

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.

1.1. Purpose

The intent of this Policy and Procedure is to provide a framework, and reflecting underpinning principles, that ensures that APAC provides effective, and appropriate levels of, student support.

1.2. Scope

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

1.3. 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.

2. Policy Statements

2.1. Academic Success, Equity and Wellbeing

APAC is committed to the equitable delivery of high-quality courses with which all students may actively engage in order to achieve relevant learning outcomes at both the course and unit level, and through which students may progress in a timely manner to completion.

APAC acknowledges that honouring this commitment requires the resourcing and deployment of a system of student support within the institution which mitigates key risk

factors that may impede engagement, equitable access, achievement of learning outcomes, timely completion, and academic success.

The risk factors managed through APAC's system of student support are varying, often intersecting, characteristics of the student cohort. These include but are not limited to:

- students who are employed;
- students with young children;
- students with carer responsibilities;
- students with health difficulties;
- students with financial difficulties;
- students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- students experiencing personal crises;
- students experiencing discrimination;
- students who are sexually or gender diverse;
- students from traditionally under-represented groups in higher education, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, students with a disability, first in family engaged in tertiary studies, students from remote and regional areas, student from low socio-economic backgrounds;
- students requiring assistance with language, literacy or numeracy; and
- students with a disability or special learning need who require additional learning support;

APAC has in place as system of student support which is informed by regularly updated knowledge of its student cohort, proactively and clearly communicated to current and impending students, delivered by capable staff, regularly reviewed and continuously improved, and supplemented by external sources of support it identifies and communicates to students.

2.2. Communication and Information

Clear, comprehensive, accurate and easily accessible information regarding the range of student support services provided by APAC, and accessible from external sources, is published on the website, in the Student Handbook, in the "Support Course" module in Moodle, and in pre-commencement information, including pre-arrival information for international students. This information will include comprehensive details for accessing student support services, including contact details.

Information provided in written and online form is also provided in APAC's orientation program for commencing students, in particular for international students. The orientation program is easily accessible for all commencing students, and will include detailed

information on the range of services available, details for accessing services and relevant contact details.

Information provided in written and online form is regularly and proactively reviewed to ensure accuracy and currency. Inaccuracies are immediately corrected, and changes to APAC's system of student support are immediately reflected in texts and presentations.

Ongoing monitoring of the external environment, including of regulatory and legislative changes, ensure currency of information.

2.3. Staff Capabilities, Training and Resourcing

Effective student support requires that staff providing support services or providing advice regarding access to support services have the appropriate and current knowledge and skills as well as a clear understanding of their responsibilities and accountabilities.

APAC ensures that those of its staff who have these responsibilities have the requisite knowledge, skills and understanding. In particular, APAC ensures that its staff who interact directly with overseas students are aware of their obligations under the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 and the implications for the support of overseas students arising from these obligations.

In order to ensure that staff providing support services or providing advice regarding access to support services have the requisite knowledge skills and understanding, APAC provides staff induction with appropriate content and clear role statements indicating responsibilities and accountabilities. APAC also ensures that currency is maintained through professional development activities, including refreshing awareness of ESOS obligations.

In the budgeting process, APAC assigns sufficient resources to student support services to ensure legislative and regulatory compliance, as per Clause 2.4 of this Policy and Procedure.

APAC acknowledges that there are limits to the kinds and levels of student support that it can offer directly. Consequently, APAC has identified relevant and current external sources of student support.

2.4. Legislative and Regulatory Compliance

APAC's approach to, and resourcing of, student support will comply with relevant regulatory frameworks and legislation, including the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (particularly 2.3. and 7.2.2e) and Standard 6 of the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018.

2.5. Review and Improvement

In providing student support services, APAC may uncover systemic, as well as particular, issues which it must address as a preventive measure. Staff should, therefore, be both attentive and reflective in their consideration of interactions with students in need of support, statements made, and perspectives offered; looking beyond the particulars of a case to more general implications. Thus, the system of student support is a component of APAC's

commitment to continuous improvement in its operations and provision of services and in building a culture that supports this.

More broadly, the system of student support is regularly reviewed, including through the use of external experts and consultation with, and feedback from, students and staff and those who have been involved. Deficiencies identified in such reviews are expeditiously remedied and opportunities for improvement are pursued where feasible.

3. Procedure

3.1. Orientation

- i. The orientation program provided to all commencing students, and required for international students, is a foundational component in APAC's system of proactive student support. 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;
 - attendance requirements and requirements regarding course progression;
 - learning support and English language support;
 - support services available from the APAC or otherwise easily and affordably accessible from external sources;
 - complaints and appeals processes;
 - legal services;
 - matters to do with safety and wellbeing; including sexual assault and sexual harassment
 - emergency and health services;
 - details of where to find important information.
- ii. For international students, the orientation provides information regarding:
 - services providing information on employment rights and conditions;
 - 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; and
 - general information on safety and awareness relevant to life in Australia.
- iii. For international students, the orientation program must be available for late arrivals and to students who are not commencing with APAC at the beginning of a course.
- iv. Information presented in the orientation program must 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.
- v. 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.

3.2. Academic and English Language Support

- i. APAC provides students with academic support and with English language support, which includes, among other things:
- a. study advice,
 - b. additional tutorials,
 - c. study and assessment skills, access to study groups,
 - d. literacy and numeracy skills,
 - e. information and communications technology skills, advice on academic integrity,
 - f. referencing techniques, and
 - g. online learning resources, including the use of the Learning Management System (Moodle).
- ii. Detailed and up to date information on the nature of the support and on how to access the support is provided on the website, in the Student Handbook, and in the “Support Course” module in Moodle.
- iii. Teaching staff regularly remind students of the availability of English Language and academic support.
- iv. Teaching, or other staff, who become aware of a student’s need for English Language support or academic support proactively and sensitively encourage the student to seek support, including in feedback on assessment items.
- v. Students are able to obtain ongoing feedback and advice from their lecturers through individual consultations by email, by telephone or face-to-face, including preparation of, and for, assessments.

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

3.3. Counselling, Health and Mental Health Support

- i. APAC is committed to the promoting the health, mental health and wellbeing of its students and accordingly provides expert, confidential counselling and health-related services, sometimes through referring students to external service providers.
- ii. Detailed and current information on the nature of the support provided and on how to access this support is provided on the website, in the Student Handbook, and in the “Support Course” module in Moodle.
- iii. Staff who become aware of a student’s need for health, mental health or wellbeing support, proactively and sensitively encourage the student to seek support;
- iv. Where APAC is unable to provide directly the kind or level of support required, it will refer the student free of charge to an affordable external service provider.

3.4. Disability Services and Support

- i. APAC is committed to equitable access to the educational opportunities it provides, and accordingly provides disability support services to students with a disability, long-term illness or mental health condition.
- ii. APAC makes reasonable adjustments for students with a disability or other conditions affecting their study in order to provide equitable access to units and courses. Reasonable adjustments may be made through variation to assessment and delivery methods, calibrated to a student’s particular situation.
- iii. Detailed and current information on the nature of the support and on how to access this support is provided on the website, in the Student Handbook, and in the “Support Course” module in Moodle.
- iv. Staff who become aware of a student’s need for disability support, proactively and sensitively encourage the student to seek support.
- v. Where APAC is unable to provide directly the kind or level of support required, it will refer the student free of charge to an affordable external service provider.

3.5. Career Services

- i. APAC is committed to securing positive graduate outcomes for its students and accordingly provides careers-related services, including through referral to external service providers.
- ii. Detailed and current information on the nature of the support and on how to access this support is provided on the website, in the Student Handbook, and in the “Support Course” module in Moodle.

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

3.6. Housing, Tenancy and Financial Support Services

- i. APAC recognises that safe, adequate accommodation and financial security play an important role in enabling the achievement of academic success, smooth course progression and timely course completion. Consequently, APAC accordingly provides housing, tenancy and financial support services, including through referral to external service providers.
- ii. Detailed and up-to-date information on the nature of the support and on how to access this support is provided on the website, in the Student Handbook and in the “Support Course” module in Moodle.
- iii. Staff who become aware of a student’s need for such support, will proactively and sensitively encourage the student to seek support.
- iv. Where APAC is unable to provide directly the kind or level of support required, it will refer the student free of charge to an affordable external service provider.

3.7. Contact Point for 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.

3.8. Contact Points for all Students

- i. All students are able to make an appointment to speak with appropriate Student Support staff about any non-academic issues regarding their studies, including about personal circumstances adversely impacting their study, or about their enrolment.
- ii. Accurate and complete information on how to contact Student Support staff 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. Students should contact their lecturers directly regarding academic issues.

3.9. Complaints and Appeals

Students enrolled, or a person seeking to enrol at APAC, who are dissatisfied with any aspect of APAC's student support services, may make a complaint under the *Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure*.

4. Responsibilities

4.1. 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.

4.2. 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.

4.3. 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 3.7 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.

4.4. 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.

4.5. 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.

5. Relevant Documents

- APAC Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure
- APAC Student Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure
- APAC Student Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment 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

6. 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.

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