Student Participation and Feedback Policy

1. Purpose

This Policy describes the principles and avenues by which students are able to participate in the planning and decision-making processes of the Sydney International School of Technology and Commerce (SISTC). The policy also sets out more general mechanisms for students to provide feedback to SISTC, and the ways in which the School uses that feedback to improve the student experience.

2. Principles

SISTC is committed to the principle that students play an important and integral part in building the essential character, life, and functioning of the School. In this context, SISTC is committed to the provision of effective arrangements for the student voice in the management and day to day functioning of the School. SISTC believes that from a symbolic point of view this should take the form of student representation on bodies which play a role in the stakeholder consultative aspect of the governance framework for the School. This comprises both student-only bodies as well as student representation on bodies which play a broader role in the areas of health, safety, well-being, and support of the SISTC community.

As well as this involvement in these formal mechanisms, all students have the opportunity to provide regular systematic feedback on key operational and support issues. This provided through structured student surveys on a range of issues. These play an important role in allowing SISTC to obtain student input to the process of quality assurance and continuous improvement as outlined in the *SISTC Compliance, Review and Quality Assurance Strategy and Plan*. Obtaining regular feedback in this provides the opportunity for analysis of responses and identification of trends in aspects of student life, which respondents are either satisfied or those which require improvement. This formal and systematic approach is highly relevant, in particular, in obtaining student feedback on the academic program's design delivery and support, in alignment with the structure of the *SISTC Teaching and Learning Plan*.

 Notwithstanding the importance of formal feedback surveys, the School considers that to be responsive to evolving student needs, real-time student feedback is also important. The channels for this are set up through a range of social media platforms sponsored by the School, where SISTC encourages an on-going conversation about matters which affect students.

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3. Participation and Feedback Structures

These principles are operationalised as follows:

3.1 FORMAL PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION STRUCTURES

3.1.1 Student Reference Group

Nominations will be called annually from the student body for the election of initially four students on a 12-month rotational basis for this group. The number of elected students will be reviewed as the cohort of students increases. This group meets quarterly and its role is to represent the student body in matters affecting students. The agenda is set by the Reference Group Chair, and a report on the outcomes of each meeting is provided to the Director of Operations. Provision is made for the Group to invite relevant School staff to present at Group meetings, and for the School to refer matters to the Student Reference Group for consideration through the Director of Operations. Terms of Reference for the Student Reference Group are at Appendix 1.

3.1.2 Health and Safety Committee

Two student representatives elected by the student body are invited on a 12-month rotational basis to be members of the SISTC Health and Safety Committee. The remit of this committee is to provide recommendations to the Director of Operations on matters relevant to the health and safety of student and/or staff. The operational details are set out in the *SISTC Health and Safety Committee Terms of Reference* included in the *SISTC Health and Safety Policy and Framework*.

3.1.3 Student Support Committee

Two student representatives elected by the student body are invited on a 12-month rotational basis to be members of the SISTC Student Support Committee. The remit of this committee is to review the efficacy and effectiveness of student support arrangements which are provided for under the *SISTC Student Support Policy*, and to make recommendations to the CEO where appropriate. This committee meets quarterly and the Terms of Reference are at Appendix 2.

All students will have access to *Student Representation Guidelines* in the Student Portal so that they understand the expectations, roles and responsibilities for student representation.

3.2 STUDENT FEEDBACK SURVEY FRAMEWORK

SISTC ensures that students are informed about how their feedback is used to improve the student experience.

3.2.1 Academic Surveys

The suite of student academic surveys comprises:

First impression surveys: All unit coordinators administer an informal 'quick impression surveys' during the first three weeks of a teaching session to assess whether there are any unpredicted problems with the unit. These surveys typically comprise open questions about what is working well about the unit, and what is causing difficulties or could be improved. Unit Coordinators provide a summary of the feedback to the Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching.

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Teaching unit surveys: At the conclusion of every taught unit, a unit survey is administered to students. The survey elicits feedback on the quality of the unit and the teaching. The results are reported to the Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching. Samples of the unit survey instruments for Student Evaluation of Units (SEU) and Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) are at Appendix 3.

Exit surveys: SISTC makes reasonable attempts to contact any student who exits SISTC without graduating in order to elicit the reasons they have left. This is mandatory for international students. A sample exit survey is set out in Appendix 4.

Student forums: The Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching organises a student forum for each course at least annually. Feedback from the forum will be reported to the Dean and the Associate Dean, Academic Programs.

Participation in the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) Survey: SISTC encourages graduates to participate in these and related surveys about coursework, the student experience and graduate outcomes.

3.2.2   Non-academic surveys

The suite of non-academic surveys comprises:

Commencing Student Survey: Administered mid-point of each trimester to commencing students in that trimester, the survey is designed to canvass how new students are settling into the School and their satisfaction with a range of support and administrative services and facilities. The generic areas surveyed are:

- quality of communications during recruitment and enrolment process;
- access to and ability to navigate on-line enrolment systems;
- access to relevant commencing student information;
- quality of orientation program;
- ability to access and functionality of learning support systems (LMS, Library);
- ability to access learning support programs (ICT systems; English Language, Maths and Study Skills);
- quality of communications with School academic and administrative staff;
- access to and effectiveness of personal support staff and programs; and
- quality of the overall commencement of study experience.

A copy of the Commencing Student Survey is at Appendix 5.

First-Year Experience Survey: Conducted at the end of Trimester 3 where there is the largest concentration of students completing first year. Survey is designed to capture overall student sentiment towards the School, its programs and support services based on their first-year experience. Focus is on areas of strength and areas for improvement to improve support for future students during their first year of study. The generic areas surveyed are:

- access to and quality of advice about course and unit choice/sequencing;
- access to, functionality and ability to navigate administrative systems;

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- access to, functionality and ability to navigate learning support systems (LMS, Library, ICT Labs);
- access to and quality of advice and assistance from academic staff;
- access to and quality of advice and assistance from administrative staff;
- design and effectiveness of academic support programs (English Language; Maths; Study Skills; Peer Assisted Learning;
- design and effectiveness of personal support programs;
- quality of School communications, including access to and functionality of ICT systems;
- opportunity to participate in student community and provide feedback to School; and
- quality of overall experience as a first-year student.

A copy of the First Year Experience Survey (FYE) is at Appendix 6.

3.3 REAL-TIME FEEDBACK

This is facilitated through a combination of regular informal meeting sessions between students and the Dean/Chief Executive Officer, and the availability of social media platforms sponsored by the School which provide the opportunity for an on-going conversation between students and the School about their student experience.

3.3.1 Use of Feedback

Student feedback is an important part of the School's continuous improvement program. It provides the opportunity to ensure School systems and processes remain relevant and meet student needs and expectations in a dynamic environment.

The student body is kept informed about the way student feedback will be used through:

- informing students in the first lecture of each unit about feedback from the previous student cohort in the unit, and how that has been acted on;
- informing students about the outcome of first impression unit surveys and how that will be acted on;
- informing students about the outcome of all regular surveys and how that will be acted on; and
- informing students periodically about the feedback from social media and how that will be acted on.

Academic staff and their supervisors are given the opportunity to review feedback on their teaching and are supported in enhancing these activities.

Relevant Legislation and Standards
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 Domain 5

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Key Related Documents

SISTC Compliance, Review and Quality Assurance Strategy and Plan 2020-2024.
SISTC Teaching and Learning Plan 2020-2024
SISTC Health and Safety Policy
SISTC Student Representation Guidelines

Notes

Responsible Officer	Chair, Academic Board
Approval Authority /Authorities	Academic Board
Date Approved	**V1.0** 6 March 2019 (endorsement by the Board of Directors)
Date of Commencement	
Date for Review	2022
Documents Superseded by this Policy	None
Amendment History	**V1.1** updated on **2 August 2019**. **V1.2** updated to the SISTC logo on **03 June 2020**. **V1.3** amended number of students on Student Reference Group from 8 to 4 on **30 September 2020** (Executive Approval) **V1.4** updated with the approved changes to the senior management structure **28 April 2021.** **V1.5** updated with the changes to the HESF 21 **1 July 2021.**

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: Student Reference Group

Purpose and Terms of Reference

Nominations will be called annually from the student body for the election initially for four students on a 12-month rotational basis for this group. The Student Reference Group meets quarterly and its role is to represent the student body in matters affecting students. The agenda is set by the Reference Group Chair, and a report on the outcomes of each meeting is provided to the Director of Operations. Provision is made for the Group to invite relevant School staff to present at Group meetings, and for the School to refer matters to the Student Reference Group for consideration through the Director of Operations.

The Terms of Reference for the Student Reference Group are:

- Provide feedback and advice to School management on matters raised by and of relevance to the student body;
- Consider matters referred to the Reference Group by School management and provide advice to School management on these matters;
- Consider and provide advice on reports from School management on feedback from student surveys and management action;
- Consider and provide advice on the quality and effectiveness of School student support systems (as set out in the *SISTC Student Support Policy*);
- Provide advice to School management on student communications, including effectiveness of real-time social media communications/feedback platforms; and
- Consider and provide advice to School management on matters for consideration by the *SISTC Health and Safety Committee*.

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APPENDIX 2: Student Support Committee

Purpose and Terms of Reference

The SISTC Student Support Committee meets quarterly to consider the efficacy and effectiveness of student support arrangements which are provided for under the SISTC Student Support Policy, and to make recommendations to the CEO where appropriate. The Committee is chaired by the Director of Operations and includes the Dean, Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching, Academic Registrar, Librarian and the eLearning and IT Support Officer. The committee has two elected student representatives on a 12-month rotational basis.

The Terms of Reference for the SISTC Student Support Committee are:

- Evaluate and provide advice to the CEO on the effectiveness of current student support provisions covered by the *SISTC Student Support Policy*;
- Provide input and advice to the CEO to inform School planning in the design and delivery of future student support arrangements covered by the *SISTC Student Support Policy*;
- Consider and provide advice to the CEO on matters referred by the School for consideration by the Committee;
- Provide advice and input on the results of student surveys and real-time feedback from students on support systems and processes;
- Provide advice and input into the design of future evaluation and feedback systems in the area of student support; and
- Undertake environmental scanning in the area of student support to identify and evaluate future directions and developments.

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APPENDIX 3: Unit Survey Instruments

Student Evaluation of Unit (SEU) Survey

Unit details	
Unit Code	
Unit Name	
Course	

Please select ONE box for each of the following questions					
Each of the statements below describes an aspect of the teaching / learning process in this unit. Tick the box that best represents your perception in response to each statement.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicabl
SEU1. Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of this unit.					
SEU2. The learning outcomes and the expected standards of this unit were clear to me.					
SEU3. In this unit, I developed knowledge and skills in the defined area of study that contributed to my overall knowledge of the discipline.					
SEU4. The unit was engaging and encouraged my participation.					
SEU5. I participated actively in class (e.g. in individual or team online or face-to-face activities).					
SEU6. The teaching staff provided clear and timely information about learning (e.g. resources, activities, assessment, and expected outcomes).					
SEU7. The assessment had a clear purpose which contributed to my learning.					
SEU8. The teaching staff gave me helpful feedback in class and on assessments that supported my learning.					
SEU9. The learning resources (e.g. library, study guides, handouts, text, and web resources) were adequate for my study in this unit.					
SEU10. What did you find were the most helpful/effective aspects of this unit?					
SEU11. What did you find were the least helpful/effective aspects of this unit?					
SEU12. On the basis of your ratings, what recommendations do you have to improve this unit?					

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Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) Survey

Unit details	
Unit Code	
Unit Name	
Course	

Please select ONE box for each of the following questions					
Each of the statements below describes an aspect of the teaching / learning process in this unit. Tick the box that best represents your perception in response to each statement.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicabl
SET1. Overall, I was satisfied with my educational experience in this unit.					
SET2. The teaching staff engaged me actively in learning in this unit.					
SET3. The teaching staff provided clear explanations of the learning outcomes, coursework, and assessment					
SET4. The teaching staff used a range of activities to help me to learn.					
SET5. The teaching staff of this unit motivated me to do my best work.					
SET6. The teaching staff gave me helpful feedback in class and on assessments that supported my learning.					
SET7. The teaching staff were helpful and approachable.					
SET8. The teaching staff demonstrated concern for student learning.					
SET9. What did you find were the most helpful/effective aspects of the teaching in this unit?					
SET10. Please feel free to make any other comments, particularly in relation to your ratings for this unit.					

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APPENDIX 4: Exit Survey

SISTC Exit Survey

As part of our commitment to the students at our School, SISTC wants to know the reasons why students have chosen not to continue studying at SISTC. We will use the information to improve our academic and administrative support services for students.

Question	Response
ES1. Course of study	(Select appropriate box) Bachelor of IT Diploma of IT Etc.
ES2. Year of study?	(Select appropriate box) First Year Second Year Third Year
ES3. What are your main reasons for leaving?	(Select up to three boxes) Course is not what I expected Life changes (travel, work, etc.) Financial difficulties Time taken to travel to SISTC Family commitments Change of institution Quality of teaching at SISTC Too expensive
ES4. Are there any reasons for leaving not listed in question 3?	
ES5. Do you have any final comments regarding your experience at SISTC?	

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Sydney International School of Technology and Commerce Commencing Student Survey (CSS)

Based on Grebennikov L & Shah, M (2012) Commencing student experience: new insights and implications for action, European Journal of Higher Education, 2:2-3, 267-289, DOI: 10.1080/21568235.2012.683663

Section 1: Student Cohort Demographics

Please identify the cohort to which you belong:	Yes	No	Prefer not to answer
1.1 International Student			
1.2 Indigenous			
1.3 Non-English speaking background			
1.4 First in the immediate family to attend Higher Education Institute			

Section 2: The Quality of the School experience during transition and in the first few weeks of enrolment

Your experience of the School so far: please rate the importance from not important to and the performance from very poor to excellent.	Importance					Performance				
	Not Important				Very Important	Very Poor				Excellent
2.1 A helpful orientation program										
2.2 Quality of communication during recruitment and enrolment										
2.3 Easy access to and ability to navigate on-line enrolment systems										
2.4 Helpful advice on the right combination and sequence of study units to select										

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Your experience of the School so far: please rate the importance from not important to and the performance from very poor to excellent.	Importance					Performance				
	Not Important				Very Important	Very Poor				Excellent
2.5 Ability to access and functionality of learning support systems (LMS, Library)										
2.6 Ability to access learning support programs English Language, Maths and Study Skills										
2.7 A helpful briefing on how my units of study work, including assessment										
2.8 A friendly classroom environment where I got to know my teachers and peers										

Section 3: Open answer/comment questions

Your experience of the School so far: please write comments on the first few weeks at SISTC	Comment
3.1 What have you liked best about your first few weeks at SISTC?	
3.2 What would you like to know more about?	
3.3 What improvement would you suggest to improve the processes and support for commencing students at SGCTC?	

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APPENDIX 6: First Year Experience Survey

Sydney Global School of Technology and Commerce First Year Experience Survey (FYE)

Based on. Questionnaire prepared by M Yorke and B Longden© The Higher Education Academy

1. In which country or part of the world were you living when you applied for a place at SISTC?

2. Are you the first person in your immediate family to attend a Higher Education Institution? Yes ☐   No ☐

3. Have you attended any course in higher education before enrolling on this one? Yes ☐   No ☐

4. Where are you living whilst you are attending SISTC? At home ☐   In other private accommodation (e.g. unit/share house) ☐

5. Roughly how close is your accommodation to the School?

      Within 1 km ☐

      1-5 km away ☐

      5-10 km away ☐

      More than 10 km away

6. How much did you know about SISTC before you enrolled? Nothing ☐   Very little ☐   A moderate amount ☐   A lot ☐

7. How much did you know about your course of study before you enrolled? Nothing ☐   Very little ☐   A moderate amount ☐   A lot ☐

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Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. If a statement doesn't apply to your particular circumstances, simply ignore it and move on to the next. The term 'program' is used for the totality of your first-year studies.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
8. I made a good choice of units to study					
9. Staff made it clear from the start what they expected from students					
10. The orientation program helped me to feel that I belonged in SISTC					
11. I am satisfied with the support I have received from student support services (in respect of matters such as student finance, accommodation, welfare issues, etc.)					
12. The on-site facilities at SISTC are great					
13. I tend to keep to myself within the institution					
14. I have made at least one close friend at SISTC					
15. I enjoy the social side of higher education I find it hard to keep up with the volume of work in this program					
16. I am not particularly interested in the extra-curricular activities or facilities provided in SISTC					
17. Travelling to the School takes up more time than I think is reasonable					
18. I am not able to attend some formally timetabled sessions because of other demands on my time (e.g. work)					
19. I have to give time to looking after others (e.g. parents, children, or partner)					
20. At least two members of the academic staff know me by name					
21. The SISTC staff with whom I come into contact are friendly					
22. I am confident that my program will lead to an appropriate graduate level job					
23. I have learnt a lot this year, and I have enjoyed my studies at SISTC					

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24. On how many days per week during term-time do you typically come to SISTC to study?   1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 or more ☐

25. On how many days per week do you typically undertake private study for your program?   1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 or more ☐

26. Have you considered withdrawing from your program whilst you have been at SISTC?   Yes ☐   No ☐

27. If 'yes', have you thought about switching straightaway to another course at this or another institution?   Yes ☐   No ☐

28. On average, approximately how many hours do you spend per week during term time on part-time employment?

    None ☐
    1-6 hours ☐
    7-12 hours ☐
    13-18 hours ☐
    More than 18 hours

29. What to date has been the best aspect of your first-year experience at SISTC?

_____

30. What to date has been the worst aspect of your first-year experience at SISTC?

_____

31. If you could make one significant change to your course

_____

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