



SAGSE

Scholarships for
Australian-German
Student Exchange

Policies & Procedures

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Our Vision & Values

From the President

SAGSE conducts a student exchange program between Victoria and Germany each year. The exchange program aims to give secondary school aged students an insight into a foreign culture, improve language skills, intercultural understanding, and build friendships between the youth of Australia and Germany.

After a selection process, the SAGSE Committee awards scholarships to Years 11 and 12 Victorian students each year to travel to Germany for approximately 10-12 weeks during their summer holidays. Whilst in Germany, the students stay with host families which have been selected by GDANSA, SAGSE's affiliate organisation in Germany.

SAGSE also undertakes a selection process to identify suitable families in Victoria to match and host German students who have been selected by GDANSA to come to Victoria in June of each year for a similar duration of 10-12 weeks (to satisfy Victorian reciprocity requirements).

All members of the Committee are volunteers. The Committee is made up of local business people, previous scholarship winners, persons of German heritage, German school teachers as well as participants in the broad based German community in Victoria.

SAGSE has a commitment to upholding child safety at all times and adhering to our Child Safety policy. SAGSE volunteers and members are responsible for promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students, students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability, international students, and students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse, and intersex (LGBTIQ+). SAGSE does not tolerate racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, or other harmful attitudes.

Our History

Celebrating Intercultural Connection

In 2017 SAGSE celebrated its 50th anniversary of continuous operation in Victoria as an Overseas Secondary Student Exchange Organisation.

In Melbourne, Fritz von Einem Joosten established Scholarships for Australian-German Student Exchange (SAGSE) in 1967 after emigrating to Australia and becoming a successful businessman. Fritz had experienced the horror of war first-hand, and was seriously injured on the Russian Front during World War II.

It was his founding belief that violence and conflict could be avoided if young people from different countries could meet and learn from one another. He sought funding for scholarships from subsidiaries of German companies operating in Victoria. He was successful in putting together a group of sponsors at the outset to realise his vision for SAGSE. SAGSE continues today to be funded by German subsidiaries as well as Australian based businesses, teachers' associations, fund raising activities of past scholarship winners and membership subscriptions.

SAGSE awards scholarships for Year 11 and 12 students to travel to Germany in late November and return early February. The exchange programs aims to give students an insight into a foreign culture and establish friendships between the two countries.

Since its inception in 1967, SAGSE has provided scholarships to more than 1500 students.

Purpose

Our Mission

SAGSE confirms that its principal purpose is to provide a broad educational experience for secondary school aged students and to further international/intercultural understanding.

Mission Statement:

Scholarships for Australian-German Student Exchange (SAGSE) aims to further cultural understanding between Australia and Germany.

SAGSE gives young Australians the opportunity to learn the German language and way of life by sending outstanding secondary students to live with German families and study at their schools. Australian families have at the same time welcomed young German students into their homes with the help of our affiliate organisation in Germany, GDANSA. The prestigious SAGSE scholarships help shape future leaders in areas such as diplomacy, government, business, education, medicine and the law. Inspired by the vision of German immigrant Fritz von Einem Joosten in 1967, SAGSE is unique in securing sponsorship from German and Australian businesses to fully fund the scholarships, thereby enabling Australians of any background to aspire to an exchange opportunity.

SAGSE is a not-for-profit organisation and an accredited Overseas Student Exchange Organisation under the regulation of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA). SAGSE recognises the Victorian Government's Child Safe Standards, and: (i) has a zero tolerance policy towards child abuse, (ii) is committed to acting in the child's best interests and keeping him or her safe, and (iii) works actively to empower children.

SAGSE's principal purpose can also be found in its Rules of Association (clause 1) – refer to Standard 6 (Attachment 5) for the current version of the Rules of Association.

SAGSE facilitates and arranges a scholarship-based student exchange program between Victoria and Germany each year. The program gives the students an insight into a foreign culture, and the

opportunities to improve language skills and build friendships between the youth of Australia and Germany. It provides students with exchange opportunities irrespective of the students' socio-economic backgrounds, race, sexuality, or gender identity.

Structure & Management

Not-for-profit Organisation

SAGSE is a registered not-for-profit organisation: *refer to Standard 6 (Attachment 5)*.

It has current Overseas Secondary Exchange Student Organisation accreditation with VRQA.

SAGSE has Rules of Association, which govern its activities and functions: *refer to Standard 6 (Attachment 5) for the current version of the Rules of Association*.

Organisational Structure

SAGSE's activities and functions are conducted under the supervision of the SAGSE Committee, which is elected annually. Current members of the SAGSE Committee are permitted to stand for re-election each year: *refer to No. 1 Applicant's details (Attachment 1) for the current composition of the SAGSE Committee*. The Committee composition is outlined below.

SAGSE COMMITTEE	Presidents		President
			Vice President
	Committee Office Bearers	Hosting & Schools	Host Family Coordinator
			Schools Liaison
			VRQA Liaison
		Governance & Finance	Secretary
			Treasurer
		Welfare & Mobility	Travel Coordinator (inbound & outbound)
			Local Coordinators
		Sponsors & Scholarships	Alumni Coordinator
			Selections Coordinator
	Sponsor Liaison		
	Non-Elected Volunteers	Support	<i>Roles and Responsibilities as required outside of core business and governance. E.g., Volunteers supporting event management</i>

SAGSE will notify VRQA of any changes to SEO governance within 14 days of the change including change of ownership, control, executive management or operation.

All members of the Committee are volunteers. The Committee is made up of local business people, previous scholarship winners, persons of German heritage, German school teachers as well as participants in the broad based German community in Victoria. A Committee Member cannot be a host of an inbound student except for in emergency situations, and only then if approved by prior by VRQA.

The Committee meets on at least four [4] occasions each year. The proceedings of each meeting are recorded in Minutes, which have to be approved at the next scheduled meeting.

The following tasks/responsibilities/duties are specifically assigned to Committee members each year:

- Treasury
- Public Officer
- Governance (including Child Safe Standards protocols)
- Legal Affairs
- Selection of scholarship recipients from Victoria
- Welfare of German students who come to Victoria
- Selection of Victorian host families.
- Fund raising and sponsorship liaison
- Events Co-ordination
- Travel Co-ordination
- Organisation of the Annual Gala Ball
- Marketing
- Database
- Membership
- Alumni Officer
- Government liaison
- Newsletter
- Secretary (Minutes) to the Committee
- Selection of Group Leader (see below)

Depending on workloads, sub-committees may also be formed to carry out these tasks/responsibilities/duties.

Separately, a Group Leader is selected each year to travel with the Victorian scholarship winners to Germany. This person is a past recipient of a scholarship and may also be a current member of the Committee.

The current President of GASS Australia is also a Committee member.

Affiliate relationships

(a) GASS Australia

GASS Australia is also a volunteer organisation and its membership is composed of students who have previously travelled to Germany on scholarships. It assists SAGSE (a) in the annual search for host families in Victoria, (b) with the organisation of formal and social events for the Victorian host families and German students throughout their period of exchange in Victoria, and (c) selection of scholarship winners from Victoria who travel to Germany.

(b) GDANSA

GDANSA is SAGSE's affiliate in Germany. As well as selecting the German exchange students, it selects host families in Germany, matches the scholarship winners from Victoria with those host families, provides for the welfare of the Victorian students during their exchange period, and in conjunction with

GASS Germany arranges a number of formal and social events for the German host families and Victorian students.

SAGSE will notify VRQA of changes related to the relationship, structure or ownership of the organisations that it has a third-party arrangement with, within 14 days of the change.

Suitability of SAGSE as an Overseas Secondary Student Exchange Organisation

To the best of SAGSE's knowledge, SAGSE and those persons involved in its management or coordination at the time of application for VRQA accreditation:

- have never had their approval/registration suspended/cancelled by a state/territory authority responsible for approving/registering applicants as SEOs in Australia;
- have never had conditions imposed on their approval/ registration by a state/territory authority responsible for approving/registering applicants as SEOs in Australia;
- have never been convicted of an indictable offence
- have never become bankrupt;
- have never been disqualified from managing corporations under the Corporations Act; and
- were not involved in the management of, or provision of a SEP at the time that any of the above events occurred.

SAGSE will continue to advise VRQA within 28 days in the event that there is a change in the control, management or operation of SAGSE. A change of ownership is not applicable since SAGSE is a registered not-for profit organisation.

Policies & Procedures

Overview

This section outlines SAGSE's policies and active commitment to upholding the 11 Child Safe Standards. Each policy contains an evaluation and review range, which depending on the policy ranges from two to four years. This ensures all policies are reviewed in an alternating policy review schedule.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Purpose

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets out the expected behaviour of adults with children and young people in our organisation.

All SAGSE committee members, volunteers, host families, contractors, service providers, members and any other adult involved in child-connected work must follow the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct applies to all physical and online environments used by students. As SAGSE hosts students in Victorian schools, this policy is also directly connection to the VRQA certification of child safety policy and procedures in secondary schools. The code of conduct extends beyond school hours, and in other locations provided for student use (e.g., camps and excursions).

Acceptable Behaviours

SAGSE and any other member of our community involved in child-connected work is responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding our commitment to child safety at all times and adhering to our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- treating students and families in our community with respect in organisational environments and outside our environments as part of normal social and community activities.
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they disclose that they or another child or student has been abused or are worried about their safety or the safety of another child or student.
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students, students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability, international students, students, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTIQ+) students
- ensuring, as far as practicable, that adults are not alone with a student – one-to-one interactions between an adult and students are to be in an open space or in line of sight of another adult.

- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to a member of the SAGSE Committee.
- understanding and complying with all reporting and disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting for those who fall under the definition of mandatory reports in Victoria, e.g., Teacher) in line with our child safety responding and reporting policy and procedures SAGSE Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy.
- Although not a school, SAGSE's close relationship with schools means it follows the [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#) in responding to incidents, disclosures, and suspicions of child abuse.
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

Unacceptable Behaviours

SAGSE and any other member of our community involved in child-connected work must **not**:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm.
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming'. (e.g., offering gifts).
- display behaviours or engage with students in ways that are not justified by the educational or professional context.
- ignore an adult's overly familiar or inappropriate behaviour towards a student.
- discuss intimate topics or use sexualised language, except when needed to manage incidents, set clear expectations, or under professional guidance.
- engage in racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, or other hateful behaviours.
- treat a child or student unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, or ethnicity.
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to exchange program,, scheduled activities, or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter. (e.g., Local Coordinators checking in with students' experience with their host families).
- photograph or video a child or student in a environments except in accordance with the [Photographing, Filming, and Recording Students Policy \[to be added\]](#), or where required to maintain student safety and meet duty of care responsibilities.
- provide or consume illicit substances in SAGSE settings or when responsible for students.
- Have contact with any student outside of when needed to deliver the SAGSE program, professional guidance or parental permission has been sought.

Breaches to the Child Safety Code of Conduct

All SAGSE volunteers, contractors and any other member of the community involved in child-connected work who breach this Child Safety Code of Conduct may be subject to disciplinary procedures.

In instances where a reportable allegation has been made, the matter will be managed in accordance with the SAGSE's reportable conduct outlined in section 'Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations', and may be subject to referral to Victoria Police.

All breaches and suspected breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct must be reported to the President. If the breach or suspected breach relates to the President, contact the Vice President.

Policy Evaluation & Review

Created / Last Updated	20/07/2024
Endorsed by	SAGSE Committee
Endorsed on	19/08/2024
Next review date	July 2027, if not earlier as required

Child Safety Policy

Purpose

The SAGSE Child Safety policy demonstrates our organisation's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

It informs our community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work. Further, it demonstrates how the organisation empowers students about their rights, and outlines how they are involved in the decision making process for matters which affect them.

Scope

This policy:

- applies to all staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students (including host families).
- applies in all physical and online environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use (for example, a camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes.

Definitions

The following terms have [specific definitions](#) as set out by the Victorian Government's Department of Education.

- child
- child safety
- child abuse
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- staff
- student
- volunteer

SAGSE is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our organisational environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated in our organisation, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our organisation has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

Roles & Responsibilities

SAGSE Committee Members

Our SAGSE Committee (outlined in *Structure & Management*) is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with the 11 Child Safe Standards.

Committee Members will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed.
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at Committee meetings
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing.
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered.
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students.
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the community including at Committee meetings and participant briefings.
- Undertake annual training on child safety such as induction briefings following the AGM, and accessing resources such as the [Department of Education Child Safe ,Volunteer training PowerPoint](#)
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse.
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, including following the steps set out in the [Four Critical Actions](#).

Volunteers and other staff:

Volunteers and staff will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the organisation, and always follow the child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, including following the steps set out in the [Four Critical Actions](#).
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

Specific Staff and Child Safe Responsibilities

- The President and Vice President are responsible for informing the SAGSE community about the policy and making it publicly available.
- The President team is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy every 2 years.
- The President team is responsible for monitoring the organisations compliance with the Child Safety Policy. The community should approach The President team if they have any concerns about compliance with the Child Safety Policy.

The President Team is responsible for:

- modeling a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing.
- enabling inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered.
- reinforcing high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students.
- promoting regular open discussion on child safety issues within the community including at sub-committee meetings, organisational briefings, and committee meetings.
- facilitating regular professional learning for volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing, prevention of, and responding to, abuse.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

Managing Risks to Child Safety and Wellbeing

We identify, assess, and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our Committee will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

Supervision and Performance

We identify, assess, and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online environments through the ongoing development of our staff. This extends to the support and feedback provided to SAGSE volunteers and personnel such as (but not limited to) Committee Members in roles of responsibility.

All new volunteers/personnel to the organisation will complete a formal training module on child safety. Where child-related work is being undertaken, adults must make sure they are in view of others and should complete this work with another member of SAGSE. For example, working with students in open, clearly visible spaces.

The President and those in leading positions will provide both positive and constructive feedback regularly, encourage open dialogue to discuss performance, and will address concerns regarding conduct in a timely manner. Where performance specifically relates to a child's safety, (un)acceptable behaviours, or reporting, specific actions as outlined in those policies will be followed.

Establishing A Culturally Safe Environment

At SAGSE, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe organisation where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our planning, policies, and activities.

The following strategies to promote cultural safety in our community:

- Begin SAGSE events with an Acknowledgement of Country.
- Volunteers and students to identify, respond and not tolerate any forms of racism
- SAGSE to engage where relevant with [KESO](#) Officers in supporting inclusive programs for Aboriginal children and their families.
- SAGSE be guided in decisions for Aboriginal Self-Determination by the [Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026](#)
- Acknowledge NAIDOC and focus on First Peoples culture and stories throughout the year.

Establishing A Culturally Safe Environment

Student Empowerment

SAGSE has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/carers.

We encourage child and parent/carer involvement and engagement that informs safe operations and builds the capability of children and parents/carers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Our organisation is committed to supporting and encouraging students to use their voice to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need. Students are provided with information on how to contact a trusted adult, such as their Local Coordinator, or Group Leader, how to report uncomfortable behaviours, and or abuse.

Students are encouraged to communicate with their trusted adult (e.g., local coordinator) in the language they feel most comfortable. Care is taken to ensure that capable German speakers are among the SAGSE team, able to support and respond to concerns raised by students in their preferred language.

When the organisation is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress. We will offer them the ability to record their complaint in German or English.

The organisation will promote the Child Safe Standards in ways that are readily accessible, easy to understand, and user-friendly to children and those of diverse backgrounds, including:

- All of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for the students and parents via the SAGSE website
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be included on the website as SAGSE does not have a single office or operating space for all volunteers.
- [Plain language summaries](#) of the standards will be available to families, with German translations to be developed appropriately.
- SAGSE community updates will inform students and community about the organisation's commitment to child safety, and strategies or initiatives that the organisation is taking to ensure student safety.

Family Engagement

Our families and the community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, SAGSE is committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- listing all our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents on SAGSE website.
- Newsletters and communications will inform families and the community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.

- Relevant posters and resources will be linked via our website in lieu of physical buildings.

Diversity & Equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Our Wellbeing and Engagement Policy provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

Suitable Volunteers and Committee Members

When engaging volunteers to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collect and record:
 - o proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - o the person's history of working with children

Newly appointed volunteers are expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. This focuses on the child safety policy, child safe code of conduct, reporting and reporting obligations, and other child safe or wellbeing information deemed necessary by the President team for the individual to conduct their role and maintain child safety.

All volunteers are required to comply with our Volunteers Policy, which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

Review of Child Safety Practices

SAGSE has established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with organisation staff and our community.

Policy Evaluation & Review

Created / Last Updated	22/07/2024
Endorsed by	SAGSE Committee
Endorsed on	19/08/2024
Next review date	July 2026, if not earlier as required

Volunteer Policy



Purpose

To outline the processes that SAGSE will follow to recruit, screen, supervise and manage volunteers to provide a child safe environment, and to explain the legal rights of volunteers.

Scope

This policy applies to the recruitment, screening, supervision and management of all people who volunteer at our organisation; including host families.

SAGSE Volunteers

SAGSE is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children and our staff and volunteers. We recognise the valuable contribution that volunteers provide to our community and the work that we do.

The procedures set out below are designed to ensure that SAGSE's volunteers are suitable to work with children and are well-placed to make a positive contribution to our community.

Becoming a volunteer or host family

Members of our community who would like to volunteer their time are encouraged to contact the general email with their contact details.

Suitability checks including Working with Children Clearances

Working with students

SAGSE values the volunteers that assist with the running or organisation of programs. To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Worker Screening Act* and the Child Safe Standards, SAGSE is required to undertake suitability checks which in most cases will involve asking for evidence of a Working with Children (WWC) Clearance and may also involve undertaking reference, proof of identity, qualification and work history involving children checks. All host families with household members over 18 are required to provide a current working with children clearance. This is checked by the host family coordinator as a part of the selection process.

Non child-related work

On some occasions, parents and other members of the community may volunteer to do work that is not child-related. For example, additional services, participating in sub-committees of the Committee, other fundraising, etc.

Volunteers for this type of work are not required to have Working with Children or other suitability checks as they are not engaged in child-related work and children are not generally present during these activities. However, SAGSE reserves the right to undertake suitability checks, including proof of identity, Working with Children Checks, at its discretion if considered necessary for any particular activities or circumstances.

Training and induction

SAGSE will provide any appropriate induction and/or training for all volunteer workers. The President (or their nominee) will determine what induction and/or training is necessary depending on what type of work the volunteer will be engaged in.

All volunteers will be provided induction in relation to SAGSE's child safety practices, including reporting obligations and procedures. Our organisation has a reporting policy which all staff and volunteers should be aware of.

Volunteers must immediately report any child safety concerns that they become aware of to a member of the Committee to ensure appropriate action. There are some circumstances where volunteers may also be obliged to disclose information to authorities outside of the school such as to Victoria Police. For further information on child safety responding and reporting obligations refer to our reporting policy.

Volunteer workers will be expected to comply with any reasonable direction of the President (or their nominee). This will include the requirement to follow our policies, including, but not limited to our Child Safety Policy, and our Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Supervision and Performance

We identify, assess, and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online environments through the ongoing development of our staff. This extends to the support and feedback provided to SAGSE volunteers and personnel such as (but not limited to) volunteers and members in roles of responsibilities.

All new volunteers/personnel to the organisation will complete a formal training module on child safety. Where child-related work is being undertaken, adults must make sure they are in view of others and should complete this work with another member of SAGSE. For example, working with students in open, clearly visible spaces.

The President and those in leading positions will provide both positive and constructive feedback regularly, encourage open dialogue to discuss performance, and will address concerns regarding conduct in a timely manner. Where performance specifically relates to a child's safety, (un)acceptable behaviours, or reporting, specific actions as outlined in those policies will be followed.

Policy Evaluation & Review

Created / Last Updated	30/07/2024
Endorsed by	SAGSE Committee
Endorsed on	19/08/2024
Next review date	July 2026, if not earlier as required

Volunteer Induction Pack – Child Safe

Purpose

Thank you for your interest in volunteering for SAGSE. The purpose of this induction pack is to ensure volunteers are familiar with our policies and procedures relating to child safety and understand the important role they play in maintaining and promoting the safety of our students.

Volunteers must read the suite of policies and procedures below before commencing any work where students may be present.

Key Messages

- SAGSE is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children. We want children attending schools and SAGSE events to be safe, happy and respected.
- We are committed to creating inclusive environment where diversity is supported, and students feel safe to bring their whole selves to our program.
- Allegations and concerns relating to the safety and wellbeing of our community will be treated very seriously and consistently with our policies and procedures.
- We are committed to preventing child abuse, identifying risks early and removing and reducing these risks.
- Everyone has a role to ensure children are safe – if something does not feel right, speak up. If you have any concerns about any inappropriate behaviours in the community, you should speak to one of the President Team or a Committee Member. If this would not be appropriate in the circumstances, contact another trusted member within the organisation, or the VRQA.

Induction Materials

This induction pack contains the following documents that all new volunteers must read and familiarise themselves with. Please click on the hyperlinks to access each document. If you would prefer a hard copy of this pack, please contact the team in the office who will happily provide you with one.

- [Volunteers Policy](#)
- [Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#)
- [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Child Safety Code of Conduct](#)

- [PROTECT: Four Critical Actions](#) – Responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse
- [PROTECT: Identify child abuse](#)

Contact

We value your feedback on ways we can continue to improve and strengthen our child safety approach and encourage you to contact email with any comments or questions.

Policy Evaluation & Review

Created / Last Updated	31/07/2024
Endorsed by	SAGSE Committee
Endorsed on	19/08/2024
Next review date	July 2026, if not earlier as required

Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures our organisation has in place to respond to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse and to ensure that all staff and members of our community understand and follow the various legal obligations that apply to the reporting of child abuse to relevant authorities.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, staff, host families, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the SAGSE (physical and online), and any adult who works with children within the organisation.

Definitions

Child abuse includes:

- physical violence inflicted on a child
- sexual offences committed against a child

- grooming of a child by an adult
- family violence committed against or in the presence of a child
- serious emotional or psychological harm to a child
- serious neglect of a child.

The definition of child abuse is broad and can include student to student incidents and concerns, as well as behaviour committed by an adult.

Grooming

Grooming is a criminal offence under the [Crimes Act 1958](#) (Vic) and is a form of child abuse and sexual misconduct. This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by an adult to prepare a child, under the age of 16, to engage in sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating (including electronic communications) and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent or carer.

Policy

SAGSE understands the important role our organisation plays in protecting children from abuse. We have a range of policies and measures in place to prevent child abuse from occurring in our organisation or during activities.

Information for students

- All students should feel safe to speak to any Committee member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have.
- If a student does not know who to approach at SAGSE, they should start with their Local Coordinator, Group Member, host sibling, or parent/guardian.

Identifying child abuse

- To ensure we can respond in the best interests of students and children when complaints or concerns relating to child abuse are raised, all staff and relevant volunteers must:
- understand how to identify signs of child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators - for detailed information on identifying child abuse and behavioural indicators of perpetrators refer to [Identify child abuse](#) and [Spotting the Warning Signs of Child Abuse](#)
- understand their various legal obligations in relation to reporting child abuse to relevant authorities - for detailed information on the various legal obligations refer to Appendix A
- follow the below procedures for responding to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse, which ensure our organisation acts in the best interests of students and children and complies with both our legal and Department policy obligations.
- At SAGSE we recognise the diversity of the children, young people, and families at our organisation and take account of their individual needs and backgrounds when considering and responding to child safety incidents or concerns.

Procedures for responding to an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse

In responding to a child safety incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, SAGSE will follow: the [Four Critical Actions, report complaints and concerns relating to all forms of child abuse](#), and follow the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending.

Committee Member and volunteer responsibilities

1. Immediate action

If a Committee Member or volunteer witnesses an incident of child abuse, or reasonably believes, suspects or receives a disclosure or allegation that a child has been, or is at risk of being abused, they must:

- If a child is at immediate risk of harm, separate alleged victims and others involved, administer first aid (appropriate to their level of training) and call 000 for urgent medical or police assistance where required to respond to immediate health or safety concerns.
- Notify a member of the Committee or a Leader as soon as possible, who will ensure our organisation follows the steps in these procedures.
- Make a report regardless of whether the law requires a report or not. SAGSE requires a report to be made and full cooperation with law enforcement and relevant authorities to be provided.

NOTE for staff and volunteers:

- if you are uncertain if an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion gives rise to a concern about child abuse you must always err on the side of caution and report the concern to a member of the Committee.
- If the President team is unavailable, the next appointed leader will take on this role.
- If the concerns relate to the conduct of those staff listed above notify VRQA.

Refer to Appendix B for guidance on how to respond to a disclosure of child abuse.

2. Reporting to authorities and referring to services

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant staff have been informed, the SAGSE President or nominated representative **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible.

The following steps will ensure our organisation complies with the four critical actions as well as additional actions required under the Child Safe Standards.

The President must ensure:

- all relevant information is reported to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection, Victoria Police or relevant services where required
- all reportable conduct allegation or incidents are reported to DFFH and Victoria Police.
- [a report is made to the Commission for Children and Young People](#) for allegations of child abuse and/or child-related misconduct by any SAGSE personnel. The reportable conduct scheme requires this to take place for all of the organisation's volunteers, committee members, host families, and any adult connected to working with children.
- NOTE: In circumstances where staff members are legally required to report child abuse to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police and they are unable to confirm that the information has been reported by another person at the school or the designated member of staff does not agree that a report needs to be made, the staff member who has formed the reasonable belief must still contact DFFH Child Protection and Victoria Police to make the report.
- If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing you must still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from Child FIRST or The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support) DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police.

Reportable Conduct

There is an allegation of reportable conduct where a person has a reasonable belief that there has been:

- a sexual offence, sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child, or misconduct involving any of the above.

3. Contacting parents or carers

The President must ensure parents and carers are notified unless advised otherwise by DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police, or there are other safety and wellbeing concerns in relation to informing parents/carers.

For further guidance, refer to [PROTECT Contacting parents and carers](#)

4. Ongoing protection and support

The President must ensure appropriate steps are taken to protect the child and other children from any continued risk of abuse. These steps must be taken in consultation with any relevant external agency such as DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police. Ongoing protection will also include further reports to authorities if new information comes to light or further incidents occur.

Appropriate, culturally sensitive and ongoing support must be offered and provided to all affected students. Ongoing support will be based on any available advice from the Department, parents and carers, health practitioners, and other authorities (such as DFFH or Victoria Police) and may include referral to wellbeing professionals, development of a safety plan, student support group meetings, and, for student to student incidents, behaviour management and support measures.

5. Record Keeping

The President will ensure that:

- detailed notes of the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion are taken including, where possible, by the staff member or volunteer who reported the incident, disclosure, or suspicion to them
- detailed notes are taken of any immediate or ongoing action taken to respond to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion
- all notes and other records relating to the incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, including the immediate and ongoing actions, are stored securely in the locked files of the President. These records must be kept for at least three years.

For community members

All community members aged 18 years or over have legal obligations relating to reporting child abuse – refer to Appendix A for detailed information.

Any person can make a report to DFFH Child Protection or Victoria Police if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. For contact details, refer to the [Four Critical Actions](#)

Members of the community do not have to inform SAGSE if they are making a disclosure to DFFH Child Protection or the Victoria Police. However, where a community member is concerned about the safety of a child or children, the community member should report this concern to the principal of the school involved (depending on the context) so that appropriate steps to support the student can be taken.

Additional requirements for all staff

All staff play an important role in supporting student safety and wellbeing and have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students.

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities in the above procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse. This means that if, after following the actions outlined in the procedure, a staff member reasonably believes that a child remains at risk of abuse, they must take the following steps:

- if they are concerned that the organisation has not taken reasonable steps to prevent or reduce the risk, raise these concerns with the President in the first instance, and escalate if they remain unsatisfied.
- report the matter to the relevant authorities where they are unable to confirm that the information has been reported by another staff member

- Staff must refer to Appendix A for further information on their obligations relating to reporting to authorities.

Appendix A: Legal Obligations Relating to Reporting Child Abuse

The following information outlines the various legal obligations relating to the reporting of child abuse to relevant authorities.

It is important to note that the procedures outlined in the above policy ensure compliance with the below reporting obligations, and also include additional steps to ensure compliance.

It is of the utmost importance that SAGSE's volunteers, families, hosts, and others connected with child-related work, make a report regardless of whether the law requires a report or not. Full cooperation with law enforcement and relevant authorities is required to ensure child safety.

Mandatory reporting to Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection

In their role as a volunteer with SAGSE, the following individuals are mandatory reporters under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic):

- registered teachers and early childhood teachers (including principals and school staff who have been granted permission to teach by the VIT)
- school counsellors including staff who provide direct support to students for mental, emotional or psychological wellbeing, including (but not limited to) school health and wellbeing staff, primary welfare coordinators, student wellbeing coordinators, mental health practitioners, chaplains, and Student Support Services staff
- nurses
- registered psychologists
- police officers
- registered medical practitioners
- out of home care workers (excluding voluntary foster and kinship carers)
- early childhood workers
- youth justice workers
- people in religious ministry
- midwives

All mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:

- a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/ or sexual abuse; and
- the child's parents or carers have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

A mandatory reporter who fails to comply with this legal obligation may be committing a criminal offence. SAGSE staff in these roles must be aware that they must make a mandatory report even if the President or any other mandatory reporter does not share their belief that a report is necessary.

If charged with not making a mandatory report, it may be a defence for the person charged to prove that they honestly and reasonably believed that all of the reasonable grounds for their belief had been the subject of a report to child protection made by another person.

The identity of a person who reports any protective concerns to DFFH Child Protection is protected by law. It is an offence for a person, other than the person who made the report, to disclose the name of the person who made a report or any information that is likely to lead to their identification.

Any person can make a report to DFFH Child Protection (131 278 – 24 hour service) if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection even if they are not a mandatory reporter listed above.

Reporting student wellbeing concerns to Child FIRST/Orange Door

At SAGSE we also encourage staff to make a referral to Child FIRST/Orange Door when they have significant concern for a child's wellbeing.

Reportable Conduct

The Reportable Conduct Scheme is focused on worker and volunteer conduct and how organisations investigate and respond to suspected child abuse. The scheme aims to improve organisational responses to suspected child abuse and to facilitate the identification of individuals who pose a risk of harm to children.

There are five types of 'reportable conduct' listed in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*:

- sexual offences against, with or in the presence of, a child
- sexual misconduct (which includes grooming) against, with or in the presence of, a child
- physical violence against, with or in the presence of, a child
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child.

A reportable conduct allegation is made where a person makes an allegation, based on a reasonable belief, that a worker or volunteer has committed reportable conduct or misconduct that **may** involve reportable conduct.

If staff or volunteers become aware of reportable conduct by any current or former employee, contractor or volunteer, they must notify the President immediately. If the allegation relates to the President they must inform the VRQA.

Failure to disclose offence

Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults (ie persons aged 18 years and over), not just professionals who work with children, have a legal obligation to report to Victoria Police, as soon as practicable, where they form a 'reasonable belief' that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under the age of 16 in Victoria.

Failure to disclose information to Victoria Police (by calling 000, local police station or the Police Assistance Line 131 444) as soon as practicable may amount to a criminal offence unless a person has a 'reasonable excuse' or exemption from doing so.

"Reasonable belief" is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

- For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:
- a child states that they have been sexually abused
- a child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a mandated professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually abused
- signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

"Reasonable excuse" is defined by law and includes:

- fear for the safety of any person including yourself or the potential victim (but not including the alleged perpetrator or an organisation)
- where the information has already been disclosed to Victoria Police and you have no further information to add (for example, through a mandatory report to DFFH Child Protection or a report to Victoria Police from another member of school staff).

Failure to Protect Offence

This reporting obligation applies to staff in a position of authority. This can include principals, assistant principals and campus principals of host schools. Any staff member in a position of authority who becomes aware that an adult associated with their school (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the age of 16 under their care, authority or supervision, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. This may include removing the

adult (ie persons aged 18 years and over) from working with children pending an investigation and reporting your concerns to Victoria Police.

If a school staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.

Further information

For more information about the offences and reporting obligations outlined in this fact sheet refer to: [Protecting Children – Reporting and Other Legal Obligations.](#)

APPENDIX B: MANAGING DISCLOSURES OF CHILD ABUSE

Important information for staff

When managing a disclosure relating to child abuse you should:

- listen to the student and allow them to speak
- stay calm and use a neutral tone with no urgency and where possible use the child's language and vocabulary (you do not want to frighten the child or interrupt the child)
- be gentle, patient and non-judgmental throughout
- highlight to the student it was important for them to tell you about what has happened
- assure them that they are not to blame for what has occurred
- do not ask leading questions, for example gently ask, "What happened next?" rather than "Why?"
- be patient and allow the child to talk at their own pace and in their own words
- do not pressure the child into telling you more than they want to, they will be asked a lot of questions by other professionals, and it is important not to force them to retell what has occurred multiple times
- reassure the child that you believe them and that disclosing the matter was important for them to do
- use verbal facilitators such as, "I see", restate the child's previous statement, and use non-suggestive words of encouragement, designed to keep the child talking in an open-ended way ("what happened next?")
- tell the child in age appropriate language you are required to report to the relevant authority to help stop the abuse, and explain the role of these authorities if appropriate (for a young child this may be as simple as saying "I will need to talk to people to work out what to do next to help you")
- Take prompt action in relation to following the procedures outlined below.

*When managing a disclosure you should **AVOID**:*

- displaying expressions of panic or shock

- asking questions that are investigative and potentially invasive (this may make the child feel uncomfortable and may cause the child to withdraw)
- going over the information repeatedly (you are only gathering information to help you form a belief on reasonable grounds that you need to make a report to the relevant authority)
- making any comments that would lead the student to believe that what has happened is their fault
- making any promises you will keep the information the student provided confidential
- making promises to the child about what will occur next or that things will be different given the process can be unpredictable and different for each child depending on their circumstances (instead reassure them that you and others will do your best to help).

Complaints & Feedback

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at SAGSE so that students, parents and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our organisation.
- ensure that all complaints and concerns regarding SAGSE are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

Scope

This policy relates to complaints brought by students, parents, carers or members of our community and applies to all matters relating to our organisation.

In some limited instances, we may need to refer a complainant to another policy or area if there are different processes in place to manage the issue including:

- Complaints and concerns relating to fraud and corruption will be referred to the [ACCC](#) as required.
- Criminal matters will be referred to Victorian Police
- Complaints and concerns relating to child abuse will be managed in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures

Policy

SAGSE welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value open communication with our families and are committed to understanding complaints and

addressing them appropriately. We recognise that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning.

We value and encourage open and positive relationships with our community. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our organisation.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parties will:

- be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role
- be focused on resolution of the complaint, with the interests of the student involved at the centre
- act in good faith and cooperation
- behave with respect and courtesy
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- operate within and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with any applicable legislation and SAGSE policy.
- recognise that SAGSE may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

For Students

SAGSE acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. SAGSE encourages our students to raise issues or concerns as they arise so that we can work together to resolve them.

Students with a concern or complaint can raise them with a trusted adult at school, for example a student's teachers at their host school, their Local Coordinator. This person will take your concern or complaint seriously and will explain to you what steps we can take to try to resolve the issue and support you.

You can also ask your host parent, carer or another trusted adult outside of the school, to talk to us about the issue instead. Information about our parent/carer complaints and concerns process is outlined further below. The parent/carer process also applies to students who are mature minors, refer to the Department of Education's: [Mature Minors and Decision Making](#).

Other ways you can raise a concern or complaint with us include:

- Sending a message to a trusted adult using email or messaging services.
- talking to your group leader, local coordinator, or a trusted adult such as a host family or the family of another student about your concern and any suggestions you have for resolving it

Further information and resources to support students to raise issues or concerns are available at:

- [Report Racism Hotline](#) (call 1800 722 476) – this hotline enables students to report concerns relating to racism or religious discrimination which may occur in their host schools or at home.
- [Reach Out](#)
- [Headspace](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#) (call 1800 55 1800)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Education Association](#) (VAEAI)

For Parents, Carers, and Community Members

SAGSE encourages parents, carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss
- remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issues that you want to raise think about how the matter could be resolved
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the schools in which students may be enrolled as well as those of SAGSE.

Support Person

You are welcome to have a support person to assist you in raising a complaint or concern with our organisation. Please advise us if you wish to have a support person to assist you, and provide their name, contact details, and their relationship to you.

Raising a Concern

SAGSE is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to your nominated contact person, for example a Local Coordinator. Where possible, this first point of contact will work with you to ensure your concerns are appropriately heard and addressed, and escalated as required. Some concerns may require additional investigation and may not have an automatic resolution. SAGSE appreciated your understanding that to thoroughly address concerns, additional time may be required.

Making a Complaint

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the President.

If you would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, SAGSE will first seek to understand the issues and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together.

The following process will apply:

1. Complaint received: Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through website with the President or relevant contact person. Please outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.
2. Information gathering: Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the President, or Vice President or their nominee may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.
3. Response: Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the President to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. If after the resolution meeting we are unable to resolve the complaint together, we will work with you to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event you would like to take further action about it. In some circumstances, the President may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.
4. Timelines: SAGSE will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 48 hours) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, SAGSE may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, SAGSE will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Please note that unreasonable conduct (e.g., vexatious complaints) may need to be managed differently to the procedures in this policy.

Resolution

Where appropriate, SAGSE may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- providing further information or clarification
- an apology or expression of regret
- a change of decision
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support
- Other actions consistent with organisation values that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the community.
- sharing findings and reporting back to committees, volunteers, host families, etc.

In some circumstances, SAGSE may also ask you to attend a meeting with an independent third party or participate in a mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

Escalation

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by SAGSE, or if your complaint is about registrations, please contact the VRQA.

If your complaint relates to a school, [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#).

If your complaint is in regards to racism or religious discrimination in schools, please see [Report racism or religious discrimination in schools](#).

Record keeping and other requirements

For at least three years, SAGSE must keep written records of:

- Serious, substantial or unusual complaints
- Complaints relating to the Child Safety, Family Violence, and other complaints related to the safety and/or wellbeing of students.

Communication

This policy will be communicated to our community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on SAGSE's website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Referenced in community communication
- Discussed at internal and community facing events and meetings

Policy Evaluation & Review

Created / Last Updated	01/08/2024
Endorsed by	SAGSE Committee
Endorsed on	19/08/2024
Next review date	July 2026, if not earlier as required

Student Code of Conduct

Purpose

To clearly communicate expectations and responsibilities of students engaged in SAGSE programs.

Responsibilities of students

Students have a responsibility to:

- accept the authority of SAGSE staff and policies regarding behaviour.
- act and work co-operatively with other students and volunteers.
- respect the learning and social needs of other students, and refrain from behaviour which would interrupt or hinder the learning opportunities of other students.
- take progressive responsibility for their own learning while on exchange; to work consistently and complete tasks as required and engage actively in learning experiences.
- behave respectfully towards other students, staff and visitors, including the use of respectful language in person and when using social media or digital platforms.
- respect SAGSE and family property, the property of staff, and other students and refraining from touching the belongings of others unless explicit permission is provided.
- in connection with GDANSA, inform parents of their progress and wellbeing while on exchange to ensure that all communication is effectively delivered.
- uphold the reputation of the organisation by observing an appropriate standard of behaviour in transit to and from events even when not under direct supervision.
- behave in a manner which does not endanger the health and safety of themselves or others.
- behave with courtesy and consideration for others. In particular, students must refrain from all forms of bullying and harassment. (See also: SAGSE Bullying Policy).
- be punctual and regular in attendance.
- remain in the school grounds during the school day as set out by their host school.
- to complete work set by teachers promptly and to the best of their ability and to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered at the school while in a host school.
- dress neatly and with due regard for health, hygiene and safety. Students must wear the approved uniform as set out on the school (if required).

Students must not possess or smoke cigarettes or vaping equipment and must not associate with any student not adhering to this requirement. Students must also not possess, use or be under the influence of alcohol or un-prescribed drugs or other substances harmful to health, at school, on excursions, in transit between school and home or otherwise while on exchange.

Actions which may be taken where the Code of Conduct is breached

If a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our community, there will be a staged response to support the student to develop positive behaviours.

Disciplinary measures may be used as part of this staged response to inappropriate behaviour in combination with other engagement and support strategies to ensure that factors that may have contributed to the student's behaviour are identified and addressed.

Disciplinary measures in our organisation will be applied fairly and consistently, and in consultation with the relevant host school or host family.

Students will always be provided with an opportunity to be heard. Consequences for students are based on restorative practices and may range from education around the behaviour, referral to services, teams within their host schools, withdrawal from class or an activity, reparation, detentions or suspensions from their host school.

Policy Evaluation & Review

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Bullying Prevention Policy

Purpose

SAGSE is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the SAGSE community.
- make clear that no form of bullying at SAGSE will be tolerated.
- outline the strategies and programs in place at SAGSE to build a positive culture and prevent bullying behaviour.
- ask that everyone in our community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour and understands the importance of reporting bullying behaviour to SAGSE staff.
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed.
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including targets, bystanders, witnesses, and students engaging in bullying behaviour)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at SAGSE.

When responding to bullying behaviour, SAGSE aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent, and responsive.
- find a constructive solution for everyone.
- stop the bullying from happening again.
- restore the relationships between the individuals involved.

Scope

This policy addresses how SAGSE aims to prevent, address, and respond to student bullying behaviour. SAGSE recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate student behaviours that do not meet the definition of bullying which are also unacceptable at our organisation. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with other relevant policies.

While on exchange, this policy applies to all activities, including camps and excursions with SAGSE and the host school. It also applies to bullying behaviour between students that occurs outside of school hours, where the behaviour impacts on student wellbeing and safety at school. Bullying can take place both in and outside of the environments. However, this policy focuses on the environments where students have a higher chance of experiencing bullying behaviours. If bullying occurs outside of this context, the relevant steps and procedures still apply.

Definitions

In 2018 the Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the following definition of bullying for use by all Australian school contexts.

- *Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.*
- *Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records)*
- *Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium, and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.*

Bullying has three main features:

- It involves a misuse of power in a relationship.
- It is ongoing and repeated, and
- It involves behaviours that can cause harm.

There are four main types of bullying behaviour:

- Physical – examples include hitting, pushing, shoving, or intimidating or otherwise physically hurting another person, damaging, or stealing their belongings. It includes threats of violence.
- Verbal/written – examples include name-calling or insulting someone about an attribute, quality, or personal characteristic.
- Social (sometimes called relational or emotional bullying) – examples include deliberately excluding someone, spreading rumours, sharing information that will have a harmful effect on the other person and/or damaging a person’s social reputation or social acceptance.
- Cyberbullying – any form of bullying behaviour that occurs online or via a mobile device. It can be verbal or written, and can include threats of violence as well as images, videos and/or audio.

Bullying can be a form of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or other type of social prejudice when the behaviour is targeted at an individual or group because of a personal characteristic, such as race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

For further information about bullying, refer to: [Bully Stoppers \(education.vic.gov.au\)](http://education.vic.gov.au).

Many distressing and inappropriate behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing and inappropriate behaviours should report their concerns to school staff and SAGSE.

Mutual conflict involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the issue. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

Social rejection or dislike is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Single episode acts of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our organisation and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. SAGSE will use its Student Wellbeing and Student Engagement Policy to guide a response to single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression.

Harassment is language or actions that are demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment.

Discrimination is behaviour that treats someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic (for example, race, religious belief or activity, disability, sex or intersex status, gender identity or sexual orientation).

Discrimination, harassment, and any other inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated at our organisation and there may be serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. This includes any form of racism, religious or disability discrimination, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or any other behaviour that targets an individual or group. Further information about discrimination and harassment, including definitions, is set out in our Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

Bullying Prevention

- SAGSE has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive culture and relationships to promote wellbeing. We strive to foster a culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling, encouraging, and teaching behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.
- Bullying prevention at SAGSE is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effect way to prevent and address bullying.
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the organisation, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students.
- We celebrate the diverse backgrounds of members of our community, including Aboriginal students.
- We foster a safe environment that is supportive and inclusive of LGBTIQ+ students.
- We promote upstander behaviour as a way of empowering our students to positively and safely take appropriate action when they see or hear of a peer being bullied.
- We seek to empower students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way.
- Students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.

Incident Response

Reporting concerns to SAGSE

Bullying is not tolerated at SAGSE.

We ensure bullying behaviour is identified and addressed with appropriate and proportionate consequences. All bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively.

Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to their Local Coordinator as soon or another trusted adult as soon as possible.

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students and/or parents and carers reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by SAGSE are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

In their host school, we encourage students to speak to their Year Level Coordinator or relevant Head of House, or similar position. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of SAGSE.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in or has witnessed bullying behaviour at SAGSE should contact their Local Coordinator.

Investigations

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, staff are required to:

1. record the details of the allegations
2. inform the relevant Local Coordinator
3. keep these records for at least three years

The Local Coordinator will refer the matter as relevant. As needed, the relevant investigator will:

- speak to the those involved in the allegations, including the target/s, the students allegedly engaging in bullying behaviour/s and any witnesses to the incidents.
- speak to the parent/carers of the students involved.
- speak to the teachers of the students involved.
- take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference.
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above.

All communications in the course of investigating an allegation of bullying will be managed sensitively. Investigations will be completed as quickly as possible to allow for the behaviours to be addressed in a timely manner.

The objective of completing a thorough investigation into the circumstances of alleged bullying behaviour is to determine the nature of the conduct and the students involved. A thorough understanding of the alleged bullying will inform staff about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour.

Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: [Brodie's Law](#).

Responses to Bullying Behaviours

When the investigator has sufficient information to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the students involved, a number of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected students.

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behaviour.

SAGSE will consider:

- the age, maturity and individual circumstances of the students involved.
- the severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the target student.
- whether the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context.
- whether the students engaging in bullying behaviour demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour.
- the alleged motive of the behaviour.

The investigator may implement some or all of the following strategies in consultation with the relevant school and/or organisations (including SAGSE) while on exchange:

- Offer wellbeing support through the relevant school's wellbeing team to target student behaviour and those engaging in it
- Support affected students who may have been witnesses and/or friends of the targeted student(s).
- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting with all or some of the students involved. The objective of restorative practice is to repair relationships that have been damaged by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the person who has bullied someone and forgiveness by the person who has been bullied.
- Facilitate a mediation between some or all of the students involved to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance. Mediation is only suitable if all students are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.
- Facilitate a process using the Support Group Method, involving the target student(s), the students engaging in bullying behaviour and a group of students who are likely to be supportive of the target(s).
- Implement a Method of Shared Concern process with all students involved in the bullying.
- Prepare a Safety Plan restricting contact between target and students engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including connecting affected students with mentors.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement proportionate disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include removal of privileges, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.

SAGSE understands the importance of monitoring and following up on the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Where appropriate, school staff will also endeavour to provide parents and carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

The relevant appointed person is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation (for at least three years) and responses to bullying behaviour.

The following websites and resources provide useful information on prevention and responding to bullying, as well as supporting students who have been the target of bullying behaviours:

- [Bully Stoppers](#)
- [Report racism or religious discrimination in schools](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [ReachOut Australia](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)

Created / Last Updated	01/08/2024
Endorsed by	SAGSE Committee
Endorsed on	19/08/2024
Next review date	July 2026, if not earlier as required

Inclusion & Diversity

Including Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harrassment

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to explain SAGSE's commitment to making sure every member of our community, regardless of their background or personal attributes, is treated with respect and dignity.

SAGSE strives to provide a safe, inclusive and supportive environment which values the human rights of all students and staff. For staff, this policy should be read alongside the [Equal Opportunity Act](#).

Definitions

Personal attribute: a personal characteristic that is protected by State or Commonwealth antidiscrimination legislation. These include: race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious belief or activity, political belief or activity, age, intersex status, physical features, pregnancy, carer and parental status, breastfeeding, marital or relationship status, lawful sexual activity, employment activity, industrial activity, expunged homosexual conviction or personal association with anyone who is identified with reference to any protected attribute.

Direct discrimination: unfavourable treatment because of a person's protected attribute.

Indirect discrimination: imposing an unreasonable requirement, condition or practice that disadvantages a person or group of people with a protected attribute.

Sexual harassment: unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature towards another person which could reasonably be expected to make that other person feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated. It may be physical, verbal, visual or written.

Disability harassment: humiliating comments or actions about a person's disability.

Vilification: conduct that incites hatred towards or revulsion or severe ridicule of a person or group of people on the basis of their race or religion.

Victimisation: subjecting a person or threatening to subject them to detrimental treatment because they (or their associate) has made an allegation of discrimination or harassment on the basis of a protected attribute (or asserted their rights under relevant policies or law).

Policy

SAGSE is committed to creating a community where all members are welcomed, accepted and treated equitably and with respect regardless of their backgrounds or personal attributes such as race, language, religious beliefs, gender identity, disability or sexual orientation so that they can participate, achieve and thrive.

SAGSE acknowledges and celebrates the diversity of backgrounds and experiences in our community, and we will not tolerate behaviours, language or practices that label, stereotype or demean others. At SAGSE, we value the human rights of every student and we take our obligations under anti-discrimination laws and the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities seriously.

SAGSE will:

- Actively nurture and promote a culture where everyone is treated with respect and dignity
- ensure that students are not discriminated against (directly or indirectly) and where necessary, are reasonably accommodated to participate in their education and school activities (eg schools sports, concerts, formals) on the same basis as their peers
- acknowledge and respond to the diverse needs, identities, and strengths of all students
- encourage empathy and fairness towards others
- challenge stereotypes that promote prejudicial and biased behaviours and practices
- contribute to positive learning, engagement, and wellbeing outcomes for students
- respond to complaints and allegations appropriately and ensure that students are not victimised.
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students, students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability, international students, students, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTIQ+) students.

Bullying, unlawful discrimination, harassment, vilification, and other forms of inappropriate behaviour targeting individuals or groups because of their personal attributes will not be tolerated at SAGSE.

We will take appropriate measures, consistent with our policies to respond to students who demonstrate these behaviours at our organisation.

Students who may have experienced or witnessed this type of behaviour are encouraged to speak up and to let their teachers, parents or carers know about those behaviours to ensure that inappropriate behaviour can be addressed.

Reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities

SAGSE also understands that it has a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate students with disabilities. A reasonable adjustment is a measure or action taken to assist students with disabilities to participate in their education on the same basis as their peers. Reasonable adjustments will be made for students with disabilities in consultation with the student, their parents or carers, their teachers and if appropriate, their treating practitioners. Our organisation may consult through briefings with families and students, and in other less formal ways.

Policy Evaluation & Review

Created / Last Updated	28/07/2024
Endorsed by	SAGSE Committee
Endorsed on	19/08/2024
Next review date	July 2026, if not earlier as required

Digital Use Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines the expectations of all SAGSE organisation members, including volunteers. However, it is especially relevant for inbound and outbound students and outlines their responsibilities when using digital platforms and social media.

Definitions

Social media refers to websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

Social media may include:

- Social networking sites (for example, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Video and photo sharing websites (for example, YouTube, Twitch, Imgur)
- Blogs / Micro-blogging (for example, X (formerly Twitter), WordPress)
- Forums, discussion boards and groups (for example, Reddit, Whirlpool)

- Instant messaging (for example, WhatsApp, iMessage, Direct Messaging).
- Wikis (for example, PBWorks, WordPress)

Policy

When using digital technologies, SAGSE expects all of its members to, including students, to be a safe, responsible, and ethical user at all times by:

1. Carefully considering the content that I upload or post online; this is often viewed as a personal reflection of who I am and can influence what people think of me.
2. Conduct myself online in a manner which reflects the values and attributes of SAGSE scholarship recipients:
 - being a positive ambassador for myself, SAGSE, and Australia.
 - having the maturity to deal with challenges and solve problems.
 - demonstrating social adaptability and high-level interpersonal skills.
3. Talking to a trusted adult if I feel uncomfortable or unsafe online, or if I see others participating in unsafe, inappropriate or hurtful online behaviours.
4. Respecting others and communicating with them in a supportive manner; never writing or participating in online bullying (for example, forwarding messages and supporting others in harmful, inappropriate or hurtful online behaviours)
5. Protecting my privacy; not giving out personal details, including my full name, telephone number, address, passwords or details which could lead someone to my identity.
6. Protecting the privacy of others; never posting or forwarding their personal details or images without consent. This includes the privacy of host families both in Australia and Germany. Students should communicate with their families before posting to protect the privacy of others.
7. Investigating the terms & conditions of use for any digital or online tool (e.g. age restrictions, consent requirements). If my understanding is unclear, I will seek further explanation from a trusted adult.
8. Abiding by copyright and intellectual property regulations. If necessary, I will request permission to use images, text, audio, and video. I will obtain the consent of others prior to uploading their image, voice, or likeness.
9. Not interfering with the network systems and security, the data of another user or attempting to log into the network with the username or password of another person.

SAGSE and its affiliates:

- may revoke permission or opportunities to attend specific events based on conduct online.

- may revoke or restrict the award of a scholarship based on conduct online and/or violation of the digital use policy.
- will refer suspected illegal online acts to the relevant law enforcement authority for investigation.

Policy Evaluation & Review

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Endorsed by	SAGSE Committee
Endorsed on	19/08/2024
Next review date	July 2026, if not earlier as required

Critical Incident Management

Purpose

The following policy and procedures (“the Document”) provide the guidelines and reference points to assist SAGSE to respond to and manage critical incidents involving exchange students arriving in Victoria under the auspices of the SAGSE and GDANSA e.V. exchange programs (“Student” or “Students”) in an appropriate manner, with emphasis on timely and co-coordinated responses as well as in a compassionate and culturally sensitive manner. SAGSE’s main priority is to ensure the safety and welfare of all affected persons and organisations.

SAGSE is committed to providing a safe environment for all students, staff, volunteers, and families. SAGSE recognises the duty of care owed to its students and that planning for the management of any critical incidents is essential.

The purpose of this Document is to articulate a plan for delivering a timely and coordinated response to critical incidents and to ensure that the reported critical incidents are:

- responded to, or resolved, in the best possible way for the Student(s), their next of kin, and for SAGSE,
- documented,
- reported to relevant authorities and agencies,
- communicated to the next of kin of the Student(s) in an appropriate way, and
- managed in a manner to ensure that negative publicity, both locally and overseas, is not generated from an incident.

Related documents

Guide for Host Families and German Students

SAGSE Privacy Policy

Definition

For the purposes of this Document, a *critical incident* is defined as a traumatic event, or the threat of such (within or outside Australia), which causes extreme stress, fear or injury. It is an event that causes individuals to experience a strong emotional reaction, which interferes with their usual coping skills. The event has a level of trauma that is beyond the normal living experiences of those affected.

The resulting stress reaction may include emotional, physical, behavioural and cognitive changes evident either at the time of the incident or later. The impact of a critical incident may affect other persons, not only those most directly involved.

Critical incidents to which SAGSE may have to respond are listed below. This list may not be exhaustive. If other incidents are identified or experienced, they will be immediately added to this Document.

1. Death of a student or close family member
2. Attempted suicide by a student
3. Life threatening injury/illness (including poisoning) of a student
4. Missing student
5. Sexual and/or physical assault of a student and/or pregnancy*
6. Mental health crisis of a student
7. Threats of violence to others by a student, or to a student
8. Drug / Alcohol overdose by a student
9. Breakdown in Host Family Communication / Relationship
10. Contacting Students in case of family emergency
11. School disturbance/ riot
12. Fire/ Explosion with injuries to a student
13. Chemical/ radiation, bio-hazard spillage affecting a student
14. Infectious disease inflicting a student
15. Natural disasters (local and international) involving a student
16. Terrorism, International hostage situation/ kidnappings involving a student
17. Arrest of a student
18. Robbery of or by a student

* Refer to [Appendix 1: Crisis Response Situation Quick Reference](#)

Key SAGSE Personnel

Refer to [Appendix 6](#).

Accountability

All persons related to and involved in SAGSE as well as host families are responsible for reporting a critical incident involving Students to the Local Coordinator of the host student.

Once a critical incident has been identified, it is the responsibility of the Critical Incident Team Leader to determine the appropriate course of action and advise the appropriate Local Coordinator of this course of action.

In the event of the exchange program being cancelled due to the below listed items or in cases of serious breaches of the code of conduct by a student, families of the student are responsible for covering additional costs not included in the 'standard package' of the exchange (e.g., flights, accommodation, changes to the itinerary)

- global, national or regional emergency circumstances
- Australian national, state or territory government directives
- the student's physical or mental health circumstances, and/or
- Breaches to the SAGSE code of conduct
- Student conduct that requires SAGSE to exercise its responsibilities for the student's welfare.

Procedures

Step 1 - Notification

When a critical incident occurs, the appropriate Local Coordinator will be informed of the critical incident immediately. He will then inform the Critical Incident Team Leader. The Critical Incident Team Leader will then determine the circumstances of the situation as well as determining whether it is a critical incident and assign roles and responsibilities accordingly.

The following steps will be taken:

1. confirm that the person/people involved in the critical incident was/were Students,
2. record any details of the critical incident provided by the person who reported the critical incident,
3. plan an immediate response,
4. allocate individual roles and responsibilities for ongoing tasks, and;
5. plan an ongoing strategy.

Step 2 – Assessment

1. create a clear understanding of the critical incident - obtain accurate and up-to-date information about what happened and about the current situation,
2. confirm the identity of the people involved,

3. retrieve detailed Student information, e.g. local address, next of kin, nationality, religion, known medical conditions and OSHC provider;
4. if the critical incident involves a student with a psychiatric disability, the Critical Incident Team Leader will determine to what extent information can be provided under the current privacy laws.

Risk Management Assessment

Risk Event	Likelihood	Consequence	Current risk assessment	Mitigation responsables	Residual risk
Lack of organisational culture of child safety	Unlikely	Severe	Low	SAGSE and GASS Committees	Low
Lack of awareness of child safety procedures and Code of Conduct	Unlikely	Major	Low	SAGSE and GASS Committees	Low
Natural trust of SAGSE and GASS Committee Members and volunteers	Unlikely	Severe	Low	SAGSE and GASS Committees	Low
Natural trust of Host Families	Unlikely	Severe	Low	SAGSE and GASS Committees and Host Families	Low
Unknown people and environments at excursions and camps	Possible	Severe	Low	SAGSE and GASS representatives and Host Families	Low
Unknown people during independent travel periods	Possible	Severe	Medium	SAGSE Local Coordinators	Low
Unsupervised recreational activities	Possible	Severe	Medium	Host Families and SAGSE Local Coordinators	Low
Child alone with one other person unsupervised	Possible	Severe	Low	Host Families and SAGSE Local Coordinators	Low

Harassment via email, SMS or other media	Possible	Severe	Medium	SAGSE Local Coordinators	Low
Vulnerability of children due to unknown personal issues	Possible	Severe	Medium	SAGSE and GASS representatives, Host Families and SAGSE Local Coordinators	Low
Inappropriate behaviour not reported	Possible	Severe	Medium	SAGSE and GASS representatives, Host Families and SAGSE Local Coordinators	Low
False allegations	Possible	Severe	Low	SAGSE Committee	Low

Step 3 - Intervention

Make contact with relevant organisations and people (the order will be determined by the specific circumstances):

1 Emergency services

If necessary, liaise with the all relevant emergency services (eg. police, fire brigade, ambulance, hospital, poisons information centre) regarding notification to the Student's family and other relevant matters. Police should be first to be informed in the matter of a criminal incident both in Australia (000) and Germany (112).

2 Next of kin

Ensure that next of kin are informed and updated on the current situation and that the next of kin have 24 hour access for on-going information updates.

If the Student is in hospital or critically ill, appropriate transportation or accommodation may need to be arranged for next of kin.

If a Student dies or is critically ill, issues related to burial/repatriation will need to be coordinated with the next of kin.

3 GDANSA e.V.

Contact GDANSA e.V. to determine what support it can provide with relevant stakeholders.

4 Embassy/Consulate

In the case of serious accident, illness or death of a Student, inform the relevant Embassy or Consulate and coordinate the allocation of roles and responsibilities.

5 Host family

Maintain contact with the Student's host family providing appropriate levels of information, and ensuring that support and assistance is available from SAGSE and GDANSA e.V.

6 Other students/staff

Identify those Students who are closely involved with the Student, determine the amount of information to be provided to them and ensure that these people are aware of support and assistance from SAGSE and GDANSA e.V.

7 Hospital

If necessary, contact the hospital and the Student's Overseas Student Health Cover to arrange any guarantor agreements or any other relevant matters.

8 School attended by Student

Inform the school of the critical incident and determine whether the school has a role to fulfill.

9 Counselling

Determine the appropriateness of providing counselling and debriefing sessions, and arranging such sessions as required with internal or external counsellors. SAGSE/GASS Counsellors are referred to in [Appendix 6](#). Die Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Dreifaltigkeitskirche and The German Welfare Society both in Melbourne have consented to providing counselling services on a needs basis.

10 Organisation of appropriate spiritual or religious support

Establish the Student's religion and contact the relevant group/organisation to inform them of the situation and determine the role that they might play.

Ask the Student's next of kin about an appropriate service or ceremony.

11 SAGSE Committee

Brief the SAGSE Committee on information, which can be provided externally including to the media and press. All media enquiries about a critical incident are to be directed to the Critical Incident Team Leader.

12 VRQA

Where required, inform VRQA of the critical incident in accordance with the “Guidelines, conditions and application form for the approval of overseas secondary student exchange organisations, December 2015”.

13 Legal Advice

Help Students to obtain legal advice, if required.

Step 4 - Follow up

- Monitor the need for counselling and maintain contact with those who may need ongoing support.
- Assess the need for follow-up sessions for those involved in the critical incident and organise if necessary.
- If a Student has died, the Critical Incident Team Leader will discuss funeral arrangements with the Student's next of kin directly.
- If the next of kin wish to transport the deceased home, provide aid with transportation and advice on the communication process with the authorities, if necessary.
- If the next of kin wish to bury or cremate the deceased in Australia, assistance will be given to arrange the funeral or memorial service.
- At all times, SAGSE will seek to accommodate the cultural and religious customs of the deceased's family, and arrange to obtain the death certificate and related documents, pack the personal effects and deliver them to the next of kin, as necessary.

Step 5 - Evaluation

The Critical Incident Team Leader shall conduct a debriefing session with all persons directly involved in the critical incident to evaluate the implementation of procedures and responses, and suggest possible changes and improvement for future critical incidents.

Step 6 - Record keeping

Records are to be kept throughout the whole response period - this will include detailed documentation about each phase of the response process, copies of emails and letters, records of significant interactions that occur, and contact details for significant people in the process using Appendices 3, 4 and 5 of this Document. Records must be kept for a minimum of 10 years.

Any action taken in regard to a critical incident may be recorded to include outcomes or evidence if the critical incident is referred to another person or agency. While referring or forwarding information to another person or agency, due consideration must be given to the current privacy laws.

6. Critical Incident During Student’s Independent Travel

Should a critical incident occur during a Student’s “Independent Travel” (refer to SAGSE’s Guide for Host Families and German Students) contact will be made in the first instance with the Student’s Local Coordinator (available 24/7), who will then make contact with the Critical Incident Team Leader to activate actions in accordance with this

Document. Refer also to Crisis Response Situation Quick Response for independent travel specific incidents.

7. Review of this Document

At least annually, the SAGSE Committee will evaluate the Document and make modifications if required.

Crisis Response Quick Reference

	Type of Incident	Primary Contacts	Secondary Contacts	Follow-up
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1	Death of student	Police Tel. 000	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V.	OSHC
		Hospital	Other Students	Counselling Service
		Next of kin	Counselling Service	
		Host family		
		VRQA Tel. (03) 9032 1539		
		Embassy Tel. 0412 359 826		
		School		
2	Attempted suicide	Police Tel. 000	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V.	OSHC
		Hospital / Mental Health Services	Counselling Service	Counselling Service
		Next of kin		
		Host family		
		Other students		
		VRQA Tel. (03) 9032 1539		
		Embassy Tel. 0412 359 826		
School				
3	Life threatening injury or illness (including poisoning)	Ambulance Tel. 000	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V.	OSHC
		Poisons information centre	Other Students	
		Next of kin		
		Host family		
		VRQA Tel. (03) 9032 1539		
		Embassy Tel. 0412 359 826		
		School		
4	Missing student	Police Tel. 000	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V.	
		Next of kin	Other students	
		Host family		
		VRQA Tel. (03) 9032 1539		
		Embassy Tel. 0412 359 826		

		School		
5	Sexual and/or physical assault and/or pregnancy	Police Tel. 000	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V.	OSHC
		Ambulance Tel. 000	Counselling Service	Counselling Service
		Next of kin		
		Host family		
		Other students		
		VRQA Tel. (03) 9032 1539		
		Embassy Tel. 0412 359 826		
		School		
6	Mental health crisis	Police Tel. 000	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V.	OSHC
		Hospital / Mental Health Services	Counselling Service	Counselling Service
		Next of kin		
		Host family		
		VRQA Tel. (03) 9032 1539		
		Embassy Tel. 0412 359 826		
		School		
7	Threats of violence to others, or to one-self	Police Tel. 000	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V. Counselling Service	OSHC
		Hospital / Mental Health Services		Counselling Service
		Next of kin		
		Host family		
		VRQA Tel. (03) 9032 1539		
		School		
8	Drug / Alcohol overdose	Police Tel. 000	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V. Counselling Service	OSHC
		Ambulance Tel. 000		Counselling Service
		Hospital / Mental Health Services		
		Next of kin		
		Host family		
		VRQA Tel. (03) 9032 1539		

		School		
9	School disturbance/riot	Next of kin	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V.	
		Host family		
		School		
10	Fire/Explosion with injuries or significant damage	Police Tel. 000	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V.	
		Ambulance Tel. 000		
		Hospital		
		Next of kin		
		Host family		
11	Chemical/radiationbio-hazard spillage	Police Tel. 000	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V.	
		Ambulance Tel. 000		
		Hospital		
		Next of kin		
		Host family		
12	Infectious disease	Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V.	
		Tel. 1300 651 160	Other Students	
		Hospital		
		Next of kin		
		Host family		
		School		
13	Natural disasters (local and international)	Police Tel. 000	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V.	
		Next of kin		
		Host family		
		VRQA Tel. (03) 9032 1539		
		Embassy Tel. 0412 359 826		
		School		
14	Terrorism, International hostage situations/ kidnappings	Police Tel. 000	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V.	
		Next of kin		
		Host family		
		VRQA Tel. (03) 9032 1539		
		Embassy Tel. 0412 359 826		

		School		
15	Arrest of student	Police Tel. 000	SAGSE / GDANSA e.V.	
		Next of kin		
		Host family		
		VRQA Tel. (03) 9032 1539		
		School		
16	Robbery	Police Tel. 000	SAGSE / GSANDA e.V.	
		Next of kin		
		Host family		
17	Incidents during Independent Travel:	Local Coordinator	SAGSE / GSANDA e.V.	
	(a) missing key transport connection	Host family		
	(b) eviction from accommodation	Next of kin		
	(c) breach of program rules	School		

SAGSE Resources		
Contact	Name	Telephone Number
President / Critical Incident Team Leader	Martin Schlegel	As required and communicated to families
Local Coordinator	Dirk Janssen	
Local Coordinator	Chantelle Taikos	
Local Coordinator	Nathaniel Smith	

External Resources		
Department	Location	Phone No.
Emergency		000
Victoria Police Centre Switchboard	www.police.vic.gov.au	(03) 9247 6666
Ambulance Victoria	www.ambulance.vic.gov.au	000
Victoria Poisons Information Centre (Austin)	www.austin.org.au/poisons	13 11 26
Metropolitan Fire Service	www.mfb.vic.gov.au	000
Country Fire Authority	www.cfa.vic.gov.au	000
Alfred Hospital (Alfred Health)	www.alfred.org.au	(03) 9076 2000
Epworth Hospital (Richmond)	www.epworth.org.au	(03) 9426 6666
Royal Melbourne Hospital (Grattan St,	www.thermh.org.au	(03) 9342 7000
Royal Women's Hospital	www.thewomens.org.au	(03) 8345 2000
Austin Hospital (Austin Health)	www.austin.org.au/austin-	(03) 9496 5000
Royal Childrens' Hospital	www.rch.org.au	(03) 9345 5522
Mental Health Services Victoria	www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalthhealthservices/	
Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit	www.2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases	1300 651 160
Beyond Blue	www.beyondblue.org.au	1300 22 4636
Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Dreifaltigkeitskirche (Pastor Christof Dielmann)	www.kirche.org.au pastor@kirche.org.au	(03) 9654 5743
The Australian – German Welfare Society	www.germanwelfare.org.au Tanja Gawin – Social Care Worker tanja@germanwelfare.org.au	(03) 9696 0907
Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade	www.dfat.gov.au	1300 555 135
German Embassy, Canberra	www.australien.diplo.de	(02) 6270 1911 0412 359 826
German Consulate, Sydney	www.australien.diplo.de	(02) 8302 4900
Honorary Consulate-General, Melbourne	Michael Pearce	(03) 9642 8088
Dept Immigration and Border Protection	www.border.gov.au	131 881
VRQA	Vrqa.student.exchange@education.vic.gov.au	(03) 7022 1400
GDANSA e.V., Sebastian Strube (President)	info@gdansa.de	+49 162 3070953

Student Cards (Inbound/Outbound)

Both inbound and outbound students are provided with a key contact information card which includes information on who and how to find support. Samples of these cards are listed below.



SAGSE
Scholarships for
Australian-German
Student Exchange

Safety Card

Student Name

Student Host Parents Names
Host Families Address
Parent 1 name : mobile number | Parent 2 name : mobile number

Your German local coordinator is:	Your Australian local coordinator is:
Local Coordinator Name	Local Coordinator Name
contact number	contact number
contact email	contact email

GDANSA e.V and GASS Germany will be providing elements of the exchange program while you are overseas.
If you require immediate assistance on any matter from SAGSE and prefer to contact SAGSE in writing, you can email help@sagse.org.au and one of our Local Coordinators will contact you.
SAGSE is a student exchange organisation approved in Victoria by the Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (VRQA).
Students or their parents/legal guardians can contact the VRQA at: vrqa.student.exchange@edumail.vic.gov.au

Policy Evaluation & Review

Created / Last Updated	28/07/2024
Endorsed by	SAGSE Committee
Endorsed on	19/08/2024
Next review date	July 2026, if not earlier as required