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Academic Services to Support Timely Completion of Studies: Students' Needs, Expectations, and Policy Strategies

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze student needs, expectations, and policy strategies for improving academic services to support the timely completion of studies. The type of research used is qualitative with a case study approach. The research informants were 21 students of the IAIN Curup Postgraduate Islamic Religious Education Doctoral Program and four managers of the IAIN Curup Postgraduate Islamic Religious Education and Doctoral Study Program. Data collection techniques used semi-structured interviews. The validity of the data obtained was checked using source triangulation and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman analysis model, which consists of three stages: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion. The research results found that students' needs and expectations to support the completion of their studies on time can be grouped into two, namely academic services carried out by lecturers and academic services carried out by education staff. To ensure they complete their studies on time, students need and expect academic services that are professional, precise, and fast. The policy strategy implemented by policymakers to support the completion of studies on time is to improve educational services to student needs and expectations by establishing quality policies.

Keywords: Academic Services, Policy Strategies, Students' Needs and Expectations, Timely Completion of Studies.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kebutuhan, harapan mahasiswa, dan strategi kebijakan peningkatan layanan akademik guna mendukung penyelesaian studi tepat waktu. Jenis penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Informan penelitian adalah 21 mahasiswa Program Doktor Pendidikan Agama Islam Pascasarjana IAIN Curup dan empat pengelola Program Studi Doktor Pendidikan Agama Islam Pascasarjana IAIN Curup. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan wawancara semi terstruktur. Keabsahan data yang diperoleh diperiksa menggunakan triangulasi sumber dan dianalisis menggunakan model analisis Miles dan Huberman yang terdiri dari tiga tahap yaitu kondensasi data, penyajian data dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa kebutuhan dan harapan mahasiswa untuk mendukung penyelesaian studinya tepat waktu dapat dikelompokkan menjadi dua yaitu layanan akademik yang dilakukan oleh dosen dan layanan akademik yang dilakukan oleh tenaga kependidikan. Untuk memastikan mereka menyelesaikan studi tepat waktu, mahasiswa membutuhkan dan mengharapkan layanan akademik yang profesional, tepat dan cepat. Strategi kebijakan yang diterapkan oleh pembuat kebijakan untuk mendukung penyelesaian studi tepat waktu adalah dengan meningkatkan layanan pendidikan terhadap kebutuhan dan harapan mahasiswa dengan menetapkan kebijakan yang bermutu.

Kata kunci: Kebutuhan dan Harapan Mahasiswa, Layanan Akademik, Penyelesaian Studi Tepat Waktu, Strategi Kebijakan.

Introduction

Completing studies on time is very important and is a hope for students and higher education institutions (Hakim & Hasmira, 2022; Rand et al., 2020). Students who can complete their studies on time will feel proud and more confident because they can meet the targets set (Hariyanti & Syukur, 2023). For educational institutions, completing studies on time is an indicator for measuring the level of success of academic services, especially in study programs (Along, 2020). However, not all students can complete their studies on time. Various challenges are often encountered, one of which is related to the academic service system (Pambudi et al., 2019). Therefore, higher education institutions must provide maximum academic services to support student's timely completion of studies (Camilleri, 2021; Yılmaz & Temizkan, 2022). Good academic services are academic services that comply with existing standards and meet students' needs and expectations to support the completion of studies on time (Fitrah, 2018).

Academic service needs are something that students need related to academic services (Lubis & Sumartono, 2023). Meanwhile, expectations for academic services are desired on academic services (F. D. Mita, 2020). Students' needs and expectations for academic services can be grouped into four areas: teaching, guidance, final assignment exams, and administrative services (Nanda et al., 2020). In teaching, students need and expect access to experienced lecturers, including teaching staff, who are explicitly concerned with access and resources (Tomlinson et al., 2023). Lecturers are not only able to understand learning material but are required to be able to convey learning material in an engaging and easy-to-understand manner (Fadhil & Ashoer, 2020; Firdaus et al., 2021; Indrayani, 2021; Zamista et al., 2021). The curriculum must be based on advances in science and the demands of the world of work. Students also need fast and easy access to learning materials, such as textbooks and journals (Firdaus et al., 2021). Effective and responsive administrative services related to course registration, academic guidance, and submission of final project proposals can be provided efficiently and quickly (Lindriany et al., 2022).

In the field of guidance, students need comprehensive support. The supervisor not only functions as a guide in writing the final assignment but also as a mentor who can help overcome various academic and non-academic obstacles (Aziz et al., 2022). Students expect guidance to be carried out regularly through open and constructive communication and clear and valuable suggestions to help complete the final assignment (Malfasari et al., 2019). Students also expect guidance to be flexibly and efficiently accessible through various

communication platforms (Al-Samarraie & Saeed, 2018; Liu et al., 2020; Nurhidin, 2022). In the guidance process, students hope that good resources will be available, provide constructive motivation, provide emotional support, help direct references, and complete final assignments (Mandira et al., 2021). With a guidance process that meets needs and expectations like this, it will have an impact on student's motivation and self-confidence in completing their studies.

On the other hand, students have the need and hope that exams are conducted fairly and transparently and reflect learning objectives (Nihayah, 2019). Exams must be well designed to measure conceptual understanding, analytical skills, and practical learning application, not just rote memorization (Andriani & Wibawanta, 2020). Students also want to receive complete and precise information regarding the exam format, procedures, and assessment criteria at the beginning of the semester and that it is carried out fairly and the results are announced on time, accompanied by constructive feedback that helps students understand their strengths and weaknesses. Regarding the final assignment exam, students need clear and comprehensive information about the final exam requirements, process, assessment criteria, and transparency in the assessment process; examiners provide objective, constructive, and detailed input on the quality of the final assignment made by students (Yusuf, 2020).

In academic administration services students need and expect efficient and fast academic administration services as an essential support to expedite the learning process (Along, 2020). In academic administration services, a management system that is transparent, easily accessible, and well-integrated is needed to help complete various academic matters quickly and smoothly (Along, 2020; Anisah et al., 2020; Heri, 2019). Academic administration services need to be supported by knowledgeable, friendly, polite staff who can help resolve all administrative problems that may be encountered (Widawati, 2020). By using academic management services that meet these needs and expectations, students can focus more on their studies and completing final assignments and are more motivated to graduate on time (Sumarni, 2019).

High school educational institutions must respond to student needs and expectations by implementing various adaptive and innovative policies and strategies to answer these hopes and needs. Optimizing services is not only oriented toward increasing student satisfaction (Kairat et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). However, it must also be oriented towards helping students complete their studies on time, producing graduates who can

compete globally (Thadi, 2020). Therefore, policymakers' response is focused on improving the quality of education and providing quality academic services in a comprehensive and integrated manner (Widiansyah, 2019). Curriculum development to current developments and demands of the world of work, providing facilities and infrastructure, creating a conducive academic environment, and improving the quality of academic services also need to be carried out (Arwitaningsih et al., 2023; Fajri, 2019).

Students' needs and expectations regarding academic services have yet to be met optimally. This condition is caused by various factors, including limited facilities and infrastructure, low quality of existing resources, insufficient oversight during the thesis development process, and the absence of an in-depth analysis of students' needs and expectations regarding academic services (Bayona-Oré & Bazan, 2020; Shabri & Yanti, 2020). This causes students to encounter various difficulties in completing their studies on time. Completing studies on time is one of the indicators for measuring the quality of service in a higher education institution (Abbas, 2020; Along, 2020). Therefore, higher education institutions must have special policy strategies to help students complete their studies on time.

Various studies have been carried out on policy strategies to improve academic services. Amin (2018), for example, examines strategies for improving the quality of academic services in higher education from a management perspective. Research related to the quality of academic services (Prahesti et al., 2021; Susetyo et al., 2022), analysis of student satisfaction with academic services (Yusa et al., 2021), evaluation of academic services using the Aligortima C4.5 method (Widiastuti et al., 2023), as well as improving academic services using technology (Retnasari & Rachmawati, 2020) have also been carried out by previous researchers. However, researchers have yet to find research that explicitly examines needs analysis, student expectations, and policy strategies for academic services to support the completion of studies on time.

This research aims to analyze students' needs and expectations and policy strategies related to academic services in the teaching sector to support completing studies on time. With this research, it is hoped that universities will understand the needs and expectations of students, especially regarding academic services that support the completion of student studies. On the other hand, with this research, it is also hoped that various policy strategies in the teaching field will be oriented toward meeting student needs and expectations so that student studies are completed as planned.

Methods

This qualitative research uses a case study approach to reveal various events or experiences of a person or group of people in depth (Creswell, 2015). This study will reveal policymakers' needs, expectations, and responses related to academic services in the postgraduate student education field at IAIN Curup. The research informants numbered 25, namely four policymakers and 21 students. These 25 informants represent the situation because the four policymakers are academic division managers and are always in contact with various academic service policies. Second, the 21 students have studied for more than one semester at the location where the research was conducted.

The data collection technique used was semi-structured interviews (Sugiyono, 2016). Three things will be revealed through this interview. First, students need academic services in the field of teaching. Second, student expectations for academic services in the field of teaching. Third, the response of policymakers to the needs and expectations of students for academic services in the teaching field. Valid data is obtained through source triangulation (Bachri, 2010) because researchers only reveal various events or experiences of research informants related to the needs and expectations of academic services.

The data is then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model analysis, which consists of three stages. First is data condensation, sorting data obtained from interviews to be adjusted to research questions. In this section, researchers also group the data obtained based on important themes related to the research questions. Second, data presentation, presenting interview data that has been reduced. The presentation of the data is grouped into two, namely, the presentation of data in tables and the presentation of data in the form of descriptions of words in paragraphs. Third, concluding (Sugiyono, 2016).

Results and Discussion

Needs and Policy Strategies for Student Academic Services in the Teaching Sector

The expectations of students, along with the responses from policymakers regarding academic services in the education sector, can be categorized into four essential themes: teaching, guidance, assessment, and educational personnel. These themes highlight important areas that must be addressed to enhance the academic experience. An illustrative summary of these themes is presented in the accompanying Table 1.

Table 1. Data Processing Results

No.	Kind of Service	Need	Policy Strategy
1.	Teach	Face-to-face presence	Mandatory lecturer attendance is 75%; the policy is to form a teaching team of 2-3 lecturers.
2.	Guide	Willingness to provide time for guidance	The obligation to guide 12x, both supervisors I and II, is to provide lecturer space.
3.	Test	Exam content or materials	An assessment sheet grid is provided; equalizing perceptions through FGD regarding the content being tested is necessary.
4.	Education Personnel	Kind of service	Administrative services, correspondence, academic portals, KRS, KHS, SK, lecture schedules, exams, etc.

Based on Table 1, policymakers' responses to the academic needs of students in the teaching field can be grouped into four. First, there are guidelines for students' needs for lecturers' presence in face-to-face lectures, which stipulate that lecturers' attendance is at least 75%. Specific courses are taught by a teaching team consisting of 2-3 lecturers to anticipate the absence of lecturers. That is according to the following interview:

"The problem with lecturers' attendance in face-to-face lectures is that there are guidelines that stipulate that lecturers must be present at least 75% of the time before their courses can be tested..." (Interview by Informan 1, July 21, 2023)

"To anticipate the absence of lecturers, we have made a policy that one course is taught by a teaching team of 2-3 lecturers. This aims to ensure that if one of the lecturers cannot attend, another lecturer can come in, and the lecture will continue..." (Interview by Informan 2, July 22, 2023)

Second, students' need for lecturers' willingness to provide time for guidance has been regulated in the academic guidebook regarding the obligations of supervisors, carrying out the guidance process at least 12 times for supervisors 1 and 2. In addition, policymakers have provided a special space for lecturers to carry out guidance. Towards students. It is according to the following interview quote:

"... regarding the obligations of supervisors, it is contained in the academic guidebook which regulates the quantity or number of guidance at least 12 times, for supervisors one and 2. So that the guidance process runs smoothly, a special space has been provided for lecturers to provide guidance to students." (Interview by Informan 3, July 23, 2023).

Third, students' needs for exam content or material or lecturer questions during the exam have a grid on the assessment sheet, and the lecturer tests must be based on this grid. Apart from that, at the study program level, it is necessary to carry out Focus Group Discussions (FGD) activities to equalize lecturers' perceptions that the exam aims to determine students' understanding and mastery of what they are researching. It is according to the following interview quote:

"...to anticipate the examiner's questions outside the content, during the exam, a grid of assessment sheets is provided, and the lecturer who is testing must test according to the grid of the assessment sheet..." (Interview by Informan 4, July 23, 2023)

"...in some cases, some lecturers like to ask questions that students cannot answer. To avoid this problem from happening again, the Study Program needs to hold FGD activities to equalize lecturers' perceptions about exams, that exams aim to measure the extent of students' understanding and mastery of what they are researching..." (Interview by Informan 1, July 21, 2023)

Fourth, students need academic services provided by educational staff to receive good administrative services. Among the administrative services are correspondence, academic portals, KRS, KHS, SK, lecture schedules, results seminar schedules, exam schedules, and so on. It is according to the following interview quote:

"Academic services that students need from educational staff are usually administrative services such as correspondence, management of academic portals, revision of KRS, printing of KHS, supervisor's decrees, lecture schedules, exam schedules, etc...." (Interview by Informan 5, July 24, 2023).

To meet students' needs for academic services in teaching, the IAIN Curup Postgraduate has prepared an academic guidebook that regulates the presence of lecturers in lectures and the frequency of guiding students' final assignments. Academic guidebooks are an essential reference for education providers to carry out academic activities consistently (Maulana & Darmawan, 2023). students to understand their rights and obligations as students, including in teaching (Rohmanu, 2016). Likewise, when testing, it is necessary to prepare an assessment grid or rubric to guide lecturers in testing (M. Mita et al., 2023). The assessment grid or rubric is straightforward, easy to understand, and includes the components to be tested (Sholeh & Olensia, 2022). The final assignment exam review grid or rubric is included in the thesis guidebook. Likewise, in administrative services, there are Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) regarding correspondence, management of academic portals, revision of Study Plan Cards (KRS), printing of Study Result Cards (KHS), Decision Letters (SK), lecture schedules, and seminar proposals and final exam.

Expectations and Policy Strategies for Student Academic Services in the Teaching Sector

Students' expectations concerning academic services in the teaching field and policymakers' responses can be categorized into four distinct themes. These themes encompass teaching methodologies, guidance provision, assessment practices, and the role of educational personnel. Each theme plays a crucial role in shaping the academic landscape and addressing the needs of students. Understanding these themes can enhance the effectiveness of educational policies and practices in meeting student expectations. The following table presents a detailed overview of these themes and their implications.

Table 2. Data Processing Results

No.	Kind of Service	Need	Policy Strategy
1.	Teach	According to the area of expertise	Educational background, teaching experience, work, at least mastery of the course material being taught, involving external lecturers and guest lecturers
		Teaching ability	Holding learning workshops at the study program level
		Ability to use learning devices	Developing e-learning
2.	Guide	Mastery of theory and study materials	Determine the supervisor according to the theme mastered and research methodology.
		Treatment during the guidance process	There is a mechanism that regulates replacement if supervisors do not carry out their functions properly, causing harm to students
3.	Test	Attitude when testing	If an exam outside the content occurs, the session's chairman will immediately respond and redirect it according to the purpose of the session or exam.
4.	Educational staff	Service quality	Explains service procedures, requirements, and service standards for one working day and goes through multilevel checks.
		Service attitude	The service has generally been good, fast and accurate, but the problem is if many activities are carried out simultaneously.

Policy makers' responses to student expectations regarding academic services in the teaching sector can be grouped into four parts. First, lecturers must teach according to their area of expertise. To realize this hope, the lecturers who teach are adjusted to their educational background, teaching experience, work, or collaborate with external lecturers

and bring in guest lecturers. On the other hand, IAIN Curup Postgraduate seeks to improve lecturers' teaching abilities by holding workshops at the study program or postgraduate level. To improve lecturers' ability to use learning tools, this is done by facilitating lecturers to develop e-learning. That is according to the following interview:

"For lecturers to teach by their field of expertise, there are several considerations to determine who teaches the course, namely according to the lecturer's educational background, previous teaching experience, his work so far, or at least mastering the subject material he teaches. "Apart from that, Postgraduate also collaborates with external lecturers and every semester brings in guest lecturers who have expertise according to the courses being offered." (Interview by Informan 2, July 22, 2023)

"To improve teaching abilities, lecturers must hold workshops at the study program or postgraduate level. "And to improve lecturers' ability to use learning tools in the future, it will facilitate lecturers to develop e-learning." (Interview by Informan 6, July 25, 2023)

Second, in guiding lecturers to master the theory and study materials, the supervisor is determined according to the lecturer's knowledge. A mechanism regulates replacement if the supervisor does not perform their functions well, causing harm to students to anticipate problems in the guidance process. This is according to the following interview quote:

"The supervisor is determined with several considerations, mastering the research theme and methodology, then the lecturer who guides and provides input... if there is a case where the lecturer is difficult to find, does not provide input, there is a mechanism that regulates applications for a change of supervisor. A change of supervisor can be done if (1) there is a theme change, (2) the lecturer is abroad for 6 months, is sick or dies, (3) the lecturer is not carrying out his function properly, which is detrimental to the students, (4) there is a personal conflict between the supervisor and the students being supervised, (5) due to the request of the supervising commission." (Interview by Informan 7, July 26, 2023)

Third, in the testing process, if the content is out of content and an atmosphere that is not conducive occurs, then the session's chairman will immediately follow up and redirect it according to the exam's objectives. This is according to the following interview quote:

"If an exam occurs that is outside the content, the chairperson of the session will immediately respond and redirect it according to the objectives of the session or exam..." (Interview by Informan 8, July 27, 2023)

Fourth, regarding the quality of administrative services, the administration department has established procedures and requirements and socialized them by sticking them on notice boards and sharing them in student WhatsApp groups. Service standard one working day. A multilevel check system is implemented to ensure the accuracy of the documents created and service attitudes. In general, the service has been good, fast and precise. This is according to the following interview quote:

"Administrative service standards are carried out within one working day. Previously, the procedures and requirements were socialized by sticking them on notice boards or sharing them in student WA groups. To ensure the accuracy of the documents being processed, the director must correct it by the head of the AK Subdivision before the letter is signed. If there is an error, it is corrected again by then correcting it again before being signed by the post director." (Interview by Informan 9, July 28, 2023)

"Regarding the service attitude of the staff, in general, they have served well, precisely and quickly. It's just that the problem is that there are often concurrent activities simultaneously; this is what makes the service less effective..." (Interview by Informan 10, July 29, 2023).

From the interview excerpt above, it can be seen that the response of policymakers to student expectations regarding academic services in the field of teaching is that lecturers teach according to their educational background, teaching experience, work, or collaborate with external lecturers and bring in guest lecturers. Improve lecturers' ability to use learning tools by facilitating their e-learning development. The supervisor is determined according to the theme mastered by the lecturer and research methodology. A mechanism regulates replacement if supervisors do not perform their functions properly, causing harm to students. In testing so that content does not come out, it is immediately followed up by the session's chairman and redirected according to the exam's objectives. The administration department has established and socialized procedures, requirements, and service attitudes regarding the quality of administrative services. In general, the service has been good, fast and precise. The problem can be that if simultaneous activities are simultaneous, the service will be less effective.

This research aligns with the results put forward by Arifin (2021) and Fauzi et al. (2020) to improve higher education academic services, not just focus on improving facilities and infrastructure. Improving the quality of academic services and the quality of human resources (HR) will allow them to compete at the national and international levels. Apart from meeting students' expectations and needs, academic services must comply with Higher Education Quality Standards (Mekawati et al., 2023; Suti et al., 2020). Other essential things that can support the creation of academic services apart from the completeness of the Internal Quality Service Standards (SPMI) policy are: First, there is a joint commitment to improve services according to Higher Education Quality Standards. Second, there is a change in paradigm, attitude, and mentality toward quality academic services (Handayani & Muliastri, 2021).

All policies made by the IAIN Curup Postgraduate are basically to meet the needs and expectations of students regarding academic services, especially in the teaching field.

However, this policy only partially guarantees that students complete their studies on time. Pasaribu et al. (2016), Sumartini (2018), and Yusuf (2020) explained that motivation has a significant role in completing studies on time. Students with high motivation will focus more on completing their studies on time. Motivation can generally be grouped into internal and external (Yusuf, 2020). Internal Motivation includes physiological conditions such as health and physical condition, psychological conditions such as talent, interest, intelligence, readiness, will and cognitive abilities, and physical and mental fatigue factors. (Saputra et.al., 2024). External Motivations that can influence the completion of studies on time are family conditions, economic conditions, social friends, and educational environment (Hadi, 2020).

Efforts to meet students' needs and expectations regarding academic services in teaching are an actual form of external Motivation, especially related to the educational environment. It aligns with the research results of Modouw & Nugroho (2021; Widarto (2017). Several educational environments that can encourage students to complete their studies on time include the quality of teaching, learning methods, experienced lecturers, relevant academic programs, learning resources, and educational institutions' academic support.

Apart from Motivation, financial conditions can also influence the completion of studies on time (Aslinawati, 2017). Financial conditions force students to take time off from college or work while studying, which results in students needing more time to study or complete their final assignments (Hermawan, 2022). For doctoral study programs, several cases were also found for master's and bachelor's programs, such as delays in completing studies due to difficulties in completing final assignments (Ananda & Purwanto, 2021; Fetene & Tamrat, 2021; Skopek et al., 2022; Sverdlik et al., 2018). Some of the challenges in completing final assignments that students often encounter are difficulties in finding research themes, challenges in finding reference sources, difficulties in collecting and processing data, difficulties in meeting supervisors, and postponing the completion of final assignments (Amani et al., 2022; Bayona-Oré & Bazan, 2020; Hawari et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2020), as well as difficulties in publishing the Scopus journal as a requirement for the final examination of the doctoral program (Hidayat et al., 2024; Hladchenko, 2024; Mills & Inouye, 2021; Muhammad et al., 2022; Munawiroh, 2020; Purwanto et al., 2020; Shamsi & Osam, 2022).

Conclusion

Students' needs and expectations for academic services to support the completion of studies on time include academic services provided by lecturers and academic services provided by educational staff. Lecturers deliver academic services to learning, academic guidance, final assignment guidance, course exams, and final assignment exams. Meanwhile, academic services provided by educational staff include administrative services that support the implementation of learning, academic guidance, final assignment guidance, course exams, and final assignment exams. Students need and expect academic services to be carried out professionally and support completing studies on time. The policy strategy to support students' completion of studies on time is a policy strategy that is oriented to students' needs and expectations for academic services and is oriented towards the established higher education quality policies. In the future, it is necessary to follow up by measuring the achievement of the policy strategy in meeting the needs and expectations of students towards academic services.

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