WELL-BEING THROUGH SFU POLICIES & PROCEDURES: A GUIDE FOR ACTION

PURPOSE

To provide a framework to intentionally consider how policies and procedures impact the physical, social and mental well-being of students, to be used when reviewing existing and creating new policies and procedures.

It is acknowledged that policies and procedures are an essential part of maintaining the integrity of the institution and its operations and there is a need for legal consideration in policy language and content.

Student well-being and success are fundamental to the core business of the institution. The intent of applying this guide to policies and procedures is to contribute to an institutional environment and culture that supports student success and well-being. For additional background information, see Appendix A.

PRINCIPLES

All aspects of policies and procedures will embody a culture of respect, fairness and support for student success and well-being.

Navigating policies and processes is seen as a learning experience and extension of students’ formal education.

LINK WITH SFU STRATEGIC VISION AND ACADEMIC MISSION

Improving well-being through policies and procedures helps improve student learning, persistence, success and satisfaction. This project is aligned with SFU’s 2013-2018 Academic Plan (Objective 1.2.3) and SFU’s Strategic Vision to be the leading engaged university and goal to “equip students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences that prepare them for life in an ever-changing and challenging world.” It contributes to the success of all students, and especially those with diverse language and cultural backgrounds, supporting the University’s principles of diversity and fostering a culture of inclusion, as well as Internationalization.

SCOPE

This guide may be applied to new and existing policies and procedures, including content, application, processes and communication, and aims to ensure they are understandable for all students. Relevant policies include formal and informal institutional and departmental policies. It also includes procedures, processes and practices as outlined in the Academic Calendar and Policies as listed in the Policy Gazette. Given this scope, multiple levels of the institution have a role to play, including departments, programs, Faculties, Senate and Senate committees.
GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are for policy and procedure development and review processes.

POLICY/PROCEDURE DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

1. The policy/procedure development or review process will engage input and feedback from key stakeholders, including students.
2. The intersection of policies/procedures will be considered (e.g., how does the implementation or revision of one policy impact other policies and vice versa).
3. Policies/procedures will be evaluated regularly to assess relevance.
4. System and technological support will be considered when developing policies/procedures (e.g., does the Student Information System allow for the application of the policy).

POLICY/PROCEDURE CONTENT, WRITING AND FORMAT

5. A clear rationale for the policy/procedure will be provided at the beginning of the policy/procedure to help students understand the need and intent.
6. The tone and content of the policy/procedure will be positive, supportive and respectful.
7. Plain language will be used as much as possible to help improve understandability of the policy/procedure (see Appendix B).
8. The format of the policy/procedure will be as brief as possible, using methods such as examples, bullets and headings to improve understandability.
9. Inclusive language will be used (e.g., in relation to gender).
10. Time sensitive requirements will be clearly indicated and apparent to readers.
11. Examples, scenarios, and links to additional resources will be provided where possible to enable understanding of the policy/procedure (e.g., definitions, links to additional resources, links to related policies)
12. Links to relevant supports (e.g., counselling services, ombudsperson, advising) will be included where possible in the policy/procedures.

POLICY/PROCEDURE APPLICATION AND INTERPRETATION

13. Policies/procedures will allow for flexibility and exceptions where possible for unique circumstances.
14. Links to relevant supports (e.g., counselling services, ombudsperson, advising) will be included where possible in the policy/procedures or related guidelines.
15. Clear guidelines as well as training will be provided for staff and faculty members regarding the interpretation and implementation of policy/procedure to ensure consistency.
16. Supporting information and resources will be made available to assist with students’ understanding and interpretation of policy/procedure where possible (e.g. guidelines, websites, videos, explanations, links).
17. Individuals interacting with students will connect students to relevant services, resources or supports (e.g., counseling services, ombudsperson, advising).
18. The application of policy/procedure is seen as an extension of students’ formal education. Efforts will be made to use discussions with students as teachable moments, contributing to students’ development, and the tone of these interactions will be positive, supportive and respectful as opposed to punitive.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This guide was developed through a collaborative process, engaging key stakeholders, including staff, faculty members, administrators and students. It is part of SFU’s Healthy Campus Community initiative and has been led by SFU’s Health Promotion team and Associate Registrar, Senate and Academic Services.

This is a living document that will be modified over time. For further information or to provide feedback, please email health_promo@sfu.ca or visit www.sfu.ca/healthycampuscommunity.
APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Policy is widely recognized as having an important impact on student success and well-being and is an essential component of a systemic approach to student success and well-being. Policy has a powerful ability to impact the well-being of students, and higher education institutions are beginning to explore policies in relation to mental health in particular. In turn, student success and well-being are fundamental to the core business of the institution. Through National College Health Assessment data since 2007, it has been identified that mental well-being is an important area of focus for SFU in terms of enhancing student well-being and ensuring academic success (NCHA 2007, 2010).

The notion of considering policy impacts on well-being explores how policies can not only contribute to improved health outcomes (e.g. reduced undue stress and anxiety), but can also shape a campus environment that positively enhances well-being. The following have been identified as key conditions to foster well-being at SFU through the Healthy Campus Community initiative.

Campus Conditions for Well-being:

- Social Connectedness
- Supportive Institutional Culture
- Reducing Undue Stress
- Opportunities for Personal Development
- Strengthening Balance and Resilience
- Inclusivity
- Involvement and Engagement

Policy, through its’ content, understandability, and application, has the most direct impact on reducing undue stress, contributing to a supportive institutional culture, promoting inclusivity and creating opportunities for student learning and development. The application of policy can also play an important role in linking students to relevant supports and resources.

The following impacts on student well-being can be realized by considering the impact of policy on well-being, as a part of a comprehensive approach to creating a healthy campus community:

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this document, the following definitions are used.

Student well-being: Student well-being is about students’ resilience, connectedness, persistence, sense of community, physical, social and emotional health, and ability to thrive at SFU and beyond. It is also about reducing negative health outcomes such as overwhelming stress, hopelessness, anxiety and isolation.

Student success: Student success relates to students’ experience, academics, retention and graduation rates.
APPENDIX B: PLAIN LANGUAGE EXAMPLES AND RESOURCES

Plain Language is a clear, succinct writing style which ensures the reader understands as quickly and completely as possible. It is not to be confused with an oversimplified or condescending style. By choosing straightforward vocabulary and sentence structures and by organizing and presenting your material clearly and logically, you can save the reader time and effort and ensure that your message will be clearly understood (Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of...</th>
<th>Use...</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a large number of</td>
<td>more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in absence of</td>
<td>without</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give consideration to</td>
<td>consider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>owing to the fact that</td>
<td>because, since</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use:

- Active voice
- Humanize the message (we, you, I)
- Short sentences and paragraphs
- Punctuation as much as possible
- Five or fewer items in lists

RESOURCES

