

Equity and Diversity Policy

Purpose

The purpose of *SISTC Equity and Diversity Policy* is to provide a framework to ensure that the strategic direction and associated activities of the School enshrine the School's commitment to social justice principles, and the building of global human capital in an equitable way. The Policy establishes the equity and diversity settings in which the School's business will be conducted. In particular, the Policy focuses on five inter-related areas:

- defining the principles of equity and diversity as it relates to the School;
- defining equity group staff and client cohorts;
- designing and delivering School operations in support of these cohorts;
- providing financial support for equity and diversity cohorts (where appropriate);
- recruitment of staff within an equity and diversity workforce model.

The *SISTC Anti-Discrimination Policy* complements this Policy and sets out how this diversity is to be supported by the daily behaviour of staff and students.

Principles

SISTC is committed to the recruitment of students from a diversity of cultural backgrounds, in particular indigenous students. We are committed to creating a learning environment which is shaped *inter-alia* by the richness of student interaction which comes from studying within a multi-cultural cohort environment. SISTC embraces Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as a priority equity group cohort.

SISTC is cognisant of the investment and family dislocation inherent in international students acquiring an Australian tertiary education. The School recognises furthermore the challenges for students associated with acquiring such an education in a language which is not their first. In this context, the School has a strong sense of social responsibility as an education provider in terms of making such opportunities available to international students and in providing the necessary level of literacy, learning and personal support in a way that is bespoke to this student cohort.

It is acknowledged by SISTC that domestic students from rural and remote areas, first in family, and those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds are under-represented in higher education. Identified reasons for low participation and high attrition rates include a lack of exposure to and experience of tertiary study in the family; a lack of role models in communities; a lack of awareness of career opportunities that exist; and difficulty for first in family and low-SES students in perceiving the links between tertiary study and future career opportunities. On this basis, our student support framework is aimed at enabling these equity groups to achieve success through ongoing academic and peer mentoring, clear course advice and guidance, and career pathway planning.

In its focus on developing global-citizen employees for the global workforce, the School understands the importance of creating a diverse student cohort which reflects the emerging global workforce. Moreover, through the operation of its Student Financial Scholarships Program, the School seeks to assure this class room diversity by supporting students in their education journey in a way that

encourages their academic achievement and advancement. The School's Student Financial Scholarship strategy is an expression of the School's commitment to promoting social equity in its operations, and to contributing to the building of global social capital in the outlook, skills and focus of students. The operation of this principle represents an important expression of practical support in delivering the School's unique set of Graduate Attributes (as described in the *SISTC Graduate Attributes Policy*).

In terms of student support more broadly, the School's design, delivery and support arrangements for its programs reflect an emphasis on face-to-face delivery, and small lecture and tutorial groups in a model where 70% of the student learning takes place in an interactive, small group, tutorial atmosphere. The School is committed to providing bespoke and culturally sensitive support, including the linking of students with external cultural/community support groups and facilitating their ability to stay connected with their home country support networks.

From a staffing perspective, SISTC understands the importance of ensuring that its teaching and support staff profile is consistent with the profile of its student cohort. To provide a student-centred experience for students, who in many cases are studying far from home in an unfamiliar environment in a language not their first, the School is committed to ensuring students are able to access staff members who can empathise with their circumstances and can provide a dimension of support in the student's first language where necessary, and consistent with the student's cultural background.

The Workforce Plan for the School more broadly reflects a similar strategy of ensuring a diverse workforce which is consistent with and broadly reflects the composition of the student cohort. The principles of equity and diversity are reflected in the School's suite of HR Policies relating to recruitment and selection; provision of culturally sensitive workplace arrangements (for example in relation to religious/worship requirements); internal School inclusion, consultation and communication frameworks and media; and recognition and celebration of diversity groups.

Priority Equity Groups

As an important part of this commitment to providing opportunity to those who have barriers to higher education achievement, the School embraces Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a priority student cohort. SISTC sets aside places and provides full financial scholarship assistance for 1% of the student cohort. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders make up 3.3 % of the Australian population. The School will progressively move towards this target as it becomes established and able to provide the necessary infrastructure and resources for a more substantial commitment.

A key consideration in respect of this priority group is the ability to establish appropriate academic and personal support arrangements for students to ensure they have optimum opportunity for success. This involves a structured approach to:

- assessment of existing skill levels in areas of learning, cognition, language, expression and mathematics (to be arranged through contacts with Universities which are experienced in this area and have developed such assessment regimes);
- bespoke tutorial support for areas where particular academic assistance is appropriate (focused one-on-one where necessary);
- establishment of mentoring arrangements at the student and personal levels;

- connecting the students with their communities (including the Union of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Students – UATSIS), and key elders/senior figures.

The SISTC approach is to develop a suite of support arrangements on a student-by-student basis, rather than to manage this group on a generic cohort basis. Where appropriate, students are brought together for elements of individual study and support plans which are common in order to reinforce peer support from their fellow priority- group members. Importantly however, students are encouraged and assisted to form networks with their wider student cohorts both within and outside the School.

Resourcing for the access and support arrangements outlined is provided by the School through its financial scholarships and respective budgets for language, maths and study support.

The equity and diversity provisions relating to students are enabled through the following operational elements:

RECRUITMENT AND STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

- full financial scholarship assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the School’s target for this priority group
- the offering of educational places to students from a diversity of international (recruited on and off shore) backgrounds
- a commitment to provision of entry level and achievement-based scholarships which recognise educational achievement and supports it in a way which *inter-alia* mitigates access barriers associated with socio-economic status
- a commitment to language support scholarships for students for whom language skills may otherwise be a prohibiting/limiting factor with regards to higher education access
- clear articulation of the School’s commitment to equity and diversity in its promotional/marketing materials
- clear articulation of financial scholarship and other support programs to and for prospective students
- specialist English language support diagnostics at an individual student level.

SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS

- personal and academic mentor and community support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- preparatory programs including access to English language/academic literacy and numeracy support programs
- tutorial/study support where necessary, over and above standard tutorial arrangements
- linkage to external cultural/community-based support groups/programs/ individuals.
- student support contact point/officer.

Support for students is also described in the [SISTC Student Support Policy](#). The School is also committed to providing an environment for students which welcomes people with disabilities and special needs. This is supported through the [SISTC Reasonable Adjustment Policy](#).

Workforce and Staffing

The *SISTC HRM and Staffing Plan 2020-2024* sets out the School's strategies for recruitment and retention of staff under its equity and diversity commitment, particularly the provisions for recruiting staff from a diversity of cultural backgrounds which aligns with the prospective student profile of the School. This includes a commitment to recruiting female staff as part of the School's strategic intention to be an institution which provides a welcoming and supporting environment to female students. The School is also committed to providing a working environment which welcomes people with disabilities and special needs. This is supported through the *SISTC Reasonable Adjustment Policy*.

The equity and diversity provisions relating to staff are enabled through the following operational elements:

- a Workforce Plan which emphasises the recruitment of staff with cultural sensitivity and the skills to deliver education and support to a diverse student cohort;
- explicit statement of the School's commitment to a diverse workforce in its promotional (including web site) and staff recruitment activities;
- selection panels which reflect the School's commitment to and aspirations for diversity in its student and staff cohorts;
- HR policies and practices which are sensitive to cultural and religious considerations for an ethnically diverse work force.

Roles and Responsibilities

Under the general oversight of the Board of Directors, the key roles in relation to student and staff equity and diversity strategy and practice are vested in the following positions:

- Student Recruitment – CEO and Dean
- Student Financial Scholarships – CEO and Dean
- Student Support – Dean; Associate Dean, Academic Programs; Student Support Officer
- Recruitment – CEO; Dean; Director of Operations.

Reporting

The School prepares an annual report for Board of Directors which outlines data in relation to the recruitment, progression and academic achievement of students from its diverse student cohorts, with a bespoke section which deals with students from the priority equity group of indigenous students. Equity and diversity aspects relating to staffing are included in the CEO's Annual Report to the Board of Directors.

Review

In view of the importance of this area of School strategy and activities, this policy is reviewed by Board of Directors on an annual basis during the first three years of the School's operation. Future review frequency to be determined by the Board.

Relevant Legislation and Standards

Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 Domains 1,2 and 6

Key Related Documents

SISTC HRM and Staffing Plan 2020-2024
SISTC Marketing Strategy and Plan 2020-2024
SISTC Anti-Discrimination Policy
SISTC Graduate Attributes Policy
SISTC Reasonable Adjustment Policy
SISTC Student Support Policy

Notes

Responsible Officer	CEO
Approval Authority /Authorities	Board of Directors
Date Approved	6 March 2019
Date of Commencement	
Date for Review	Annually for first three years
Documents Superseded by this Policy	None
Amendment History	V1.0 amended with the SISTC logo July 2020 . V1.1 amended with the approved changes to the senior management structure 28 April 2021 . V1.2 updated with the changes to the HESF 21 1 July 2021 .