

Academic Freedom Policy

Purpose

This Policy sets out the commitment of the Sydney International School of Technology and Commerce (SISTC) to the principles of academic freedom. SISTC recognises the importance of freedom of inquiry by academic staff and students, which is essential to the values of the School as well as to the principles of academia.

Scope

The School's academic staff have the freedom to teach or communicate ideas or facts, and provide opinion without being targeted for job loss, or disadvantaged in employment. All members of the *SISTC Community* have the freedom to express opinions.

Key Definitions

Academic freedom pertains to any form of expression (including communication and performance). Academic freedom includes the rights of all academic staff and students to:

- exercise academic freedom without fear of harassment, bullying or unfair treatment;
- speak, write, and publish without being subject to sanction by SISTC;
- hold and express opinions on a range of issues;
- participate, in a personal capacity, in public debates about political and social issues;
- participate, in a personal capacity, in professional and representative bodies to engage in community service without fear of harassment, intimidation or unfair treatment; and
- express controversial views, although this does not mean the right to harass or intimidate other persons.

The *SISTC Community* means staff, students, alumni, Board and Committee members, partners and visitors.

Policy Statement

Academic staff and students are expected to exercise academic freedom in a manner that is consistent with a responsible search for knowledge and its dissemination. Academic freedom of expression does not extend to behaviour that is illegal. Academic staff and students should uphold the good name of SISTC and exercise judgement in the best interests of the School and the SISTC Community.

In the exercise of academic freedom, staff and students will act in a professional and ethical manner and will not harass, vilify, intimidate, or defame others in accordance with the *SISTC Bullying, Harassment and Violence Prevention and Response Policy*. Furthermore, in exercising their freedom to carry out teaching, scholarship and research, academic staff have a responsibility to conduct their activities in accordance with the principles of intellectual rigour and without any interference or suppression.

Academic freedom does not denote the freedom to neglect the basic obligations of:

- the employer-employee relationship included in employment contract(s), the *SISTC Staff Rights and Obligations Policy and Procedures Policy* and the *SISTC Intellectual Property Policy*; or
- student obligations under the *SISTC Student Rights and Obligations Policy*.

Academic staff and students may hold views and express them freely on all topics, even outside their expertise, whilst identifying themselves as members of SISTC. However, in exercising academic freedom, academic staff and students who communicate ideas publicly on topics outside their area of expertise should be conscious of whether it is reasonable, in the circumstances, to link their comments to their association with SISTC.

SISTC staff and students have an obligation to enhance the value of academic freedom to society.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Chief Academic Officer (Dean) will monitor any complaints or grievances related to academic freedom using the procedures outlined in the *SISTC Staff Rights and Obligations Policy and Procedures* and the *SISTC Student Complaints, Appeals and Grievances Policy*. Where a case needs to be discussed, the Dean will seek advice from the Chair of Academic Board in the first instance.

Monitoring and Review

The *SISTC Compliance, Quality Assurance and Review Strategy and Plan 2020-2024 (Attachment A)* shows how SISTC continuously monitors the application of this Policy to achieve ongoing regulatory compliance and process improvement.

Relevant Legislation and Standards

Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 Domain 6

Key Related Documents

SISTC Compliance, Quality Assurance and Review Strategy and Plan 2020-2024 (Attachment A)

SISTC Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy

SISTC Anti-Discrimination Policy

SISTC Bullying, Harassment and Violence Prevention and Response Policy.

SISTC Intellectual Property Policy

SISTC Staff Rights and Obligations Policy and Procedures

SISTC Student Complaints, Appeals and Grievances Policy

SISTC Student Rights and Obligations Policy

Notes

Responsible Officer	Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching
Approval Authority /Authorities	Academic Board
Date Approved	27 July 2017
Date of Commencement	
Date for Review	2021
Documents Superseded by this Policy	None
Amendment History	<p>Revised November 2018; 6 March 2019 (Board of Directors endorsement)</p> <p>V1.0 updated with SISTC logo July 2020.</p> <p>V2.0 updated with reference to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the <i>Model Code for the Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom in Australian Higher Education Providers March 2019 (French Review)</i>; • Key Related Documents related to bullying, intellectual property and student complaints; • the approved changes in the senior management structure 28 April 2021; and • the change to Institute of Higher Education category and the HESF (2021) 26 August 2021.