



Somerset Virtual Academy

Faculty Handbook

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of Somerset Virtual Academy (SVA) is to provide students with high quality virtual learning content and services. SVA is committed to fostering the development of diligent and responsible life-long learners of the 21st century through the thoughtful use and continuous, data-driven improvement of interactive, media-rich educational opportunities in flexible, student-centered, virtual learning environments. Ultimately, SVA achieves success in surpassing national standards via the integration of student, teacher, parent, school, Governing Board, and community efforts in the direction of excellence in education.

VISION STATEMENT

Somerset Virtual Academy is dedicated to providing equitable high-quality education for all students.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Somerset Virtual Academy promotes a culture that maximizes student achievement and fosters the development of responsible, self-directed lifelong learners in a safe and enriching environment.

**The Mission, Vision, and Purpose Statements of Somerset Virtual Academy are reviewed and updated periodically by the Governing Board and stakeholders periodically upon the completion of each strategic planning cycle.*

ENGAGEMENT CULTURE

Somerset Virtual Academy, hereinafter referred to as “SVA”, prioritizes people. The best student experiences are delivered by teachers who are happy and engaged. We agree with the research-supported conclusions that people in general are most engaged when there is sufficient autonomy, an opportunity to gain mastery, and a connection—both to others as well as to a higher purpose.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

SVA, is committed to providing employees with the best work experience possible. The policies provided serve as a source of information about the policies and procedures for teachers, parents, and students participating in SVA programs.

SVA, upon resolution by its Board of Directors, reserves the right to amend, add or change the policies, protocols, or procedures as it deems necessary or as required by law.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER POLICY

In order to provide equal employment and advancement opportunities to all individuals, employment decisions will be based on merit, qualifications, and abilities. SVA is an equal employment opportunity employer and does not discriminate against any person because of race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, handicap, disability, age or any other characteristic protected by law (referred to as "protected status"). This nondiscrimination policy extends to all terms, conditions and privileges of employment as well as the use of all company facilities, participation in all company-sponsored activities, and all employment actions such as promotions, compensation, benefits and termination of employment.

SVA’s employment policies and procedures comply with anti-discrimination provisions of Section 1000.05, Florida Statutes. Discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status against a student or an employee in the system of public K-20 education is prohibited. No person shall, on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of,

or be subjected to discrimination under any public K-20 education program or activity, or in any employment conditions or practices, conducted by a public educational institution that receives or benefits from federal or state financial assistance.

SVA will make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with known disabilities unless doing so would result in an undue hardship. This policy governs all aspects of employment, including selection, job assignment, compensation, discipline, termination, and access to benefits and training.

Any employees with questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in the workplace are encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of their immediate supervisor or the Human Resources Manager. Employees can raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal. Anyone found to be engaging in any type of unlawful discrimination will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

REQUIRED SCREENINGS

SVA only hires instructional personnel who have completed a background screening, as required by Section 1012.32, Florida Statutes. All instructional personnel that are hired or contracted for positions must undergo background screening, and may be subject to additional pre-employment criteria, such as finger printing, and/or a pre-employment drug test. If the employee has been offered employment before any such investigation or test is completed, employment is contingent on a satisfactory result on all required tests. In addition, continued employment is contingent upon maintaining satisfactory fingerprint clearance as well as active and current acceptable state teaching certification.

CERTIFICATIONS

In addition to providing eligibility by submitting the required documents for employment, teachers will be required to:

- Present proof of bachelor's degree from an accredited post-secondary institution.
- Present a teaching certificate.
- Present proof of educational certificates and/or statement of eligibility.
- Present original transcripts for all degrees conferred.
- Submit for fingerprinting, background checks and drug testing to the county school board office or the local police department, if required, or submit proof of previous compliance.

It is the professional responsibility of each educator to provide the administration with a copy of a current, valid Florida Educator's Certificate or copies of other documentation such as Statement of Eligibility and/or college transcripts, as may be applicable. It is also the professional responsibility of each educator to maintain a current teaching certificate and to fulfill the requirements of any waiver they have.

Teachers must agree to comply with all certification requirements, as set forth by SVA and Florida Statutes. Any teacher who has been granted a waiver agrees to complete any and all credits required for certification in the subject area within the time frame specified by the Principal. The teacher further agrees to provide SVA, in a timely manner, with written verification of her/his compliance with SVA requirements.

BUSINESS ETHICS AND CONDUCT

The continued success of SVA is dependent upon our clients' trust and we are dedicated to preserving that trust. Employees have a duty to their students, parents and vendors to act in a way that will merit the continued support and confidence of the public.

SVA will comply with all applicable laws and regulations and expects its directors, officers, and employees to conduct business in accordance with the letter, spirit, and intent of all relevant laws and to refrain from any illegal, dishonest, or unethical conduct.

In general, the use of good judgment, based on high ethical principles, will guide you with respect to lines of acceptable conduct. If a situation arises where it is difficult to determine the proper course of action, the matter should be discussed openly with your immediate supervisor for advice and consultation.

Compliance with this policy of business ethics and conduct is the responsibility of every employee. Disregarding or failing to comply with this standard of business ethics and conduct could lead to disciplinary action, up to and including possible termination of employment.

EMPLOYMENT TERMINATION

Termination of employment is an inevitable part of personnel activity within any organization, and many of the reasons for termination are routine. Below are examples of some of the most common circumstances under which employment is terminated:

- Resignation - voluntary employment termination initiated by an employee.
- Discharge - involuntary employment termination initiated by the organization.
- Layoff - involuntary employment termination initiated by the organization for non-disciplinary reasons.
- Retirement - voluntary employment termination initiated by the employee meeting age, length of service, and any other criteria for retirement from the organization.

Since employment is based on mutual consent, both the employee and SVA have the right to terminate employment at will, with or without cause, at any time. Employees will receive their final pay in accordance with applicable state law.

GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS EXPECTATIONS

Frequent student-teacher communication in the virtual learning environment requires commitment above and beyond the traditional workday by staff, as communication is the critical element to the success of the program. Instant Message (IM) communication and email are considered essential and are expected on a regular basis. Voice to voice communications or video-conferences are expected with parents and students on a monthly basis as well as at the initial start as well as the end of the term. Personnel are required to alert their immediate supervisor of their availability on days in which they will be traveling or away from their regular work location.

All email, voicemail and instant message communication should be responded to within 24-48 hours during the workweek. Weekend communication should be handled with the highest integrity and professional judgment.

All instructional staff are expected to have a publishable telephone line. It may be a landline or a mobile number. This phone must be answered in a professional manner ("This is Ms./Mr. speaking, how may I help you?") at all times, either in person or by an answering device. Your home phone line may not be used as your business line unless you can guarantee that it is answered as above.

All staff are expected to be available to students, parents, and/or colleagues on the days that respective staff member has identified as a workday. As a means for providing good customer service to our students and parents, instructional staff should alert students to their weekly schedule.

Teachers are expected to talk personally with each student and their parent at least once a month as well as at the beginning and end of the term.

Teachers are expected to update course announcement pages frequently.

If a student is not performing, the teacher is expected to follow the communication procedures in our Student Drop Policy.

INTERNET USAGE POLICY

All Internet data that is composed, transmitted, or received via our computer communications systems is considered to be part of the official records of SVA and, as such, is subject to disclosure to law enforcement or other third parties. Consequently, employees should always ensure that the business information contained in Internet e-mail messages and other transmissions is accurate, appropriate, ethical, and lawful.

Data that is composed, transmitted, accessed, or received via the Internet must not contain content that could be considered discriminatory, offensive, obscene, threatening, harassing, intimidating, or disruptive to any employee or other person. Examples of unacceptable content may include, but are not limited to, sexual comments or images, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any other comments or images that could reasonably offend someone on the basis of race, age, sex, religious or political beliefs, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law.

Abuse of internet platforms and tools provided by SVA in violation of law or policies will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Employees may also be held personally liable for any violations of this policy. The following behaviors are examples of previously stated or additional actions and activities that are prohibited and can result in disciplinary action:

- Sending or posting discriminatory, harassing, or threatening messages or images.
- Using the organization's time and resources for personal gain.
- Stealing, using, or disclosing someone else's code or password without authorization.
- Copying, pirating, or downloading software and electronic files without permission.
- Sending or posting confidential material, trade secrets, or proprietary information outside of the organization.
- Violating copyright law.
- Failing to observe licensing agreements.
- Engaging in unauthorized transactions that may incur a cost to the organization or initiate unwanted Internet services and transmissions.
- Sending or posting messages or material that could damage the organization's image or reputation.
- Participating in the viewing or exchange of pornography or obscene materials.
- Sending or posting messages that defame or slander other individuals.
- Attempting to break into the computer system of another organization or person.
- Refusing to cooperate with a security investigation.
- Sending or posting chain letters, solicitations, or advertisements not related to business purposes or activities.
- Using the Internet or Education Portal for political causes or activities, religious activities, or any sort of gambling.
- Jeopardizing the security of the organization's electronic communications systems.
- Sending or posting messages that disparage another organization's products or services.
- Passing off personal views as representing those of the organization.
- Sending anonymous e-mail messages.
- Engaging in any other illegal activities.

TEACHER AVAILABILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS

Frequent student-teacher communication in the virtual learning environment requires commitment above and beyond the traditional workday by staff in a brick-and-mortar environment, as communication is the critical element to the success of the program. Instant Message (IM) communication and email are considered essential and are expected on a regular basis. Voice to voice communication is expected at a minimum at the initial start as well as monthly. SVA makes the following commitments to its students and parents:

- All instructors will post information on how students can contact them via telephone, email or online messaging tools (text message).

- All email, voicemail and instant message communication will be responded to within 24-48 hours during the workweek.
- Teachers will establish office hours and will be available to students and parents during those hours on school days that the staff member is working.
- Teachers are expected to talk personally with each student and their parent at least once a month as well as at the beginning and end of the term.
- Teachers will update course announcement pages frequently.
- Prior to each student being granted access to their online course, all teachers will have a Welcome Phone Call conversation with that student.
- Teachers will provide targeted and timely feedback to students on submitted assignments and completed assessments within a period of time not exceeding 72 hours.
- Teachers will use standard signature guidelines on all email and posted messages.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

1. Check email and instant messages frequently; at least twice per day.
2. Create a system for storing email that would be logical to anyone (by student name is suggested.)
3. Use Spell check on all emails before sending.
4. Do not use email or instant messages to address difficult or controversial issues with students or parents. This includes concerns over the tone of student's communication with you or with other students, concerns about the authenticity of student work, etc. Use the telephone. If you are unable to reach a parent and/or student by phone, it is certainly acceptable to send them an email (not instant message). Try to refrain from using email or instant messages as the forum for airing your concerns. Use email (not instant message) to alert them to the fact that you desire to speak to them via the telephone and identify sometimes when you will be available should they desire to contact you.

TELEPHONE/VOICEMAIL POLICY

1. Instructors are expected to check email, text and voice messages daily.
2. Teachers are required to enter all telephone calls to students and parents into the Student Information System, SIS. These logs are reviewed periodically and are used for school accountability reporting.

WELCOME PHONE CALL / MONTHLY CALLS

All instructors are expected to have a Welcome Phone Call conversation with their students and parents as well as a monthly call with students and parents.

STUDENT DROP POLICY

Within each course teachers must outline the weekly minimum work requirements. It is essential that the student and instructor maintain regular contact. All students are advised of the Drop Policy and are required to sign the following statement upon registration:

I acknowledge that during the first 14 days of being activated into my course I may drop the course without penalty. I understand that for each online course there are a minimum number of assignments that must be completed each week. Failure to submit the minimum number of assignments on a weekly basis will result in a failing grade being assigned to my academic transcript. If I drop the course after completing 50% of the class requirements and fail to take the final exam, I may be issued an "F" for my final grade.

During the grace period, if you notice that a student is not progressing, as they should, there are a few things you must do prior to removing the student from the course:

- Contact the student and parent by email to alert them that they are not making appropriate progress and explain the consequences if such behavior continues once the grace period expires.
- Contact the parent about the concerns.
- Log the contacts in the SIS.
- Withdraw the student through the SIS.
- Message Non-Starters using email template in the SIS.

If the teacher initiates dropping students **after the grace period** has expired, an email is sent to the student and parent(s) prior to a No Contact Phone Call and then a No Contact Letter. The following steps should be taken in sequence:

- Within each course, the instructor outlines the weekly minimum work requirements. It is essential that the student and instructor maintain regular contact. To ensure that our students are aware of this commitment, the four-part process below will be followed:
- If the student does not submit the expected number of assignment(s) within a period of ten (10) consecutive days, the student and parent(s) will receive an email from the instructor to set up an academic intervention conference call. During the call, the students, parents, and teacher will work to resolve any issues that prevent the student from submitting an acceptable number of assignments each week.
- If the student does not respond to the phone call by submitting assignments within five (5) days or does not continue to submit an acceptable number of assignments each week, the instructor will place a phone call to the student/parent(s) to remind them of the importance of submitting work and detailing the withdrawal process.
- If the student does not respond by submitting assignments within twenty (20) days of the initial email, SVA will send a formal letter to the student and their parents.
- If there is no response within 20 days, SVA will assume that the student does not intend to remain in the course, and the student will be administratively dropped from the course.
- An official final grade report will be emailed to the student upon completion of the course and the return of the course materials.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Teachers must monitor student attendance carefully. Students will receive full time or part-time instruction through this virtual program. Therefore, students must log-in the minimum number of times per week to be considered active in the course.

Attendance in online courses is performance based. It is measured not only by logging on to the computer, but by successful assignment completion and submission, participation in course activities such as live sessions, and communication with the online teacher.

Virtual students are expected to attend and participate in their online education courses as they would attend and participate in a traditional classroom course. Expected number of logins will vary depending upon the pace of the course.

If there is no activity or login from a student in one week, the teacher may contact the Administrator. Unless prior communications have been received from the student, parent, or home school regarding the student's absence, a student who fails to log in and participate in his/her online course for two weeks may be dropped from the course. **If a student does not log in to a course for 7 consecutive days for any reason, it is his or her responsibility to notify the teacher.**

Attendance is measured by contributions made through communication via live sessions, and/or through the submission of assignments, projects, and tests. Each time a student enters a course, participation is automatically recorded and the length of time in each area is noted.

Not meeting the minimum attendance requirement for any 20 days in a semester for any course (or combination of courses if enrolled in more than one course) is considered in violation of Compulsory Attendance and the student and parent/guardian may be subject to legal sanctions.

POLICY FOR DOCUMENTATION OF STUDENT WORK

All student assessment records should be kept in the SVA Learning Management System (LMS), Cosmos. Primarily, student work will be completed within the course management system. The following procedures will apply to alternate forms of student work:

1. Keep digital documentation of any student assessments given in live sessions. Create a system for storing work that would be logical to anyone. Record the assessment grade and comments in the LMS.
2. Any change in how an assignment, an assessment, a module exam and/or final exam is designed, delivered, altered or modified must have the approval of your instructional team leader.
3. Keep digital documentation of any student work received by email. Create a system for storing work that would be logical to anyone. Record the assessment grade and comments in the LMS.
4. All students are required to take all exams and pass the segment final exam before credit can be issued unless specified otherwise.

PROGRESS REPORT POLICY

Progress reports will be disseminated bi-monthly. Please make sure that all grades are up to date prior to progress reports being sent out.

GRADING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

A major component of proper communication is returning student work in a timely manner. It is SVA policy that all communication is responded to within 24-48 hours. Responding within 24-48 hours does not have to include the grading of all work that was submitted the previous day, only the acknowledgment of receipt of assignments or questions.

It is the responsibility of the instructor to inform students about the expected turnaround time on grading work that has been submitted. All work should be graded in a timely manner within a period of time that does not prevent the student from progressing through the course (within three to five days).

Students are to be advised of the grading criteria prior to the beginning of the grading period. Students and parent(s)/guardian(s) are also to be advised of Somerset Academy's district-wide standards for promotion and graduation as applied to the student's grade placement:

- **Academic Grades** - Academic grades are to reflect the student's academic progress. The grade must not be based upon the student's effort and/or conduct. Grades in all subjects are to be based on the student's degree of mastery of the instructional objectives and competencies for the subject. The determination of the specific grade a student receives must be based on the teacher's best judgment after careful consideration of all aspects of each student's performance during a grading period.

GRADE	LETTER VALUE	VERBAL INTERPRETATION	GRADE POINT VALUES
A	90 - 100 %	Outstanding	4
B	80 - 89 %	Good	3
C	70 - 79 %	Satisfactory	2
D	60 - 69 %	Minimal; Improvement Needed	1
F	0 - 59%	Unsatisfactory	0
I	0	Incomplete (Secondary Only)	0

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Internet access is required for all students, but access must be used in a responsible, safe, efficient, ethical, and legal manner. With expanded access to electronic information, availability of inappropriate material is not uncommon. Some sites contain illegal, defamatory, inaccurate, or offensive information. Although it is impossible to control such misuses, we believe that with responsible use, the benefits of the Internet as an educational tool outweigh the negatives. Teachers play a key role in monitoring responsible Internet use while students communicate with both teachers and classmates. Please review the following student **rules and expectations**:

- **Students are responsible for good behavior** on the network. Always use a computer in a way that shows consideration and respect. It is illegal to use obscene, profane, threatening, or disrespectful language.
- **We take integrity and authenticity of student work** very seriously. Do not cut, copy, or plagiarize Internet content or the work of your online classmates. Teachers do utilize technologies to check for authenticity. Copying, knowingly allowing others to copy from you, and/or misusing Internet content could result in removal from our courses.
- **Security is a high priority**, especially when the system involves many users. If you can identify a security problem in the school's computers, network, or Internet connection, notify a system administrator.
- **It is illegal to create harmful computer viruses.** (f.s. 815 Computer-Related Crimes).

- **Email is not private.** Never say anything via email that you wouldn't mind seeing on the school bulletin board or in the local newspaper.
- **Beware of emails from anyone, particularly adults you don't know,** asking for personal information, attempting to arrange meetings, or engaging in personal contact. Alert your teacher of any message you receive that is inappropriate or makes you feel uncomfortable.
- **Email with your online classmates should be course related.** It is prohibited to send unwanted email to your online classmates.
- **Email addresses that use profanity or may be construed as offensive, shall not be permitted for correspondence.** Administration reserves the right to determine if student email addresses are inappropriate. When necessary, students will be asked to use an alternative email address or be refused for participation in courses.
- **Protect your password.** Keep it secret from anyone except your parents.
- **Administrators will cooperate fully** in any investigation related to any illegal activities conducted through Internet access. In the event there is a claim that you have violated this policy, you will be provided with notice of the suspected violation and have an opportunity to present an explanation. Any violations may result in removal from course(s), as well as other disciplinary or legal action.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

What is academic integrity?

Academic integrity means that all work submitted is created by the student and is an original representation of the student's work.

Why is academic integrity important?

When students submit an assignment that is not their own original work, there are two issues involved:

1. Students are earning credit for learning material for which they have not demonstrated mastery.
2. They may be violating the policies of Somerset Academy.

What are some examples of academic integrity violations?

There are two kinds of academic integrity violations. One is "plagiarism" and the other is "cheating."

1. **Plagiarism** - to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own: use (another's production) without crediting the source." Some examples are, but not limited to the following:
 - a. Copying and pasting a report from the Internet and representing it as your own work.
 - b. Copying any other work and not properly citing authorship.
2. **Cheating**
 - c. To influence or lead by deceit, trick, or artifice.
 - d. To practice fraud or trickery to violate rules dishonestly Some examples are, but not limited to the following:
 - i. Providing questions/answers/ work to another student.
 - ii. Receiving questions/answers/work from another student.

Ensuring Academic Integrity

SVA uses a variety of tools to ensure the integrity of student work. Among these tools are:

- **Plagscan.com** - This Internet tool compares student work against a variety of databases. The Learning Management System is now integrated with Plagscan.com, and most work is automatically uploaded to the system. This database compares students' work against other students' work, as well as work found on the Internet.
- **Academic Integrity Database** - database of student integrity incidences or violations. This database is used to monitor the number of student integrity issues.
- **Teacher Expertise** - Instructors have extensive classroom experience. Their expertise is often a guide in identifying the level of originality in student work.
- **Discussion-Based Assessments** - Each teacher regularly conducts discussion-based assessments with his or her students. These conversations occur at specific intervals as well as randomly in a course and are included in the assessment component of each course. The teacher discusses individual student work and extends the conversation to allow the student to demonstrate mastery of the content and to verify the authenticity of the student's work.
- **Academic Integrity Reporting Policy** - Community members, guidance counselors, parents, and students can call or email any academic integrity-related issue anonymously.

Consequences of Violation of this Policy

A variety of consequences will be administered when students are caught cheating or plagiarizing. These consequences range from resubmission of an assignment up to expulsion from coursework. Additionally, final grades may be rescinded if a student is found to have cheated or plagiarized after the grade has been posted to a transcript.

Students are responsible for submitting their own, original work and are expected to:

- Read and sign the Student/Parent Acknowledgement Form as part of the enrollment process.
- Participate in a welcome call during which components of our academic integrity program will be discussed.
- Ask any questions regarding plagiarism or cheating if they are not sure.

Parents/Guardians, as partners in supporting student learning, are expected to:

- Read and sign the Student/Parent Acknowledgement Form as part of the enrollment process.
- Participate in a welcome call during which components of our academic integrity program will be discussed.
- Ensure that their student's work is authentic and original.
- Monitor, via their guardian account, various academic integrity tips from the text.
- Ask any questions regarding plagiarism or cheating if they are not sure.

Teachers, as stakeholders in ensuring the highest standards of academic integrity, are expected to:

- Act as a resource for student questions.
- Submit various assignments in the Plagscan.com database.
- Coordinate any academic integrity issues with the Instructional Leader.
- Verify student mastery of content through discussion-based assessments and authentic assessments.
- Participate in any mandated trainings or staff development such as "coffee chats," focus groups, or other opportunities.

Instructional Leaders are expected to:

- Support academic integrity in each course they oversee.
- Ensure that all teachers participate in academic integrity initiatives.
- Support the administration of consequences.
- Provide support to the instructional staff and in the implementation of these policies.

PARENT/GUARDIAN'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Teachers and SVA will keep the parent/guardian apprised of the student's progress and will initiate contact if they fall behind in their coursework according to the Student Drop Policy. Parents are expected to supervise and monitor their student's progress throughout the duration of the course. This can be accomplished by accessing the parental account periodically to monitor student progress.

PRIVACY POLICY

SVA will abide by the **student privacy guidelines** set forth by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The following persons have access to student records:

- Principal
- Administrative Team
- Professional Staff (Teachers, Guidance Counselor, the General Counsel)

In accordance with privacy laws, students who attain the age of 18 may transfer certain rights related to their academic records. To learn more about this please contact your guidance counselor.

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

Somerset Virtual Academy prohibits harassment between members of the SVA community, including communication of any form between students, SVA faculty and/or staff, and any third parties directly or indirectly related to the SVA Academic Network.

SVA is committed to maintaining a working and learning environment in which students, faculty, and staff can develop intellectually, professionally, personally and socially. Such an atmosphere must be free of intimidation, fear, coercion and reprisal.

It is an expectation that all students and employees shall use all equipment and programs for the intended educational purpose. SVA is committed to protecting its students and employees from bullying, harassment, or inappropriate uses of computers or programs to participate in bullying behavior. Bullying and harassment **will not be tolerated** and shall be just cause for disciplinary action.

Conduct that constitutes bullying or harassment, as defined herein, is prohibited.

Bullying, harassment, and cyber stalking are defined as inflicting physical or psychological distress, and/or communicating words, images or language using electronic mail that causes emotional distress and for which there is no legitimate purpose.

Any action by a student or parent deemed inappropriate will be fully investigated by the appropriate administrator.

Consequences for students for actions that violate the policy on bullying and harassment shall be determined by the administrative staff and may include:

- Student/teacher/parent conference
- Suspension of email privileges
- Removal from access to courses

NETIQUETTE POLICY

The SVA community is responsible for proper behavior while online. Students as well as faculty members must always show consideration and respect when participating in SVA classes. Obscene, profane, or threatening language online as well as offline will not be tolerated.

Students should be cautious about email messages from anyone, particularly adults asking for personal information, attempting to arrange meetings, or engaging in personal contact. Students should disclose to teachers any message received that is inappropriate or that causes uncomfortable feelings.

Any distribution of unsolicited email to online classmates is prohibited. All course interaction between teachers, parents, students, and stakeholders will be logged. Email messages to online classmates should be limited to welcomed correspondence that is course related. SVA administrators will cooperate fully in any investigation related to any illegal activities conducted through the Internet.

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

SVA will determine the appropriate disciplinary actions for student violations of the code of conduct as they arise. The severity of the offense is the prime determiner in deciding the appropriate consequence. Any inappropriate behaviors that are outlined in the student handbook that are reasonably considered detrimental in the educational setting are grounds for immediate removal from SVA programs. Possible actions may include but are not limited to:

- Written and verbal warning and notification to parent and/or legal guardian.
- Placement on “temporary conduct probation.” A student’s online academic network activities will be monitored for the duration of the student’s current course(s) and the course(s) the student takes in the subsequent term.
- Suspension from the program for a specified period of time.
- Permanent removal from the program.

When a violation has occurred, a report, including the date, time and circumstances of the alleged act, will be submitted. This report includes a description of the actions of all parties involved, names of witnesses available and documentary evidence that supports the charge.

Students wishing to describe a violation should file a report through the teacher. Upon receipt of the report, SVA will determine if a policy was violated by the student. If there is sufficient information, the student and parent will be contacted in writing informing the student of the charges in sufficient detail, including the time and place the alleged violation occurred and the penalty that would be appropriate if the student did in fact violate the policy.

GRIEVANCE POLICY

Students, faculty, and staff have the right to be officially heard in matters where they feel they have a grievance against School policy or personnel. The procedure for seeking redress of such grievances is set forth below:

1. A grievance must be initiated within three (3) weeks of the date of the alleged occurrence or the last act in a series of occurrences, unless otherwise waived by the Chief Operating Officer, or Principal.
2. If the grievance involves SVA faculty, staff, or a student (an “SVA employee”), the complainant should first attempt to resolve such a grievance with that individual. A grievance should be filed if the complaint is not resolved with the SVA employee, or if the complainant initially wishes to have anonymity with respect to the SVA employee.

3. A complainant who has a grievance regarding an SVA employee or with an SVA policy must put the grievance in writing and the complainant should complete the attached form by filling in all necessary information. The complainant should submit the form directly to the appropriate “Grievance Officer”. For grievances that are “academic” in nature (involving a member of the faculty or an academic SVA policy) the Grievance Officer shall be the Director of Domestic Academics if the grievance implicates SVA’s domestic academic activities or the Director of Global Academics if the grievance implicates SVA’s domestic academic activities. For grievances that are “non-academic” in nature (involving non-academic personnel or a non-academic SVA policy), the Grievance Officer shall be the Chief Operating Officer. If a particular Grievance Officer reasonably believes that they received a grievance that is more within the purview of another Officer, they may forward the grievance to that official while providing written notice to the complainant of the action.
4. Reasonable efforts will be taken to maintain confidentiality unless the nature of the complaint requires disclosure (such as if it involves the commission of a crime). However, the complainant should know that his or her name could be made known to the Sr. Director of Domestic Academics, Chief Operating Officer, General Counsel, and Principal of SVA.
5. The COO will contact the complainant to discuss the problem. The COO may call together the complainant and the SVA employee (if applicable) to resolve the issue. If the complainant requests anonymity, the COO will meet with the SVA employee, give the employee a copy of the complaint, and request a written response. The Sr. Director of Domestic Academics will report to the COO (if the grievance is academic in nature or non-academic) on the resolution of the matter.
6. If the matter was not satisfactorily resolved by the Sr. Director of Domestic Academics, the complainant may appeal to a “Hearing Committee”, consisting of the Chief Operating Officer (depending on the academic or non-academic nature of the grievance) and no less than two other administrators or faculty members, as selected by the Principal, who have no relationship to the complainant’s case. The Hearing Committee’s decision may be appealed to the Principal of SVA.

Form for Documenting Grievance (SVA Employee or Policy)

I. Name of Complainant: _____

II. Date/Semester of Action which is Subject of Complaint: _____

III. Name of SVA Employee (if applicable): _____

IV. Description of Employee Action/SVA Policy Causing Complaint:

Signature of Complainant

Date

V. Description of Steps Taken to Resolve Complaint and Outcome:

Signature of Sr. Director of Domestic Academics

Date

VI. Complainant (check one): Accepts Officer's resolution or wishes to appeal resolution.

Signature of Complainant

Date

VII. If appealed, add decision of the Hearing Committee on separate page.

VIII. Reviewed by COO:

Signature

Date

FACULTY/STAFF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I, _____, hereby acknowledge that I have received and read a copy of the Faculty Handbook, which outlines the expectations of Somerset Virtual Academy, as well as my responsibilities as an employee.

I have familiarized myself with the contents of this handbook. By my signature below, I acknowledge, understand, accept and agree to comply with the information contained in the Faculty Handbook provided to me. I understand this handbook is a general guide to the goals, policies, practices, and expectations of Somerset Virtual Academy, and is not intended to cover every situation which may arise during my employment.

I understand that the Faculty Handbook is not a contract of employment and should not be deemed as such.

(Signature)

(Date)

DIRECTIONS: Please print, sign, and date this form accordingly and email amarulanda@aveteaching.com.