# SUnStAR

## SUPPORTING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AT RISK OF DROPPING OUT

# GUIDELINES FOR THE "PLATFORM FOR INSTITUTION SPECIFIC SOURCES OF SUPPORT"

Platform for
Institution Specific
Sources of Support

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## Table of contents

## Specific Sources of Support

In this section information is provided about another resource included in SUnStAR platform: sources of support. This is a guideline for the feedback and information for respondents. The information that is provided should be locally and on university level. For this, an information search process and along going activities are necessary that are explained in this paper. Within the scope of this feedback, also a linkage to the six modules of the self-directed online course is possible/established.

The feedback and information that students receive after the SRT 2.1, is structured along the single scales of the questionnaire. The feedback and information are two parts: a general one and an individualized one with university specific information including also a linkage to the self-directed online course.

The first general part is based on a red-yellow-green system which was explained in the SRT section of this handbook. The student's average is compared to the overall average of all respondents. If the individual average is located in the top third, a green light with a feedback is given. Green indicates that everything is fine for this construct. The yellow color refers to the second third group. The student might have some problems within this scale (e.g. concentration), and should improve this. A corresponding standardized feedback text is given. Red symbolizes the need for action, and is feedbacked accordingly to the student.

Besides the standardized text, which you find in the SRT 2.1 feedback template, there is room for individual information of your university or local counselors. To make the information search process easier for you, we provide a template in the Annex A. There are various target groups of the SRT 2.1. Some of them have a dropout intention, others don't.

The four main groups are:

1. Students that fill in the questionnaire, because they do it voluntarily and haven't thought about dropping out.
2. Students who have considered dropping out, but are insecure about it.
3. Students who certainly will drop out, and who might be supported with the feedback results.
4. Students who don't care about their results, but are certainly going to drop out.

Besides, there are several more target groups: Unsatisfied students without dropout intention. And maybe there are also satisfied students, who certainly want to quit.

These subgroups should facilitate the information searching process, taking into account that student can easily find a target group to which identifies. However, there are always individuals with an own personal problem set, which might be not detectable on a first view. Those individual students need more help by a counselor or psychologist. The SRT 2.1 with its feedback clearly wants to give impulses for further reflection and at the same time should provide more information for help seekers. Therefore, appropriate information should be provided. Keep in mind that too much information can be obstructive. Some of the above-mentioned target groups are already overwhelmed with dropout emotions. Hence, further information should be easy to overview and useful. The goal is individual-oriented feedback and information.

After the information collection process, you sort the information and provide it below the generalized feedback. Note that not all scales have to be filled with information. Make sure to attribute the information to the most appropriate scale or scales. Some information might be even repeated. Anyways, it is possible that some feedback slots remain empty. The university specific information is added at the section "Feedback Maintenance Area" of the platform.

In a second step, when you have collected all information and sorted it to the corresponding scales, formal ascertainment might be necessary. For this, you find a checklist in the annex B. First of all, the general regulations for data protection (GDPR) should be fulfilled. There is a responsible in each organization, who should be able to help you out. If you add a counselor with additional information (e.g. consultation hours, address, email) make sure to have a written agreement from this person.

On university level, you should further consider own counselors or psychologist. You could recheck with the university's responsible how to integrate them. Moreover, if there is a responsible for the SRT 2.1 at your university, you maybe want to add the contact as well in case of technical support, etc. At university level, you might need to fulfill more requirements, for instance, a corporate design referring to the used text fond or color. Find out who is responsible for this in your organization and contact him/her.

Furthermore, please consider the following recommendation: Information is dynamic. This means, it is a process over time to collect information. This is why you should calculate some time to search information. In addition to that, it is necessary to keep information up to date. Thus, if you cannot guarantee a frequent information update, be careful what to upload. Eventually, you want to add a date when you upload this information. In this way, you can also make sure that students can evaluate the information better and faster, or serve them for self-search.

Finally, yet importantly, revise the wording of the feedback in your national language. Depending on cultural specifies, it might be necessary to adapt some phrasings in order to provide a sensitive, or even effective, feedback. English was the basis for all translations of the feedback. While English can be a straightforward language, this can be different or even rude in some other languages. Take this into consideration.

Annex A: Information Search Template

# Template for support sources
# Keep in mind the four target groups:

# TARGET GROUP1
# I guess I am fine. My results are okay in general.
# I am just here because I am curious.

Sometimes, studying can be debilitating. Maybe you're overwhelmed with the amount of work or you're unsure, if your major is the right choice. These sources give you more information about these kind of questions:

# TARGET GROUP 2
# I do face some problems, but I'm unsure if I should quit my studies.

You're overwhelmed with your studies and/or your private life and you don't know what to do? Or maybe you have questions concerning legal issues or concerning social services? These Adresses help you with private, financial and other problems:

# TARGET GROUP 3
# I have problems, I am certainly dropping out of my studies. What happens next?

You've already decided to drop out, and these results support your decision. But you don't know what's next yet? Or you need counselling to specific alternatives? These Adresses help you find the way:

# TARGET GROUP 4
# I don't care about my results, I am going to drop out anyways.

Maybe there is no information or counselling of any help in this target group. Eventually you have information events or any student groups, that might be of any help.

# I guess I am fine. My results are okay in general. I am just here because I am curious.

Sometimes, studying can be debilitating. Maybe you're overwhelmed with the amount of work or you're unsure, if your major is the right choice. These sources give you more information about these kind of questions:

**Legal and social concerns**

Information about fees and registrations; school calendar; diploma supplement; prizes and scholarships  at:

Information on support for people with disabilities or special needs at:
International students can access information at:

**Financial concerns**

Are you having financial concerns in paying tuition, daily expenses or other expenses related to the studies? You can find information about scholarships, paid activities on campus and social support at:

**Psychological support**

Are you having difficulties you are not being able to cope with? You can find counseling and psychological support at:

**Others**

Do you like sports, cultural, music activities?
You can find information at:

# I do face some problems, but I'm unsure if I should quit my studies.

You're overwhelmed with your studies and/or your private life and you don't know what to do? Or maybe you have questions concerning legal issues or concerning social services? These Adresses help you with private, financial and other problems:

**Drop out**

Do you have questions regarding academic matters? Do you need support to develop study and time management skills to improve your academic tasks?

**Alternatives**

Do you have difficulty meeting the deadlines and level of demand of your course?

You can change from Integral to Partial frequency. You can consult information:

**Self-Organisation**

Maybe you are just overwhelmed and have difficulty managing time and tasks? You can find support at https://www.sas.uminho.pt/ and https://www.psi.uminho.pt/pt/apsi/ .

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8

# I have problems, I am certainly dropping out of my studies. What happens next?

You've already decided to drop out, and these results support your decision. But you don't know what's next yet? Or you need counselling to specific alternatives? These Adresses help you find the way:

**Dropout What's next?**

Are you determined to abandon your studies?
If so, there are some precautions you must take to ensure that your situation is properly recorded. You should make the request to cancel the registration:

NOTE: If you are benefiting or have benefited from a scholarship, you should contact:

**Alternatives**

If you would like to continue studying in Higher Education:

If you would like to explore other options or levels of education and / or training you can access information at :

If you would like to enter the job market, you can consult information in the:

# I don't care about my results, I am going to drop out anyways.

Maybe there is no information or counselling of any help in this target group. Eventually you have information events or any student groups, that might be of any help.

**Any other helpful information**

These can be e.g. satisfied students who want to drop out. It can be unclear which information would be useful for them. If there is any information, put it here.

## Annex B: Checklist for information collection

Guarantee GDPR

- ask your organization's responsible for advice
- ask + receive counsellors, other institutions for permission to publish their information (in written form)

Recheck with university top level

- that the provided information can be published
- obligatory information e.g. responsible for SRT 2.1, or university psychologist

Recheck with press & communication

- for more information to add, e.g. events related to drop-out prevention
- about obligatory corporate design
- maybe they even want to announce the SRT 2.1 in a brief article on university level/website

Add university responsible for SRT 2.1 (optional)

- maybe for technical support