

Academic Standards Policy

| | |
|------------------|----------------|
| Version number | 2 |
| Approved by | Academic Board |
| Date of approval | 07/01/2021 |

Purpose

As a higher education provider registered under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act 2011), Sydney Institute of Higher Education (SI) has a legal obligation to maintain high academic standards throughout all aspects of its higher education operation, in accordance with the requirements of registration.

Compliance with high academic standards and *Higher Education Framework Standards (HESF) 2015* is essential to protecting the reputation of SI and the Australian higher education sector as a whole.

The *Academic Standards Policy* establishes the principles and procedures that govern the maintenance, integrity and quality assurance of academic standards at SI. It outlines the role and responsibilities of the *Academic Board* with respect to academic standards and the areas of the higher education operation within the *Academic Board's* oversight that contribute to the maintenance of academic standards, such as benchmarking, program design, program development and review, learning and teaching, and assessment.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff and students at SI, and all members of the *Academic Board*.

Principles

SI will ensure high academic standards are maintained throughout its higher education operation through strong oversight by the *Academic Board*.

High academic standards are required to ensure the ongoing reputation, credibility, standing and registration of SI as a higher education provider.

Procedures

Academic governance

The *Academic Board*, with authority delegated from the *Corporate Governance Board*, is responsible for ensuring that:

- Academic expertise external to SI and input from industry representatives is sought during the curriculum development process and any major program or unit review process (see the *Program Development and Approval Policy* and *Program Review and Continual Improvement Policy*);
- As an overall quality assurance mechanism, benchmarking projects must be conducted between SI and other Australian higher education providers. Criteria for comparison include program content, along with broader academic arrangements, such as admissions and program progression policies, enrolment and completion data, among others. Approaches to Academic Governance and management will also be benchmarked. (Refer to the *Benchmarking Policy*);
- All higher education delivered at SI is informed by scholarship and engages with critical inquiry. Not only curriculum, but all aspects of teaching and learning must aim to foster independent thinking and approaches to lifelong learning (refer to the *Learning and Teaching Policy* and *Learning and Teaching Plan*);
- Program review cycles that will be conducted a minimum of once every five years will be informed by regular ongoing program monitoring in accordance with the *Compliance Calendar*. Ongoing program monitoring will collect and report data on student performance, attrition and completion rates, student feedback concerning the quality of teaching, the adequacy of learning resources and student support, among other criteria. The *Program Review and Continual Improvement Policy* provides further information and guidance;
- All academic aspects of higher education delivered and supported at SI is continually improved, with academic standards set by the *Academic Board*, reviewed and monitored for compliance, and improvements implemented.

Program Development, Program Design and Review

The programs of study offered by SI must demonstrate an academic standard of pedagogy and design appropriate for a higher education degree. New programs will be assessed for delivery on the basis of a sufficiently advanced level of inquiry and depth of learning, and that programs appropriately progress in complexity of content, learning outcomes, and assessment as students progress through them. The development of programs of study must demonstrate external referencing of scholarship, and be regularly internally evaluated for quality assurance purposes.

All SI programs of study will:

- Be aligned with the appropriate AQF level requirements of the qualification, relevant State and Federal legislation, and industry best practice as determined by external referencing and benchmarking activities
- Demonstrate the constructive alignment of program learning outcomes with unit learning outcomes and a range of appropriate assessment activities that allow learning outcomes to be assessed throughout the duration of the program of study
- Demonstrate a sequenced structure that allows for the progressive and coherent achievement of the expected learning outcomes
- Deliver content that is informed by rigorous academic research and relevant theories and concepts in the discipline
- Be developed in consultation with relevant industry representatives, professional bodies and disciplinary experts in the field as well as learning and teaching experts
- Engage with current and emerging scholarship in the field

- Challenge students to engage in critical inquiry and develop lifelong learning abilities
- Be innovative in design and learning and teaching methods
- Reflect all relevant requirements of the Higher Education Standards Framework.
- The *Program Development and Approval Policy* provides further information and guidance.

The *Program Advisory Committee* is responsible for providing advice to the *Academic Board* on new program development, program design and review. As well as consulting students and academic staff, this committee is responsible for benchmarking and consulting external and industry experts in the development of new programs, new units of study, program changes and improvements.

Benchmarking

As described above, benchmarking is a quality control mechanism that allows SI's governing bodies to assure themselves that the quality of education delivered at SI is of a sufficient standard appropriate for higher education programs. Benchmarking also provides external evidence to inform decision-making around resource allocation and/or redeployment of resources to meet internal academic objectives.

Internal benchmarking informs ongoing monitoring, review and improvement activities to maintain quality and standards within SI whilst allowing SI to position its educational offerings as distinct within the higher education sector.

Benchmarking arrangements should aim to cover the following operations at SI at minimum:

- Structural arrangements (including governance)
- Program benchmarking (program design, learning outcomes, assessment strategies and moderation, student performance, expected graduate pathways, specific program admission criteria, fees)
- Policies and processes, particularly concerning admissions arrangements, program progression, and early intervention for unsatisfactory progress
- Benchmarking of student outcomes (outcomes data, student progression, attrition and completion rates, student and staff satisfaction, staff performance, student achievement in relation to program and unit learning outcomes)
- Staffing arrangements, including aggregated data about salaries and staff/student ratios.

The *Benchmarking Policy* provides further information and guidance on external referencing and internal benchmarking practices.

Learning and Teaching

SI learning and teaching arrangements are central to maintaining high academic standards. SI strives to develop a culture of academic leadership whereby more senior and experienced academic staff mentor and share teaching innovations with junior academic staff, fostering a community of academic best practice within SI.

SI must ensure that:

- All staff involved in developing curriculum are qualified and experienced in approaches to higher education pedagogy (refer to the *Workforce Policy* and the *Workforce Plan*)
- Academic staff are provided with opportunities to improve their practice through a program of

- professional development activities (refer to the *Professional Development Policy*)
- Learning and teaching staff encourage students to engage in critical inquiry and the development of lifelong learning (refer to the *Critical Inquiry Policy*)
 - Learning and teaching activities are arranged to foster progressive thought and increasingly advanced knowledge in the discipline
 - Students are provided with appropriate learning resources to support their intellectual inquiry and research activities (refer to the *Library and Information Resources Policy*).

The *Learning and Teaching Policy* and *Learning and Teaching Plan* provide further information and guidance.

Assessment

SI will ensure that all assessment activities are consistent, applied fairly, and are appropriate for the stated program learning outcomes.

As such, SI will:

- Engage in moderation activities (as per the *Moderation Policy*) so that:
 - All student work in a given assessment is marked against the same criteria.
 - All grades awarded are an accurate reflection of students' achievement.
- Ensure that assessments require students to demonstrate the learning outcomes.

The *Assessment Policy* provides further information and guidance.

Policy Implementation and Monitoring

The *Academic Board* delegates responsibility for the implementation of this policy to the academic management committees identified above in 'Procedures'.

Definitions

Academic Board: the SI governing body responsible for academic oversight, including SI learning and teaching environment and practices, program development and approval, workforce planning, research and scholarship, and academic policies and procedures. The *Academic Board* advises the *Corporate Governance Board* on academic matters.

Academic governance: The structures, systems, and processes through which academic oversight is maintained, ensuring the best quality of learning, teaching, scholarship, and research at SI.

Academic integrity: the standards and values that must be embedded in all academic activities, such as accountability, fairness, honesty, and respect.

Benchmarking: Key to ongoing quality assurance and improvement, benchmarking is the process through which SI sets standards based on best practice for practice in both academic and non-academic areas of operation.

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015: The Australian national standards for higher education that all higher education providers must meet, regulated by TEQSA.

Learning and Teaching Plan: a document that outlines the SI's academic objectives over a five-year period, corresponding strategies to achieve the objectives, and measurements of progress.

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA): Australia's regulatory body that registers and evaluates the performance of higher education providers against the Higher Education Standards Framework, thus ensuring that all students studying a higher education degree in Australia receive quality education.

Review Schedule

This policy will be reviewed by the *Academic Board* every three years.

| Version History | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Version number: | Approved by: | Approval date: | Revision notes: | Next review date: |
| 1 | Academic Board | 25/10/2017 | | 25/10/2020 |
| 2 | Academic Board | 07/01/2021 | No change. Periodic Review. | 07/01/2024 |

| ▲ Related Documents | |
|---------------------|---|
| ↗ | Academic Governance Policy |
| ↗ | Academic and Professional Integrity Policy |
| ↗ | Academic Standards Policy |
| ↗ | Assessment Policy |
| ↗ | Benchmarking Policy |
| ↗ | Corporate Governance Policy |
| ↗ | Program Development and Approval Policy |
| ↗ | Program Review and Continual Improvement Policy |
| ↗ | Critical Inquiry Policy |
| ↗ | Workforce Policy |
| ↗ | Learning and Teaching Policy |
| ↗ | Library and Information Resources Policy |
| ↗ | Moderation Policy |
| ↗ | Professional Development Policy |
| ↗ | Learning and Teaching Plan |
| ↗ | Workforce Plan |

| |
|---|
| ↗ Corporate Governance Board - Terms of Reference |
| ↗ Program Advisory Committee - Terms of Reference |
| ↗ Academic Board - Terms of Reference |

End of document: "Academic Standards Policy"

Document ID: 8470, Revision No : (10), Created : January 5, 2020 6:04 pm, By : Nigel Finch, Last updated : January 7, 2021 11:35 am, Updated by : Nigel Finch
Produced & Printed : Thursday 7th of January 2021 12:35:58 AM "Sydney Institute of Higher Education ABN 49 618 742 813 TEQSA PRV14323 CRICOS 03866C"
