Student Support Policy

Policy Owner	Academic Dean
Approving Authority	Academic Board
Implementation Responsibility	SPI Staff
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Current Status	Version 2

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the principles and types of support that are available to students studying at Sydney Polytechnic Institute (SPI). The policy aims to have measures in place that will ensure students' wellbeing and optimise their learning outcomes and student experience.

This policy seeks to foster attitudes of mutual respect and confident participation amongst the SPI student population.

SPI is committed to supporting all students to adjust to studying with SPI, particularly where this has led to changes in their living circumstances, to enable them to achieve their learning goals and achieve satisfactory progress towards meeting the learning outcomes of their course.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, students, and affiliates at Sydney Polytechnic Institute (SPI).

3. Definitions

In this Policy:

Academic Staff refers to all personnel in teaching and research roles.

Administrative Staff *refers to personnel in non-academic roles.*

Consultation refers to a time slot where students can have face-to-face or online meetings with Academic or Administrative Staff to raise and clarify questions about their course of study and progress as well as teaching and learning in their study. Note that Academic Skills Support and Language Support are separate and in addition to consultation time.

Course Coordinator refers to an academic staff member who has responsibility for and oversight of all aspects of a specific program (course) of study.

***Learning Management System (LMS*)** refers to a software tool that supports learning through facilities for administration, document management, reporting and tracking, and automated delivery of learning activities. SPI is currently using Moodle LMS.

Staff refers to both Administrative Staff and Academic Staff at SPI. This includes all full-time, part-time and casual staff.

4. Roles

4.1 The Academic Dean is responsible for overseeing all academic aspects of the students' experience at SPI, including ensuring that the overall structure for student support is in place and that processes for consultation and other support activities are appropriately managed.

4.2 Course Coordinators are responsible for ensuring that student support, including consultation, is implemented in accordance with this policy for all Units within their Courses, and that Academic Staff adhere to the roles and responsibilities outlined in the policy.

4.3 Staff are responsible for managing and providing student support and consultation as outlined in this policy.

5. General Student Support

5.1 During Admissions: Support shall be available to all students during the Admissions process. Special consideration may be considered for any of the following;

- students with a disability;
- applicants with learning or language difficulties;
- applicants from a disadvantaged socioeconomic background;
- applicants of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent as outlined in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Policy; and;
- applicants who have been disadvantaged in their access to education;

Information on Special Consideration is provided in the Student Handbook.

5.2 Whilst Enrolled: SPI will provide the following forms of support, at a level consistent with ensuring the welfare and wellbeing of each student:

- Academic and learning support, including:
  - Learning support from academic staff, including holding Academic Readiness workshops in the first weeks of each trimester;
  - Early intervention for students identified as potentially at risk;
  - Language, literacy and numeracy support.
- Administrative support, including:
  - providing pre-enrolment information outlining the rights and obligations of students
  - student support services available to students in the transition to life and study in a new environment
  - refers to legal services
  - referrals to emergency and health services
  - facilities and resources
  - complaints and appeals processes,
  - any student visa condition relating to course progress and/or attendance as appropriate.
  - student safety
  - Information and resources in relation to support services.
  - Assistance with enrolment, unit registration and unit timetable
- Technology support, including:
  - Access to the internet and network.
  - IT and software support for resources provided by the Institute.

- Personal support: SPI will maintain a list of external providers of specialised counselling services relevant to its students including:
  - Counselling for non-academic matters.
  - Health issues.
  - Welfare and wellbeing support.

This list will be reviewed for currency every twelve months by the Registrar.

- Disability support that includes:
  - Reasonable adjustments to assessment or teaching for students with a disability.
  - Reasonable adjustments to facilities for students with a disability.
- Professional support that includes:
  - Career Development Consultation (including resume-writing and consultation services)

5.3 Staff training: SPI staff members who interact directly with overseas students will be trained, as part of their induction, about the Institute's obligations under the ESOS Framework. Refer to SPI Staff Recruitment, Review and Development Policy for further information.

5.4 SPI will promote and foster security and safety for students on campus and online. Refer to SPI Health and Safety Policy.

5.5 Any fees charged by SPI for support services will be limited to the costs of providing those services. No fees will be charged for access to information on support services or for support associated with required academic functions (e.g. admissions, enrolment).

6. Student Consultation

6.1 Consultation sessions with students are held during teaching and study weeks and may be conducted for reasons including, but not limited to:

- clarifying or explaining the learning resources and assessment requirements
- advising individual students on their course study plans and academic progress
- advising on progression rules and clarifying the completion requirements generally
- academic course or study advice for students who are at academic risk of failure or lack or progression
- providing information related to their teaching

6.2 All Academic Staff must be available for student consultation each week during the teaching sessions in which their teaching occurs, in addition to the associated examination periods.

6.3 All Academic Staff must advise students of the available consultation times during the Orientation program, the first lecture/tutorial, and announce online 1-week before the commencement of each teaching session. The consultation time-slots will be included in the unit information on Moodle and displayed within the SPI campus.

6.4 Students are encouraged to attend scheduled consultation times with their teachers or make a time for consultation with SPI administrative staff or their teacher during regular office hours.

6.5 Staff teaching in each Unit of Study must be available for consultation for the following minimum times during the weeks specified in clause 6.1:

- Unit Coordinator or Unit Lecturer: at least one hour per week;
- Academic staff: at least 1 hour per 30 students or part thereof each week.

- Administrative staff shall be available for consultation during published office hours.

6.6 Communication: Academic Staff involved in a unit should ensure that the Course Coordinator and administrative staff are properly advised about their consultation hours at the beginning of each teaching period.

6.7 The Course Coordinator and SPI administrative staff shall ensure that all consultation times do not clash with scheduled teaching activities and that they are published in the timetable, in the unit information in the Moodle LMS and any other appropriate communication mediums.

6.8 Physical Venue: Face-to-face consultation sessions will be held at venues that are suitable for the purpose of the consultation, such as the student service centre, academic staff offices, the library, and vacant lecture/tutorial rooms.

6.9 Where the consultation requires privacy, SPI staff will ensure that the meeting takes place in a venue which enables privacy and with no more people present than required.

6.10 Student support person: A student is able to invite a support person or the student representative to be present at the consultation meeting.

6.11 Online Consultation: SPI will promote the utilisation of remote and online tools to students where appropriate for consultation outside of scheduled lecture/tutorial times.

6.12 SPI staff will also provide students with access to remote or online consultation services via appropriate text, audio and video communication methods. These may include, but are not limited to, the LMS accessible via the SPI website, phone consultation, video-conferencing such as Zoom.

7. Learning Support

7.1 The Learning support provided by SPI will be designed to:

- provide as constructive and supportive a learning environment as possible;
- ensure that the individual needs of students are identified and, where appropriate, addressed;
- encourage students who are struggling in their studies to seek support;
- identify and respond to opportunities to progressively enhance the learning support that is provided to students.

7.2 Provide arrangements for supporting and maintaining contact with students who may be off-campus.

7.3 Student Information and Orientation Program: All students will be provided with access to SPI information prior to the acceptance of any offer.

7.4 All enrolled students are required to attend the Orientation Program before the commencement of each teaching period. The Academic Dean and Registrar are responsible for monitoring and ensuring that the Orientation program is properly delivered to all students. The Orientation program should be designed to provide students with the information required to successfully engage in their learning during the upcoming teaching period.

7.5 The Orientation program would typically be designed to encompass a range of information and resources, mostly identified into two major themes:

a. Education
   - Enrolment, Registration, ID and Campus Tour.
   - Demonstration on how to access SPI's resources for students including policies and forms and Student Handbook.
   - Learning Management System and IT systems introduction.
   - Individual course advice and enrolment check.
   - Study progress and Visa requirements and obligations
   - Academic integrity responsibilities and penalties for breaches including plagiarism and cheating.
   - SPI Student Support Services
   - Complaints and appeals process.

b. Living and social information
   - Living and studying in Australia.
   - Methods to contact Australian emergency and health services.
   - Introduction to relevant legal services.
   - Showing where and how students can access information and advice on their employment rights and conditions, as well how to resolve workplace disputes.
   - SPI Student Support Services for students' personal life.

7.6 On-campus orientation sessions are supported through appropriate resources made available through appropriate channels, including the SPI website and/or the Student Learning Management System.

7.7 The Registrar or delegated staff are responsible for making students aware of the requirement for attendance at Orientation and for following up with students who do not meet the requirement (see SPI Student Orientation Policy for further guidance).

7.8 Equity and diversity: In compliance with Standard 2.2 of the Higher Education Standards Framework 2021, all student learning support is to be designed to accommodate student diversity. No student should be placed at a disadvantage because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, beliefs or culture.

7.9 Participation and progress in, and completion of, student support activities by identified student subgroups shall be monitored and findings will be provided in an annual report to the Academic Board.

7.10 Equity and diversity related information will be delivered during Orientation, ensuring all students are aware of SPI's policies and rights and obligations to and of students.

7.11 Student Support: All students shall be advised of the actions they can take, staff contacts, and the support services that are available if their personal circumstances are adversely impacting their study.

7.12 Students shall be provided with information and access to learning support services. Appropriate information about these services shall be included in a range of student communication channels.

7.13 Learning support services shall be consistent with the requirements of students' course of

study, their mode of study and the learning needs of student cohorts.

7.14 Identification of Individual Student Needs: The Academic Dean or Course Coordinator shall be responsible for the development and implementation of clearly defined strategies that enable the early identification of students who may be at risk of progressing in their academic studies. See 7.16.

7.15 Writing skills of students will be reviewed early in their studies and an additional workshop will be provided, if necessary.

7.16 Students who are at risk and require learning support will be identified through mechanisms including, but not limited to:

- Noting failure to attend (where attendance is taken at each class)
- Unsatisfactory assessment outcomes (assignment submissions are monitored).
- Students who fail to attend class regularly and/or who fail to submit, or perform poorly in one or more assessments, will be contacted by academic staff and/or student services staff.
- Noting a failure to engage with, or participate in, relevant information or activities in the Learning Management System.
- Reviewing discussions between academic staff and students during the Orientation program.
- Self-referal by students.
- Referral by academic staff who have identified a student experiencing difficulty (such as by observation in class or upon analysis of assessment tasks submitted early in the term).
- When a student seeks assistance from relevant support staff.
- During an interview with a student.
- Reviewing an existing intervention strategy agreed between the student and the Course Coordinator, Academic Dean or equivalent academic staff.

7.17 The Academic Dean, Course Coordinator or their delegate, will consult with the student once they are identified as having learning support needs. Learning support needs may arise from factors associated with, but not limited to, the following:

- English language
- Numeracy
- Study techniques
- Time management
- Organisational skills
- Teamwork
- Technology usage
- The requirements of the course
- Equity and diversity factors
- External personal issues

7.18 An individual learning support program will be prepared in consultation with, and with the consent of, the student, and will utilise advisory services and resources outlined in this policy.

8. Ongoing Student Learning Support:

Programs designed to assist students with higher education commence during the Orientation. A range of support programs would include workshops, individual interviews with students and

informal support provided by academic staff. The support programs utilise a wide range of resources available. Individual assistance will be available from specialist support staff.

8.1 Ongoing provision of learning support activities will include at least the following:

- ensuring that teaching staff provide the necessary teaching and learning adjustments and manage allocated resources to address the diverse needs of all students at risk;
- ensuring that teaching and support staff who are engaged in delivery of units of study are offering appropriate support that meets the specific needs of their students (see Staff Professional Development Policy).
- encouraging staff to consult with relevant Institute-based and external stakeholders when developing a support program for students at risk.
- English Language and Academic Assistance. Organising workshops, providing advice and resources which include topics such as essay writing, report writing, referencing of sources, avoiding plagiarism, using Turnitin, making oral presentations, and examination tips.

8.2 Library information sessions will be held during the Orientation period. Additional workshops are scheduled throughout the year to assist students to effectively utilise the range of library resources, including utilisation of electronic databases. These workshops are designed to improve the information literacy skills of students. Library staff are available during library opening hours to give individual assistance and advice to students.

8.3 Information technology staff will be available during normal office hours to help students with course related issues associated with the use of educational technology (i.e. hardware and software) available to them and to assist in solving any problems associated with connectivity issues that limit access to course materials.

8.4 The Academic Dean ensures each student is provided with appropriate academic advice including course progression, attendance, academic performance, support actions and arrangements for referrals to other services.

8.5 Records will be maintained regarding all students who are referred to, or provided with, any formal or structured support. Summary data will be reported to Teaching, Learning and Examination Committee (TLEC) on a trimester basis.

8.6 To promote a positive learning environment, students are also encouraged to participate in discussions and debates with their student peers (social aspect of learning) through extra-curricular activities.

9. English, Mathematics and Computing Support

9.1 English safety net support: Where a Unit Coordinator identifies a student who may be experiencing English language difficulties, the student will be invited to an advisory session that may involve an English assessment.

9.2 Providing extra-curricular English support for students, e.g. offer English workshops at each teaching session where necessary.

9.3 Staff skills in integrating language enhancement: SPI will allocate at least one academic staff member who is qualified and experienced in delivering English support. This staff member will provide advice, academic resources, and appropriate training for other SPI staff.

9.4 The allocated staff member will also act in a leadership role to provide a key academic resource and appropriate additional training for other academic staff.

9.5 Computing and Mathematics safety net support: Where a Unit Coordinator identifies a student who may be experiencing Computing and/or Mathematics difficulties, the student will be invited to an advisory session that may involve a Computing and Mathematics assessment and development of an appropriate support plan.

9.6 The outcome of the test will be discussed in an individual meeting with an academic advisor, and extra-curricular support program will be developed as necessary.

9.7 Extra-curricular Computing and Mathematics support: An online Computing and Mathematics resource collection will be accessible for students. The collection will include resources that are required by specific units; and the required resources will be highlighted in the Unit Outlines.

9.8 Accountability: The Academic Board has overall responsibility for the appropriateness of English, Computing, and Mathematics Support; the Academic Dean will have the operational responsibility that will be delegated to Unit Coordinators where appropriate. The Registrar and student support team will work with the Academic Dean to ensure the English, Computing, and Mathematics Support is properly delivered by appropriately qualified staff who are aware of their responsibilities.

10. Welfare and Wellbeing Support for Students

10.1 The Institute provides students access to welfare-related support services to assist with issues that may arise during their study, including course progression and attendance requirements and personal issues. These services are provided at no additional cost to the student.

10.2 Where the Institute refers the student to an external support service, it will not charge for the referral.

10.3 A staff member may observe signs that indicate a student is experiencing difficulties in an aspect of their lives, or, appear to be at risk of deteriorating mental health while studying at SPI. Under such circumstances, the staff member shall refer the identified student to the student support team for initial counselling. A student may also approach the student support team directly to seek help if experiencing difficulties in any aspect of their lives.

10.4 SPI designates a member of student support team to provide initial advice to all students. The appointed student support staff is also the official point of contact for overseas students. The Student Support service provides assistance to students experiencing difficulties in any aspect of their lives, including issues of academic or personal nature.

10.5 The student support team is available to overseas students to help them access study support and welfare-related services such as;

- Legal Services
- Accommodation
- Emergency and Health Services
- Facilities and Resources
- Complaints, Grievances and Appeals processes
- Health and Safety

10.6 If students still have trouble coping with stress after initial counselling, referral to external counselling services shall be provided as specified in the table below.

When to refer? ▪ A student indicated feelings of hopelessness or helplessness, or seems to be "perpetually" tired, anxious, depressed, irritable, angry, or sad. ▪ A student's use of alcohol or other substances interferes with his/her relationships or work. ▪ A student's thoughts or actions appear unusual to others. ▪ A student attempts to self-harm or makes suicidal comments.
How to refer? ▪ Following initial advice, the Student Support Officer shall discuss the option to attend external counselling services with the student. With the consent of the student, the Student Support Office will support the student to access external counselling services. ▪ During initial counselling, the Student Support Officer shall o explain to the student that external counselling services are recommended to support the student in managing their feelings and any issues through the help of professionals, and, o provide the students with details of the external counselling services, including information any costs and how confidentiality will be managed.
If the student does not agree to the referral? The Student Support Officer should: ▪ Inform the student of alternative options and encourage the student to consider those options; ▪ Talk with the student and let them know that the Student Support Officer will show continuing support for their wellbeing and is available for further discussions should the student wish to seek further information or advice. Or ▪ Strongly encourage the student to attend external counselling services and assist the student (if the Student Support Officer considered the situation as an urgent or crisis situation) to make any necessary travel arrangements including accompanying the student to the Counselling Service location.
If the student agrees to the referral, but only agrees to contact the external counselling services on their own? The Student Support Officer should: ▪ Provide the student with sufficient information about the external counselling service, as well as any supporting documentation and suggest that the student contact the external counselling as soon as possible. ▪ Talk with the student and let them know that the Student Support Officer will show continuing support for their wellbeing, and is available for further discussions should the student wish to seek further advice. Or ▪ Make any necessary travel arrangements, including accompanying the student to the Counselling Service location (if the Student Support Officer considered the situation as urgent or critical).
If the student agrees to the referral, and agrees to have the Student Support Officer facilitate the referral? The Student Support Officer should: ▪ Ask the student for permission to share his or her contact details, previous counselling record with the Student Support Officer and other relevant information for the external counselling services. ▪ Facilitate the referral by arranging an appointment. The Student Support Officer shall call ahead if the student is being brought over or sent directly so that an appointment can be made to have a counsellor available. Or ▪ Make any necessary travel arrangements, including accompanying the student to the Counselling Service location (if the Student Support Officer considered the situation as urgent or critical).

10.7 Students will have access to the **Student Representative of the Academic Board** who will;

- listen to student views and concerns, and actively represent them in an objective manner;

- provide independent support, advice and advocacy to students;
- maintain confidentiality and independence when representing students;
- clarify and explain SPI's Policies and Procedures to students;
- raise student concerns with the Academic Board and Governing Council of SPI.

10.8 Academic staff will give special attention to the participation and progress of students who have been admitted with special consideration and provided with additional academic support.

10.9 The Registrar will maintain a critical incident register of all incidents associated with student wellbeing. A report outlining any incidents will be provided to the Academic Board on an annual basis.

Notes

Related Documents:

SPI Student Complaint and Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure
SPI Student Orientation Policy
TEQSA Guidance Notes: Wellbeing and Safety

Amendment History:

Version No.	Approved by	Effective date	Amendments
1.0	Governing Council	27/08/2021	New Policy
1.1	Governing Council	29/01/2022	Section 4.2 inserted and the subsequent sections renumbered; Section 4.3 has been modified with the clarification of the process and responsibilities relating to student referrals.
1.2	Governing Council	30/11/2022	Section 3.3 inserted and the subsequent sections renumbered; minor amendments made to Section 4.1 and 4.3.
1.3	Governing Council	08/05/2024	New Section 4.6 inserted and the subsequent sections renumbered. Section 3.2D modified. Minor editing and other amendments made.
2.0	Academic Board	17/04/2025	Policy revamped (merges from previous Student Consultation Policy, Student Learning Support Policy, English, Computing and Mathematics Support Policy, Student Support Policy).