

## 052-PP-MGS **Student Support Services, Including Orientation and Counselling**

### 1. **Purpose and Scope**

This policy deals with Student Support Services at MGS. Its aim is to ensure that students, including international students, have a wide range of non-academic services to ease their transition into the school and, in many cases, into Australian life, as well as to provide support as needed.

It relates to the requirements of:

- National Code 2018 Standard 5/NESA Guidelines, Requirement 3.12: Student Support Services

However, this standard also refers to other policies and procedures not contained herein, such as the Course Progress Policies and Procedures (Standard 8/Guideline 3.12.2) and Critical Incidence Policy (Standard 5/Guideline 3.12.4).

This should be read in conjunction with the policies and procedures relating to possible reasons for providing student support services, including:

- 014-Deferring, Suspending & Cancelling Enrolment
- 080-Younger Overseas Students (Accommodation & Welfare)
- 096-Attendance
- 099-Transfer Between Registered Providers
- 124-Monitoring Course Progress

### 2. **General Principles Applying to All Sections of This Document**

All services must be delivered in an age-appropriate way that also takes into account the English language proficiency and cultural backgrounds of the student.

All actions taken should be documented, with the evidence kept on file for future reference, for audit purposes, and in case investigations are required in the event of complaints or appeals. These records may be viewed by NESA Inspectors, the Overseas Student Ombudsman, the Appeals Tribunal and so on.

The student, parents and caregivers privacy and confidentiality must be respected at all times. Guidelines are provided by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner ([www.oaic.gov.au](http://www.oaic.gov.au)).

### 3. **Responsibilities**

The (PEO)/Headmaster has overall responsibility for student services.

The Student Services Officer (SSO) reports to the PEO/Headmaster and is responsible for most day-to-day student services tasks, except for welfare counselling which is the responsibility of the Director of Curriculum and Compliance and the Director of Welfare and Operations. Should student numbers increase, an Assistant SSO will be appointed, reporting to the SSO (see 'Ensuring an adequate number of student support personnel' section, below).

The Admissions Officer covers for the SSO when is absent and acts as a back-up; note that a nominated back-up person is recommended by the National Code (see 'Student Services Point

of Contact' section below). This also ensures coverage of the SSO function when the SSO is on leave or otherwise not available, and allows for continuity in the event of staff changes.

The Marketing and Operations Manager also have some duties under this policy as indicated below.

#### **4. Student Orientation Programme**

The MGS Orientation Programme is essential for all students, no matter when they join the school. It is considered a critical part of ensuring that students have the best possible chance to settle into their new environment as smoothly as possible.

The first part of the programme is delivered on the first day the student arrives to the school, no matter whether the student arrives as part of a main intake or arrives later by themselves. This first part covers the bigger picture points and essentials, such as what to do in an emergency, student visa requirements, homestay, guardianship, TPS, counselling, academic performance and requirements, etc. It is followed up with on-going information through the newsletter, school assemblies, app, interviews, etc throughout the course of the student's enrolment.

The following will be covered:

- timetabling, course structure and how to do well in their studies
- school facilities and resources
- the range of student support services available, and how to access them
- safety information, including evacuation procedures for all premises that students might access during their course
- emergency and health services, including numbers to call in the event of an emergency, and some information about what to expect once the number is called
- compliance with student visa conditions, including course progress and attendance
- school rules
- complaints and appeals processes, including the requirement to maintain enrolment and (usually) attendance during an appeals process
- legal services
- introduction from each student's point of contact (see 'Student Services Point of Contact' section below)

Written information will also be provided in the form of the Student Handbook, so that if students need to look something up, they have the information at hand. The handbook is written in plain English, in order to minimise difficulty for international students. It may also be distributed to parents and guardians.

Where international students and domestic students are provided with an orientation session on the same day, they will be together for parts of the session that apply to all, such as timetabling, safety and educational requirements, etc. This will allow students to mix; getting-to-know-you activities may be incorporated, to encourage friendships between the local and international students. International students may have an extension to the session to cover the points that apply to them, for example visa requirements and welfare issues specific to international students.

Should students arrive outside the normal start date (first day of term at the beginning of the new school year) a special orientation will be run. The exact form will be determined on a case-

by-case basis by the PEO/Headmaster, adhering to the principle that information should be provided at the earliest opportunity. For example, if two students start within a couple of days of each other, the first might receive a one-on-one briefing of the most important points on the morning they arrive, followed by a full orientation for both when the second arrives.

For ELICOS students with lower levels of English language proficiency, an experienced teacher or in-house translator may be brought in to ensure that the language used in orientation is at an appropriate level, and also to carry out comprehension checks.

Attendance records are kept of all orientation events, including one-on-one sessions. These record who attended, any late arrivals, what was done for any late arriving students to catch up, and the areas covered.

## **5. Academic Support**

A self-study centre is available for the use of ELICOS students, to enable them to follow their specific language learning needs and interests outside of normal classroom hours.

High school students have easy access to teachers, who are able to set extra work or alternative work for students who need it. Teachers are available for extra assistance during class breaks. The monitoring of course progress by teachers and management, and intervention strategies implemented when students show signs of falling behind, are dealt with in 124-Course Progress Policies and Procedures.

## **6. Student Services Point of contact**

All students are informed on their first day of their point of contact in Student Services the SSO, and the Admissions Officer. These people will generally be heavily involved in the orientation. If not (e.g. if a student arrives on a day when the point of contact is on leave), the contact person should introduce themselves to each individual student, and explain their role and the support services available, at the earliest opportunity.

Generally, the point of contact will be the Student Services Officer and the back-up will be the Admissions Officer. At all times, each student should know who their designated point of contact is.

The nominated point of contact is the person the student, their family or their guardian would contact in the first instance in the event of a critical incident.

## **7. Ensuring an Adequate Number of Student Support Personnel**

Currently, one full time equivalent Student Support Officer per 100 international students or 150 total students (international and domestic), is considered adequate, from experience. This figure will be reviewed annually by the most senior Student Services Officer working in conjunction with the PEO/Principal. When projected enrolments exceed either of these figures, an Assistant Student Services Officer maybe engaged and the Admissions Officer will remain as a back-up person.

## **8. Staff Awareness of the Needs of International Students**

All staff who may interact with international students in an official capacity are required during their induction to become familiar with all ESOS requirements relevant to their role. This information is also included in the Staff Handbook. Staff should be aware of the differing implications of their actions for domestic and international students – for example, the importance of attendance not just for meeting school rules but also for meeting visa requirements.

Any changes to ESOS requirements must be communicated to staff through appropriate training. The relevant line manager (Director of Curriculum and Compliance, Director of Welfare and Operations, Operations Manager, International Relations Officer or PEO/Headmaster) will ensure that records are kept in the employee's file of when the training was received and what was covered.

## 9. Welfare-Related Support Services

Information about these will be provided at the orientation, available on noticeboards, and reiterated whenever circumstances make it relevant.

They are designed to be accessible – students may approach any member of staff they feel comfortable with to discuss welfare-related concerns. That person would then refer the student to the relevant person if it is not them.

See also:

- 080-Younger Overseas Students Policies and Procedures, which deals with accommodation and guardianship
- 096-Attendance Policy
- 124-Course Progress Policies and Procedures
- the 'Welfare counselling' section below

Between them, these policies and procedures cover the monitoring of student welfare and procedures to either prevent or deal with welfare issues when they do occur.

## 10. Welfare Counselling

Students may be **referred for welfare counselling** for a wide range of reasons, from lack of attendance, poor performance in studies, problems with homestay through to serious welfare issues such as assault. Any teacher, student services staff member or manager may refer a student for counselling. Students may also self-refer for counselling directly or going through another staff member such as their teacher or SSO.

**Records of All Counselling** meetings will be kept on form 446-FM-MGS Student Counselling Form (or 217-FM-MGS Progress Improvement Plan where the counselling interview relates to misbehaviour / discipline issue). Where reasonable, these will be placed in the student's file – for example, in the case of straightforward attendance issues that are not caused by welfare incidents or mental health issues. However, there will be cases where it is not appropriate to put notes in the student file. In this case, the Welfare Counsellor will ensure that records are kept in a secure place with limited access, and a note placed in the student file mentioning that further confidential counselling records exist. These records should only be accessed by the counsellor, the Director of Curriculum and Compliance, the Director of Welfare and Operations and the PEO/Headmaster.

For students under the age of 18, **parents/legal guardians and any guardians in Australia** appointed for the duration of the student's visa will be informed, unless there is a genuine reason that this may be detrimental to the student's welfare. Records of when these people are informed and any relevant reaction will also be kept. The student will be told who will be aware of the content of the meeting. In many cases, the parent/legal guardian and/or guardian in Australia will be involved in the resolution of the matter, in which case records will also be kept of any telephone, Skype and/or face-to-face meetings.

Students are allowed a **support person** with them in the counselling meeting. In most cases for students under the age of 18, this will be a parent or guardian.

Counselling at MGS is sensitive to cultural needs and differences, and to the experience of being a young person away from home, in a country that may be very unfamiliar. As a secular school, it is policy that religious indoctrination or influence is avoided, and this is especially important in counselling contexts.

As a result of welfare counselling, it may be decided that it is in the best interests of the student that due to 'compassionate and compelling circumstances', it may be appropriate for the student to stop studying for a time. Please see 014-Deferring, Suspending and Cancelling Enrolment for details.

For specialist issues that are beyond the experience and training of the welfare counsellor, referrals will be made to **external services**. The PEO/Headmaster, Director of Welfare and Operations, Director of Curriculum and Compliance and counsellor will maintain a list of contact details of people and organisations offering such services, that is readily accessible and which can be accessed quickly at any time of day or night in an emergency. These could include: suicidal thoughts, assault, pregnancy, trauma and so on.

For very serious incidents, see the **Critical Incident Policy** and the section about that policy below.

### **11. Critical Incident Policy**

According to National Code 2018 Standard 5, critical incidents are any incidents or threat of incident that may cause extreme stress, fear or injury. Examples include: missing students, severe verbal or psychological aggression, death, serious injury or threat thereof; natural disaster, e.g. affecting a student's home town or region; issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, drugs or alcohol abuse.

See 005-Critical Incident Policy. This includes contact information for police, counselling services specialising in a variety of areas, and other organisations that might be able to assist, as well as protocols for contacting them.

**All staff** should ensure they are aware of the Critical Incident Policy and how to access it.

### **12. University and College Placement Service**

This service is provided by the Careers Advisor to any student who enrolls in any Macquarie Grammar School course for a period of 12 weeks or longer. The service provides the following advantages:

- Helps students select an appropriate higher or further education course based on their educational background, visa status, personal preferences and plans for the future.
- Macquarie Grammar School cooperates with Universities, Colleges and other educational institutions in Australia.
- Students can apply to universities, higher education providers or colleges of their choice.
- Macquarie Grammar School can certify students' documents for application to university or college.
- MGS allows students to apply for Conditional Acceptances if the required level of English language proficiency has not yet been reached.
- MGS assists students in applying for international English language exams such as IELTS, TOEFL or the Pearson Test of English.

### **13. Social and Sporting Activities**

MGS provides social, excursion, camps and sporting programmes that have broad student welfare aims. They are designed to assist the integration of local and international students, to allow international students to experience non-academic aspects of Australian society, to encourage a broader perspective than simply an academic perspective, and to encourage physical activity. Details will be explained regularly during homeroom time and on noticeboards.

### **14. Other Student Support Services**

Students are welcome to speak to the Student Services Officer or Admissions Officer about any other aspect of living in Australia that their homestay, guardian or other responsible adult has not been able to assist them with. The assistance may take the form of researching and putting the student in touch with external services.

### **15. Review of Student Services**

The operations covered in this document will be reviewed annually. The PEO/Headmaster is responsible for ensuring that this happens, and the review will be carried out by the SSO working in conjunction with the PEO/Headmaster.

### **16. Revision history**

Review date: 18 March 2018

Version	Date	Description of modifications
7.0	29 Oct 2015	Comprehensive review and expansion to cover most of National Code Standard 6. Some items more relevant to attendance moved to 096-Attendance. Title change to better reflect the scope of the document.
7.1	6 Nov 2015	Adjustments to better link to the newly revised 014-Deferring, Suspending and Cancelling Enrolment.
7.2	27 March 2016	Roles and Procedures have been adjusted.
7.3	18 March 2018	Terminology and standards updated.