners** may provide guidelines to the BSA Committee for making these assessments.

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* This rarely applies to AUC students (first year students are not eligible for a seat on the Student Council for example).

** Members of the Board of Examiners are not usually also members of the BSA Committee, but exceptions may be made by the Dean of AUC with the consent of the Board of Examiners.

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5 Other extraordinary extenuating circumstances

5.1 In exceptional cases, the BSA Committee may advise the Dean of AUC to deviate from the regulations in favour of the student, if, owing to extraordinary extenuating circumstances, application of the regulations would lead to serious injustice (see AS&P 3.7.09). The Board of Examiners may provide guidelines to the BSA Committee regarding what constitutes, and how to weigh, extraordinary extenuating circumstances.

It is important that as part of their postponement dossier, the student ensures they have done all they can to avoid falling below the BSA requirements (and can demonstrate this in their documentation). The students Tutor plays a vital role and it is therefore important the student engages as early on as possible with their tutor throughout their first year, in particular when experiencing difficulties. The student will be given every opportunity at their hearing with the BSA committee to talk through their mitigation, unless the BSA committee has already decided to advise the Dean of AUC to deviate from the regulations in favour of the student on the basis of the information in their dossier.

6 Appealing a negative BSA decision

6.1 An AUC student who has received a negative BSA decision can appeal to the VU Examination Appeals Board (VU COBEX). The appeal, accompanied by sound motivation, must be sent within six weeks of the issuing of the negative BSA decision. https://vu.nl/en/about- vu/more- about/disputes-procedure

6.2 While awaiting the decision of VU COBEX on the appeal, the student is not permitted to be enrolled on the AUC programme, nor to live in the AUC student residences. If the student requires a speedy decision in order to avoid serious study delay, they can request a provisional ruling (*voorlopige voorziening*) from the chair of the VU COBEX when submitting their appeal. If approved, a provisional ruling suspends the negative BSA decision until the COBEX makes its final decision on the appeal. If the appeal is granted, the negative BSA decision is annulled and the student can remain enrolled at AUC or re-enrol from the next enrolment moment (either 1 February or 1 September). If the appeal is denied, the negative BSA decision is enforced: the student is deregistered from AUC and may no longer live in the AUC student residences.