

Student Rights and Obligations Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to outline the rights and obligations of students in both the academic and non-academic elements of their relationship with the Sydney International School of Technology and Commerce (SISTC). The Policy sets out the behaviours expected of students in these domains and outlines the behaviours that they can reasonably expect towards them by fellow students, and School management and staff. The framework is also set out for dealing with situations where students do not meet their obligations as specified under the Policy.

Principles

SISTC believes that due to the very close connection between students and staff which is essential to the learning experience, it is important to establish clear standards in relation to the rights, obligations and behavioural expectations between the parties. As a first principle SISTC seeks to build a learning partnership with each student, which is built on a basis of mutual respect and consideration. Rights, requirements and behavioural standards are prescribed within the context of reciprocal obligation, consistent with a learning partnership dynamic. The School's standards for both parties to the partnership reflect and give life to this principle.

Student Rights

Student rights fall into three categories, i.e. pre-commencement, academic, and non-academic.

1. STUDENT RIGHTS – PRE-COMMENCEMENT

During the application process, prospective students have the following rights in relation to their relationship with the School:

- access to clear, concise and accurate information about the School, its programs, fees and charges, the student and teaching body, and its location and accessibility – all in plain English;
- access to information about Australia, its laws and statutory requirements in relation to international students, as well as balanced and accurate information about Sydney as a destination for international students (including appropriate links to relevant agency web sites etc);
- avenues by which students are to clarify any aspects of the School as a prospective study destination, including on-line chat with the School, telephone enquiry numbers, and recruitment agent contact details;
- clear information about the entry requirements to programs (including English language capability) and the required proof of documentation/or similar;
- clear information about pathways programs and the way that prior learning is assessed and treated for entry purposes;

- clear and accurate information about the range of support programs available to students as set out in the *SISTC Student Support Policy* (English Language, academic and study support, financial/scholarship support, and personal support elements);
- clear information about the application process and the School's undertakings and timeframes for providing an initial reply to an applicant about their eligibility, and for finalising a determination of eligibility;
- information about communications media to be used during the application and enrolment process;
- on positive determination of eligibility, clear communications with respect to formal enrolment requirements, liaison in relation to Visa requirements etc;
- clear details about the study protective provisions of the *SISTC Tuition Protection, Teach-Out and Transition Policy* (via web site and as part of formal communication instruments)
- clear information about commencing in the School, including timeframes and processes for receiving and welcoming students to Sydney and to the School;
- on-line orientation program followed up by face-to-face orientation sessions during Orientation Week.

2. STUDENT RIGHTS – ACADEMIC

Academic staff standards and expectations with regards to teaching, communications with students, providing feedback on assessment etc. are set out in the School's suite of academic policies, which are available on the SISTC website.

Students can expect:

- the School to provide a high quality of education including a high quality of teaching, supervision, curriculum and unit content, a commitment to inclusivity, and good access to staff;
- to access accurate, timely, and sufficient information regarding enrolment and other administrative procedures;
- to access accurate, timely, and sufficient information concerning each unit in which they might enrol, including timetabling, assessment details, fees, and attendance requirements;
- to have the content and outcomes of each unit, and any relevant information communicated effectively and clearly;
- assessment that is valid, educative, explicit, reliable, and fair;
- to have their intellectual property and copyright recognised;
- to be able to communicate freely, to voice alternative points of view in rational debate, and to have their intellectual freedom protected;
- to have the opportunity to contribute feedback on the teaching they experience and to make suggestions for future course planning and to do so under full protection of intellectual freedom;
- to have 24x7 access to learning resources and student communications systems.

3. STUDENT RIGHTS – NON-ACADEMIC

In terms of student rights more generally, and consistent with the reciprocal obligations framework, students may expect the following standards in the behaviour of staff towards them:

- students have, first and foremost, the right to study in an environment which recognises and celebrates diversity and is free from discrimination of any sort (as set out in the *SISTC Equity and Diversity Policy* and *SISTC Anti-Discrimination Policy*);
- provision of a safe and accessible environment, including facilities and equipment;
- respect for the privacy of all individuals in accordance with the *SISTC Privacy Policy*;
- in all interactions with the School student shall a right to timely, clear and understandable communications in plain English, as well as the opportunity and channels for clarifying any aspects;
- in all aspects of their student experience students have the right to readily accessible help and support negotiating administrative systems and requirements;
- students have the right to access reasonable adjustment provisions set out in the *SISTC Reasonable Adjustment Policy*;
- in all interactions with students either individually or in groups, staff reflect the School's commitment to an environment which is free from bullying, harassment, or intimidation of any kind;
- in all interactions with students, staff recognise and respect the fact that students may be studying in unfamiliar environments, with unfamiliar expectations of them, and may not have English as their first language;
- where they believe from their interactions with students that this may be appropriate, staff-members will ask students discreetly and confidentially if they feel they require assistance from the School's Counselling Support Service and make the referral for them or assist them to make the referral;
- immediate assistance if they are approached about fear of being at risk for their health, safety or well-being by removing students from the area/source of risk and seeking assistance from the School's Counselling Support Service or a senior staff-members (e.g. Director of Operations; Dean; Registrar; or Associate Dean, Academic Program)
- students have the right to lodge a complaint (formally or informally), appeal or grievance in relation to any matter affecting them and for such situations to be dealt with openly and fairly under the *SISTC Student Complaints, Appeals and Grievances Policy*;
- 24x7 access to communications systems and relevant corporate systems/portals for administrative matters.

Student Obligations

Student obligations similarly fall into three categories, i.e. pre-commencement, academic, and non-academic. The SISTC student obligations are set out clearly on the School's web site for students to freely access. The website encourages students to follow the standards, seek

clarification when required, and to note the reciprocal expectations they should have in relation to both fellow student and staff behaviour.

1. PRE-COMMENCEMENT OBLIGATIONS

Student obligations during the application and enrolment process relate essentially to truthful and timely interaction with the School, and are as follows:

- realistic assessment of ability to meet attendance, progression and other requirements of an International student Visa;
- realistic assessment of the ability to meet the financial costs and manage the personal implications of studying far from home in a large and expensive city in a country with an unfamiliar language and culture;
- provision of honest and accurate information about their personal identity, educational qualifications, Visa status, and intended commencement timeframes if a successful applicant;
- provision of required supporting documentation which is genuine and meets the School's requirements for validation;
- timely responses to requests by the School and/or its agents in relation to information required during the application lodgement and assessment period, including follow up requests for clarification/additional information/proof etc;
- reading and taking note of the directions, advice and information provided by the School in relation to the enrolment process (including as it relates to non-School matters such as Visa requirements, Student Health Insurance requirements etc);
- contacting the School through the avenues provided to clarify any aspects of the School's academic and support programs, fees, or any other matters of concern or uncertainty;
- payment of fees on time pre-commencement;
- participation in the School's orientation program and activities.

2. ACADEMIC OBLIGATIONS

Academic behaviour requirements are set out in the *SISTC Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedures* which covers requirements in respect of plagiarism, cheating and presenting only original work for assessment, lodged within the appropriate timeframes and in the approved form. The *SISTC Reasonable Adjustment policy* outlines the circumstances in which variations in relation to timeframes and format for assessment may be approved.

Students are expected to exhibit the following behaviours:

- to bring an open and enquiring mind and enthusiasm to their studies;
- to participate actively in the teaching and learning environment, in particular by attending classes as required, complying with workload expectations, and submitting required work on time;
- to be aware of all unit information made available to them and to raise any questions or concerns with the appropriate staff member in a timely manner, also to make their learning needs known to appropriate staff members in a timely manner;

- to take an active part in the management of their enrolment with the School and monitor their own progress within the teaching-learning environment;
- to understand that despite all efforts to promote successful teaching and learning outcomes, student work may still not reach the standard required to pass a unit;
- to recognise the fundamental principle of intellectual freedom and to seek to safeguard this principle and freedom;
- to adhere to the principles of ethical and academic integrity during the course of their studies;
- to contribute fair and honest feedback on the teaching and supervision they experience when requested to do so.

Academic Integrity – Student Responsibilities

Academic integrity means:

acting with the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in learning, teaching and research. It is important for students, teachers, researchers and all staff to act in an honest way, be responsible for their actions, and show fairness in every part of their work. Staff should be role models to students. Academic integrity is important for an individual's and a school's reputation.¹

Students are required to take responsibility for ensuring at all times that they follow appropriate academic practices, particularly where it comes to preparing assessment items, and do not put themselves at risk of an allegation of misconduct under the *SISTC Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedure*.

Examples of student behaviour which would put students at risk of such an allegation of misconduct include the following activities²:

Cheating: is any attempt to dishonestly give or obtain assistance from another person, material, or device in an academic exercise.

Contract-cheating: is having another person or entity conceive, research or write material for an assignment and submitting the work as their own, irrespective of whether the other person or entity was paid for the material.

¹ Exemplary Academic Integrity Project (EAIP): Embedding and extending exemplary academic integrity policy and support frameworks across the higher education sector (2013), *Plain English definition of Academic Integrity*, Office for Learning and Teaching Strategic Commissioned Project 2012-2013, <https://lo.unisa.edu.au/course/view.php?id=6751>.

² Adapted from <https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/academic-integrity>

Collusion: is unauthorised collaboration in producing an academic exercise that is designated as an individual task.

Deception: is providing false or misleading information to the School.

Fabrication: is to forge or falsify any information or citation in an academic exercise or report false or misleading results or conclusions.

Impersonation: is pretending or assuming another person's identity or using a substitute person for the purposes of providing an advantage.

Obstruction: is intentionally impeding or interfering with another person's academic activity.

Plagiarism: is adopting or reproducing the work or ideas of another person, whether intentionally or not, and presenting this as their own without clearly acknowledging the source of the work or ideas.

Sabotage: is acting to prevent or hinder another person from completing an academic exercise to the best of their abilities including by making information or material unavailable to others or disrupting or interfering with an academic exercise, experiments, research or other academic activity of any other person.

Self-plagiarism: is unacknowledged use of material they have previously published or submitted.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is unacceptable as it is contrary to the principle that students must present assessment which is demonstrably their own work. Plagiarism is defined as “presenting someone else’s work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition.”³.

Examples of plagiarism include:

- copying ideas, phrases, paragraphs, formulas, methods, evidence, programming code or diagrams without correctly referencing the source;
- copying from another student’s work without indicating this is what you have done;

³ Oxford University <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism?wssl=1>

- mentioning the source in your bibliography but not referencing the content properly in the main body of your assignment, so the marker does not know what work is your own;
- changing the order of words taken from other material but retaining the original idea or concept, without correct referencing.

Plagiarism applies to oral presentations as well as written assignments, web pages and computer programming code. If students are found to have participated in plagiarism it may result in an allegation of misconduct under the *SISTC Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedures*.

3. NON-ACADEMIC OBLIGATIONS

Aside from academic behaviour requirements, the general behavioural standards for students fall into three domains, i.e. behaviour towards their fellow students; behaviour towards School staff (academic, professional and support staff); and behaviour when undertaking internships or other learning activities outside the School as part of their approved learning experience.

Students are obliged also to abide by the terms and conditions under which they agree to be provided with access to the School's IT systems for learning, communications, and administrative support. These obligations are set out in the *SISTC Acceptable Use of IT Policy*.

3.1 Obligations towards fellow students

The over-riding principle in relation to student behaviour towards their fellow students is that students will do nothing to threaten the safety of fellow students or to diminish the quality of the learning environment and learning experience of fellow students. This infers a dynamic of respect and consideration for others in all dealings between students and their peers.

In particular, students are expected to exhibit the following behaviours:

- not bully, harass, or in any way intimidate fellow students in writing, verbally, or via electronic or social media;
- not engage in physical or verbal assault or confrontation with fellow students;
- not engage in sexual harassment or any other unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour towards fellow students;
- not engage in behaviours which are distracting to other students or inhibit their ability to fully concentrate and engage during teaching events (e.g. talking during classes);
- speak to, question and behave courteously to fellow students at all times both within and outside the class room;
- contribute in an equal way during group work or discussion to make an equitable contribution to group marks/grades for assessment;

- respond positively and constructively to feedback from other group members to improve their contribution to group process and success;
- recognise that other students have valid points of view about issues which may differ from their own, and that alternative points of view should be respected and valued as part of the learning process;
- refrain from eating during teaching and related events;
- limit use of mobile devices for non-educational purposes;
- recognise the need for all students to have equitable access to teaching spaces and respect the personal space of other students;
- obtain permission from other participants prior to recording SISTC teaching sessions, group work, study activities or any other SISTC activities (face-to-face or online), in accordance with the *Surveillance Devices Act 2007 (NSW)*.

3.2 Obligations towards SISTC staff

Students are expected to:

- attend classes as required under their Visa conditions;
- be seated and ready to commence teaching and other organised events by commencement times unless a variation is expressly approved in advance;
- speak to, question and behave courteously to all staff – teaching, administrative and support;
- not leave a teaching or other organised event before it concludes unless expressly approved in advance;
- treat School staff with respect in the way they would want to be treated themselves;
- obtain permission from staff prior to recording SISTC teaching sessions or any other SISTC activities (face-to-face or online), in accordance with the *Surveillance Devices Act 2007 (NSW)*.

3.3 Obligations during external learning experiences

Student requirements during and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programs and projects are prescribed in individual learning agreements/contracts with host employers. These set out inter-alia the expected outcomes for both parties to the agreement and where relevant outline the specific contributions which students will make to the host employer during their placement.

At all times students undertaking such placement are required to comply with the behavioural standards set out in this policy as they relate to behaving respectfully and courteously at all times. They are also expected to follow directions from their host employer, and in general follow the behavioural standards and expectations which apply within the host workplace. The exception is where either behavioural expectations or behaviours encountered during the placement are contrary to the reciprocal obligations set out in this policy for treatment of students by School staff. In such situations, students should notify their Work Integrated Learning supervisor

immediately and remove themselves from the workplace if they have reason to feel their safety is at risk of being compromised.

Students Not Meeting Obligations

In all situations, both academic and non-academic, the following principles apply for resolving situations where it is apparent students may not be meeting their obligations under this policy:

- matters are to be raised in privacy with students and not in places where their colleagues are able to witness or hear a conversation;
- matters are to be approached initially in an exploratory way on the basis that the matter may be a misunderstanding or have a reasonable explanation;
- the concern is to be outlined clearly in plain English to the student and they are to be given adequate opportunity to seek clarification or pose questions and have these addressed to their satisfaction;
- if it is apparent that the student was not fully aware of requirements, an opportunity is to be given for the student to undertake not to engage in such behaviour in the future;
- where matters are resolved informally, the staff member is to check that the student understands future requirements and is to monitor for compliance;
- where further training or guidance is required (e.g. in relation to referencing/citation etc.) this is to be arranged by the academic staff member who had the discussion with the student and the staff member is to follow up with the student that they understand requirements;
- second or repeat offences are to be treated more formally with a record made of the discussion with the student and any agreed action plan, signed by both parties; with the student to be invited to have a support person attend such discussions;
- further occurrences to be referred to the Dean or Director of Operations (as appropriate) for decision to issue a formal warning to the student, including that further occurrences may result in their status as a student of the School being suspended or their enrolment cancelled in accordance with the *SISTC Course Rules Progression and Completion Policy and Procedures*;
- students to be made aware of the *SISTC Student Complaints, Appeals and Grievance Policy* provisions throughout all stages of the process which they are able to access if they are not satisfied with the way any matter has been, or is being handled.

Monitoring and Review

The *SISTC Compliance, Quality Assurance and Review Strategy and Plan* 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)

Surveillance Devices Act 2007 (NSW)

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

National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018

("the National Code 2018") Part D, Standards 1-10:

Key Related Documents

SISTC Compliance, Quality Assurance and Review Strategy and Plan
SISTC Acceptable Use of IT Policy
SISTC Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedures
SISTC Anti-Discrimination Policy
SISTC Course Rules Progression and Completion Policy and Procedures
SISTC Equity and Diversity Policy
SISTC Intellectual Property Policy
SISTC Privacy Policy
SISTC Reasonable Adjustment Policy
SISTC Student Complaints, Appeals and Grievances Policy
SISTC Student Support Policy
SISTC Tuition Protection, Teach-Out and Transition Policy

Notes

Responsible Officer	CEO
Approval Authority /Authorities	Board of Directors
Date Approved	6 March 2019, 2 August 2019
Date of Commencement	
Date for Review	2022
Documents Superseded by this Policy	None
Amendment History	<p>V1.0 updated with the SISTC logo July 2020</p> <p>V1.1 updated with inclusion of the <i>SISTC Privacy Policy</i> and the <i>SISTC Acceptable Use of IT Policy</i> December 2020</p> <p>V1.2 updated with the approved changes to the senior management structure 28 April 2021.</p> <p>V1.3 updated with the changes to the HESF 21 1 July 2021.</p> <p>V1.4 minor update to reflect the provision of counselling services to students 9 November 2021.</p> <p>V1.5 minor update by executive approval to obtain express prior permission from students before recording of any conversation or activity with students and/or staff 27 January 2022</p>