

First Nations People Policy and Procedure HEPP98

PURPOSE

This policy reflects the commitment of Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education) (SCEI-HE) to recognising and supporting First Nations Peoples within its educational environment. Through the application of this policy, SCEI-HE will:

1. Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters, skies, and communities.
2. Respect First Nations peoples' cultures, customary practices, and rights to self-determination.
3. Ensure equitable access to education for First Nations students through support services and inclusive teaching practices.
4. Align with national and international frameworks supporting Indigenous education and participation.
5. Promote cultural competency within the institution.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, students, third parties (partners, contractors, consultants, etc.), and visitors to the Institute. This policy should be read in conjunction with relevant policies, including;

1. Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure HEPP05
2. Admissions Policy and Procedure HEPP37
3. Assessment Policy and Procedure HEPP04
4. Critical Incident Policy and Procedure HEPP56
5. Deferring, Suspending or Cancelling Student Enrolment Policy and Procedure HEPP58
6. Disability and Special Needs Student Support Services Policy and Procedure HEPP71
7. Examinations Policy and Procedure HEPP31
8. English Language Proficiency Policy and Procedure HEPP43
9. Inclusive Culture Policy HEPP52
10. Mental Health Policy and Procedure HEPP69
11. National Literacy and Numeracy Test Policy and Procedure HEPP73
12. Privacy Policy HEPP34
13. Professional Practice Policy and Procedure HEPP48
14. Sexual Assault and Harassment Policy and Procedure HEPP60
15. Special Consideration Policy and Procedure HEPP82
16. Strategic Workforce Planning Policy and Procedure HEPP22
17. Student Welfare Policy and Procedure HEPP49
18. Support for Students Policy and Procedure HEPP97

DEFINITIONS

First Nations peoples	Any person who: • Is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent; • Identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person; and • Is accepted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in which they live as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.
SCEI-HE	Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education)

POLICY

SCEI-HE makes the following commitments in relation to the education of and research activities that engage with First Nations peoples:

1. To respect the values and views of First Nations peoples and acknowledge the wisdom and diversity of First Nations peoples traditional knowledge systems.
2. To respect the right of First Nations peoples to self-determination and engagement in decision making that impacts on their own lives and maintaining, controlling, protecting and developing their heritage and culture.
3. To encourage the contribution of First Nations students in the ongoing development of the Institute's education and research, including the opportunity to participate in decision-making bodies.
4. To include First Nations perspectives in all major strategies and plans.
5. To foster a greater understanding and appreciation of First Nations perspectives, cultures and issues.

6. To provide campuses that are welcoming, respectful, supportive, non-discriminatory and free of harassment for First Nations students and staff.
7. To follow the best practice of higher education providers to improve support for First Nations peoples, and research activities that engage First Nations peoples.

SCEI-HE will ensure Australian government-specific funding supports First Nations students' success and will provide additional financial support, where possible.

PROCEDURE

1. Acknowledgement and Cultural Integration
 - a. SCEI-HE will promote understanding and appreciation of First Nations cultures, perspectives, and heritage by:
 - i. Providing Indigenous cultural competency training for all staff and students
 - ii. Incorporating First Nations perspectives into teaching materials and assessments, supported by academic staff development.
 - b. Campuses will be maintained as welcoming and respectful environments for First Nations peoples.
2. Support for First Nations Students
 - a. SCEI-HE will assist First Nations students' transition and success in higher education by:
 - i. Offering tailored admission pathways
 - ii. Providing socio-economic, cultural, and academic support to achieve parity in access, participation, retention, completion and success
 - iii. Collaborating with each First Nations student to develop and annually review a Personal Learning Plan addressing their learning and cultural needs.
 - iv. Employing dedicated First Nations Student Support Officers to provide guidance, advocacy, and mentorship.
 - b. Government-specific funding will be utilised to support First Nations students, supplemented by additional Institute resources where possible.
3. Engagement and Representation
 - a. The Academic Board will seek representation from a First Nations peoples' representative to advise on curriculum, pedagogy and teaching/learning needs.
 - b. Academic and non-academic employment opportunities for First Nations peoples will be encouraged and supported.
 - c. Staff will ensure learning materials and assessments are culturally appropriate for First Nations students.
 - d. SCEI-HE will partner with First Nations organisations and communities to provide students with culturally relevant work placement opportunities and career pathways.
4. Ethical Research Engagement
 - a. SCEI-HE commits to ethical research practices when engaging with First Nations communities by:
 - i. Adhering to the AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research.
 - ii. Ensuring research projects align with First Nations community priorities and needs.
 - iii. Requiring informed consent and community collaboration in all research involving First Nations peoples.
 - b. First Nations researchers and students will be supported through mentorship, funding, and recognition of Indigenous knowledge in research practices.
5. Review and Community Collaboration
 - a. SCEI-HE will host an annual First Nations Forum to discuss issues related to First Nations students, curriculum and pedagogy, research and community engagement.
 - b. The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed annually, with input from First Nations students, staff, and community representatives, to ensure continuous improvement.
6. Communication and Implementation
 - a. The policy and procedure will be implemented and communicated throughout the Institute via:
 - i. The Institute's webpage.
 - ii. Internal circulation to staff and students.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Australian Government National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy



- AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research
- Universities Australia, Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025
- Department of Education, The Australian Universities Accord (Final Report)
- AITSL, Indigenous Cultural Competency in the Australian Teaching Workforce (Discussion Paper, 2020)
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

RESPONSIBILITIES

Academic Board: Ensures First Nations representation and oversees curriculum integration.

Academic and Support Staff: Implement cultural training, student support, and Personal Learning Plans.

Managing Director: Oversees policy implementation and resource allocation.

DOCUMENT AND RECORD CONTROL

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