Student Support Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

The Australian Performing Arts Conservatory (APAC) Student Support Policy and Procedure sets out the purpose, scope, principles, policy statements, procedures and responsibilities relating to student support. The document is designed to underpin effective student support, as required by mandated higher education standards, and to appropriately assign responsibility and accountability. For all intents and purposes, this policy is compliant with the Higher Education Provider Amendment (Support for Students Policy) Guidelines, specifically section 49A Support for students policy requirements.

2. Purpose

APAC is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students. APAC will provide learning and general wellbeing support services conducive to optimal learning and will ensure a positive environment for all students. APAC will ensure that accurate information is readily available regarding all support services and that all support services are freely accessible by all students regardless of their educational and cultural background, entry pathway, mode or place of study. APAC has processes in place that identify students at risk of unsatisfactory progress and will provide specific support for these students.

This policy outlines the responsibilities of APAC, its staff and students; the student support services available and the methods by which students will be informed of these. It summarises the identification, support, monitoring and reporting of students at risk and other students potentially requiring additional support. It lists other relevant APAC policies and procedures and summarises the governance of this policy.

3. Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to students, staff and members of APAC decision-making bodies.

3.1. Principles

- Effective student support is a key enabler of students' academic success and achievement of learning outcomes, mitigates academic risk, and contributes to delivering equitable opportunities across the student cohort;

- Effective student support underpins a safe study environment and contributes to the health, safety and wellbeing of students;

- The structure of student support reflects the characteristics of the student cohort, taking into account trends and changes in the student cohort and reflecting the needs of particular groups in areas such as cultural transition, health, English language support, disability and wellbeing;

- Student support services are resourced so as to ensure that students needing support are able to access support of an appropriate quality.

4. Information for Students

4.1. Communication

Information regarding all student support services is provided during Orientation and is available on APAC's website, in the Student Handbook, on posters around the campus, and on APAC's Learning Management System. APAC also holds fortnightly All-Student Meetings where students participate in workshops relating to wellbeing, academic progression, academic integrity, bullying and harassment, consent, and are advised on support services. Student Representatives provide important peer mentoring and support for all students.

Accurate course information is accessible on APAC's website. Academic staff are also available to provide advice on enrolment patterns to ensure optimal course progression and other academic and support advice.

Students who request access to academic and non-academic support services can engage with those services before and after APAC's census date for their unit of study. APAC will ensure that the requested support is available to students in a timely manner.

4.2. Orientation

An Orientation program is provided for all new students which includes information regarding all support services available, including the methods of accessing these. Information regarding Orientation is provided in the Letter of Offer and available on APAC's website. Reminders are also communicated to students.

All students must attend an Orientation program at the beginning of their studies. These sessions are conducted face-to-face and or by web-conferencing as appropriate. A session specific to internationals students is also provided. Students will have the opportunity to ask questions at each session.

The Orientation program is accessible, age and culturally appropriate and provides all students with key information about, but not limited to:

- facilities and resources

- rules and expectations, including the Student Code of Conduct

- the Learning Management System

- all relevant policies and procedures including those relating to student safety, attendance, course progress, refunds, critical incidents, and complaints and appeals

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- learning support and cultural support (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders)

- support services available from the APAC or otherwise easily and affordably accessible from external sources

- emergency and health services

- FEE-HELP information and census date advice, including that support services are available to students before and after the census date of each trimester.

- tours of the campus identifying classrooms, student areas, library, students' administration, student chill-out/zen space, evacuation processes and meeting points and any other relevant areas such as toilets and restricted areas.

- details of where to find important information.

For international students, the orientation provides information regarding:

- services providing information on employment rights and conditions

- cultural and English language support

- resolution of workplace issues, including through the Fair Work Ombudsman

- services providing assistance with general or personal circumstances adversely affecting their education

- services providing assistance to international students in adjusting to study and life in Australia

- actions students can take to enhance their personal security and safety

- how to seek assistance for, or report, any incident that significantly impacts their wellbeing;

- social and cultural norms students need to be aware of while in Australia

- general information on safety and awareness relevant to life in Australia.

For international students, the orientation program will be available for late arrivals and to students who are not commencing with APAC at the beginning of a course.

Information presented in the orientation program will be provided on the website, in the Student Handbook, and in the "Support Course" module in Moodle so that it may easily be revisited by students seeking that information and so that it might be accessed by students before they accept an offer of admission.

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The orientation program is complemented by workshops held in Orientation week designed to assist students with the transition to higher education study and campus life.

5. Support Services

5.1. Enrolment Support

Student Services provides personalised advice and assistance as students are preparing to enrol, including services such as:

- Course transfers

- Deferring commencement of study

- Application of advanced standing

- FEE-HELP advice

Students are invited to complete the Disability, injury or health condition support needs questionnaire during their enrolment which is the first step APAC implements to understand the diverse needs of its cohort. Student responses trigger assessment and planning of support mechanisms which are individualised.

5.2. Academic Progression and English Language Support

APAC provides student with academic support and with English language support which includes, but is not limited to:

- Study advice

- Additional tutorials

- Study and assessment skills and access to study groups

- Literacy and numeracy skills

- Information and communications technology skills

- Advice on academic integrity

- Research and referencing techniques

- Time and study management

- Online learning resources, including support in the use of the Learning Management System.

Detailed and up to date information on the nature of support and on how to access support is provided on APAC's website, in the Student Handbook, in the Support Course module in the Learning Management System, during the All-Student Meetings, via email communication, and from teaching staff during classes.

Staff facilitate formative and summative assessment activities early in Trimester 1 to gauge the incoming students' academic proficiency and preparedness for study. These activities allow staff to fine tune curriculum, and ensure resources and activities align with student capabilities and where necessary student Support Plans are created. Teaching, or other staff, who become aware of a student's need for English language or academic support proactively and sensitively encourage the student to seek support, including feedback in assessment items.

Students are able to obtain ongoing feedback and advice from their lecturers through individual consultation by email, by telephone or face-to-face, including preparation of, and for, assessments.

Where APAC is unable to provide the kind or level of support required, it will refer students free of charge to an affordable external service provider.

5.3. Mental Health and Wellbeing Support

Wellbeing support is provided for students through the availability of the following services:

- Counselling

    o On-site free counselling and well-being support is provided through a psychologist who delivers one-on-one support to students, as well as group workshops and support activities.

    o Free of charge, external 24-hour counselling services provided by AccessEAP.

    o Information about APAC's counselling services are supplied to student at Orientation, individually by staff, and in the form of collateral around the campus.

    o A number of bespoke short videos on topics such as managing stress and anxiety, time management, having difficult conversations, and Mindfulness are available to students via APAC's Learning Management System.

    o A Wellness Week is held each trimester offering a range of wellness information, activities and healthy food.

- Safety and wellbeing support and education (including bullying, assault and harassment workshop)

- Accommodation information and referral

- Financial information and referral

- Career preparation, information and referral

- Equity and Disability services and support

- Health and First Aid

- Social events

- Student Employment referral

Detailed and up to date information on the nature of support and on how to access support is provided on APAC's website, in the Student Handbook, in the Support Course module in the Learning Management System, during the All-Student Meetings, via email communication, and from teaching staff during classes.

6. Student Risk Factors and Risk Assessment

6.1. Identification of and Support for Students at Risk

APAC's Attendance, Progression and Exclusion Policy Procedure outlines the process for identifying students at risk. Risk indicators may include educational and socio-economic background information, attendance, engagement with course materials and activities, and academic performance, including failure to successfully complete a unit of study. Students are identified through self-identification, administrative processes at admission, student performance and behaviour, and Student Management System reporting. Students assessed as at risk are flagged and identified as such in the Student at Risk Register and supported by an intervention plan.

Once identified, these students are supported by any or all the services listed above in section 5.2. and 5.3. Where staff determine a student needs further support, additional bespoke academic support may be designed with the Director of Higher Education and the relevant Head of Discipline. This may include adjustment to assessment due dates, or the assessment type.

6.2. Other Student Potentially Needing Additional Support

The following categories of students may include a higher than average proportion of individuals who required additional support:

International students

i. As required by the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (Standard 6), APAC designates at least one member of staff (the "Contact Officer") as the official point of contact for international students.

ii. Accurate and complete information on how to contact the Contact Officer is easily accessible on the website and is available in the Student Handbook, in the "Support Course" module in Moodle, in pre-arrival information, and is provided in the orientation program.

iii.   The Contact Officer has access to accurate and complete information regarding APAC's student support services, including those provided internally and those that may be delivered through external service providers.

iv.   APAC ensures that all staff who interact directly with international students are aware of the obligation under the ESOS framework and it implications for international students.

v.   APAC has policies and procedures in place specific to international student visa holders in supporting them to maintain visa compliance.

vi.   APAC provides bespoke professional development for staff on teaching students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to ensure students are supported.

First Nations students

APAC provides academic and non-academic support which is culturally appropriate for First Nations students. APAC does this by building connectedness by providing cultural and social interaction opportunities amongst student and staff e.g. through NAIDOC Week celebrations; creating a culturally safe space that fosters understanding and cultural connectedness; and recommending culturally specific services and resources.

Students with a disability

APAC's Students with a Disability Policy and Procedure provide a framework for the provision of an accessible, inclusive, safe and supportive learning environment for students with disabilities and the provision of reasonable adjustments to learning to support the participation of students with a disclosed disability. APAC provides bespoke professional development for staff on neurodiversity in the teaching space to ensure students are supported.

Other Students

For a variety of reasons, any student may experience a change in circumstances which may increase their need for additional support. All students may request assistance from any APAC support services, either directly or by referral from a relevant staff member.

6.3.   Monitoring of Students at Risk

Details of intervention plans are entered into the Students at Risk Register and the subsequent academic performance of those students is monitored through meetings and various reports presented to the Academic Board. These may include de-identified reports on activities and students created by APAC's on-site psychologists. Where appropriate, additional intervention plans are developed and implemented.

6.4. Process to Reduce Student Risk

The timely referral of appropriate student support is intended to give each student the best possible opportunity to address issues that are causing them difficulty in progressing their study, and to improve their academic performance in a timely fashion, before they may fail a unit. Staff promptly contact students via email if they miss a class, an assessment deadline, or show a change in participation in class activities. This information is then communicated to the relevant Heads of Discipline (HoD).

Should a student fail to utilise a support service to which they have been referred, or continue to struggle with engagement and academic performance despite receiving relevant support, the Director of Higher Education will, in consultation with the relevant Head of Discipline, take additional action including, but not limited to, regular scheduled meetings with the student, referral to additional support, and discussion with Student Services regarding suspension or withdrawal.

6.5. Withdrawal of Non-engaged students (pre-census)

Students who fail to engage in classes within the first two weeks the trimester will, in addition to being referred to support services, be contacted by the relevant Head of Discipline via email and/or phone to discuss the option of withdrawal from one or more units or from the course before Census Date.

If a student continues to fail to engage (including failure to utilise offered support services and/or failure to response to the Head of Discipline communication) then the Head of Discipline will advise the Director of Higher Education and Student Services of the student's lack of engagement and lack of response to communication. Where there is sufficient evidence, as judged by the Head of Discipline, non-engaged students will be withdrawn by Student Services prior to Census Date.

6.6. Reporting

A report of the student at risk data will be prepared by the relevant Head of Discipline using the Student at Risk Register and tabled at the Teaching and Learning Committee at the end of each trimester. The report will include a summary of the interventions and progress of each student. A de-identified version of this report will be tabled at subsequent Academic Board meetings. The Director of Higher Education also reports student progress, support and retention at the beginning of each Trimester to the Academic Board and at each Board of Directors meeting.

A de-identified report on APAC's Student Support Policy will be provided annually to the relevant authority on or before 1 March each year as per the requirements set out in section 49B of the Higher Education Provider Amendment (Support for Students Policy) Guidelines.

7. Student Safety

7.1. Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment

The Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure states APAC's position regarding its zero tolerance to sexual assault or sexual harassment of any kind and outlines how reports and allegations of misconduct will be handled. This is also referenced in APAC's Student Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure, Student Code of Conduct and Student Handbook. Where a student discloses family and domestic violence, harassment, sexual harm, or other traumatic events, APAC will work with the student to provide reasonable adjustments for their academic work.

7.2. Bullying, Discrimination, Harassment and Threatening Behaviour

Bullying, harassment, discrimination and other forms of threatening or unlawful behaviour is not tolerated at APAC and is never acceptable. APAC does not tolerate victimisation and will take reasonable steps to ensure that all individuals involved in dealing with, responding to, or managing these matters are not victimised. The Student Code of Conduct states APAC's position in relation to these behaviours and outlines how reports and allegations of misconduct will be handled.

7.3. Critical Incident Management

The Critical Incident Management Policy and Procedure outlines the action and responses that APAC will take during and in the period immediately following a critical incident.

8. External Services

APAC staff will provide students with contact details for relevant external professionals where appropriate. Any referrals are provided at no cost to the student, however charges may be applied by the external provider and any such charge should be clarified by the student prior to using these services. APAC does not receive any financial benefit from the external providers for such recommendations.

9. Student Records

Student records held in the Student at Risk Register and Student Management System including biographical information, communication, and details of support services provided, will be managed in accordance with APAC Privacy Policy and Procedure and Records Management Policy and Procedure.

Permission levels in both platforms are used to ensure that all staff will have appropriate access to only the student data relevant to their responsibilities.

10. Complaints and Appeals

The Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure outlines APAC's approach to managing student academic and non-academic complaints and appeals to ensure fairness, equity, reasonableness, and transparency and to drive compliance with the requirements of relevant mandated higher education standards.

11. Policy Review

In order to ensure that APAC has support services for students that are appropriate in scope and quality, APAC will implement a regimen of regular review and feedback from various stakeholders to monitor the quality and accessibility of the support services and will action improvements where necessary.

This feedback may be sourced formally through surveys or other research and/or informally. Any complaints will be analysed to determine whether it is reasonable and feasible to improve the relevant service delivery.

This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed annually.

12. Responsibilities

12.1. The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and regulatory requirements through the oversight of APAC activities and the development, monitoring and review of policies and practices and initiating prompt action where compliance is deemed to have lapsed;

- assuring itself that an effective system of student support is developed, resourced and implemented; and

- assuring itself that the system of student support complies with the requirements of mandated higher education standards and aligns with good practice.

12.2. The Academic Board

The Academic Board is responsible for:

- contributing to the development of effective systems of student support, particularly in relation to academic matters;

- monitoring the effectiveness of student support as evidenced in academic success, retention, progression, completion and student satisfaction; and

- ensuring that proposals for new courses and for changes to courses consider and incorporate relevant student support services.

12.3. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for:

- overseeing the operation of the system of student support and assigning requisite responsibilities and accountabilities, including designating the Contact Officer referred to in Clause 6.2 of this Policy and Procedure;

- monitoring the performance and effectiveness of staff involved in providing student support services and related advice, and ensuring adequate induction programs and ongoing training for staff, including ESOS obligations; and

- ensuring that in the budget process adequate resources are provided for student support services.

12.4. Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- discharging the responsibilities of their role in relation to student support services; and

- participating in inductions and undertaking professional development and training calibrated to their involvement in providing student support services and related advice, including ensuring a current understanding of their ESOS obligations

12.5. Students

Students are expected to:

- be aware of supports available and seek help where relevant; and

- undertake support that has been recommended as a result of risk identification and interventions.

13. Relevant Documents

- Attendance, Progression and Exclusion Policy and Procedure

- Student Orientation Policy and Procedure

- Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure

- Student Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure

- Student Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Policy ad Procedure

- Student Code of Conduct

- Student Handbook

- Critical Incident Management Policy and Procedure

- Privacy Policy and Procedure

- Records Management Policy and Procedure

- Disability Policy and Procedure

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992

- Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000

- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021

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

- Higher Education Provider Amendment (Support for Students Policy) Guidelines 2023

- Avondale University Support for Student Policy and Procedure Version 2.0 1 May 2024

14. Definitions

- **Adjustment** is a measure or action taken to assist a student with a disability to participate in education and training on the same basis as other students. An adjustment is reasonable if it achieves this purpose while taking into account the student's learning needs and balancing the interests of all parties affected, including those of the student with the disability, the education provider, staff, and other students.

- **Disability** in the context of this policy and procedure is someone who has temporary or permanent disabilities; physical, intellectual, sensory, neurological, learning or psychosocial disabilities, diseases or illnesses, physical disfigurement, medical conditions, or work-related injuries.

- **Critical Incident:** a traumatic event, or the threat of such, which causes extreme stress, fear or injury.

- **Support Services:** services that offer academic or wellbeing support to assist students to realise their academic potential and maximise the benefits of a course of study.

Version Control and Document Owner

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Document Owner	Chief Executive Officer	Approval Authority	The Board of Directors
Audience	Staff and Students	Review Date	August 2025

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1.1	APAC	Current.	9 June 2017	
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4.0	DVE Business Solutions Pty Ltd	Review and update of policy and procedure.	19 October 2022	
5.0	DVE Business Solutions Pty Ltd	Updates to Orientation Procedures to include Cultural support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and cultural and language support for International Students.	23 August 2023	23 August 2023
6.0	APAC	Review and update to whole document to comply with the Higher Education Provider Amendment (Support for Students Policy) Guidelines 2023	29 August 2024	29 August 2024