



ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY

Global American Learning

GENERAL REGULATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY

These General Regulations of the University serve as a reference for all members both Executives and Lecturers, both new and current. In this document, they can review policies related to their role and STU's expectations of them. This Policy, therefore, can be used by Faculty members as a guide to understanding the most important ideas expressed by St. Thomas University regarding academic behavior and teaching positions.

Similarly, policies and procedures are regularly under review as new needs and developments occur at the University. In addition, the contents are subject to change due to legislative events. STU expressly reserves the right to amend its policies and procedures when necessary as it deems to be in the best interest of the University. Such amendments, as well as any new policies, will be effective as of the date of their enactment unless the action itself specifies a different effective date.

More details on some of the issues addressed in this document can be found in the individual policy statements published by the University from time to time, as well as in the Catalog, in other documents related to the University's procedures and organization (Code of Conduct - Regulations for the Use of STU Information Technology Tools and NIC-TOM Platform). Faculty members, like all other employees, are required to follow all policies and procedures promulgated by Departments and other administrative offices.

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1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.1 INSTITUTION

St. Thomas University (from now on, also referred to as "STU") is a private university with educational, scientific, administrative, organizational, and disciplinary autonomy.

St. Thomas University is a non-profit university. It is primarily by income from its operations and is managed by a self-appointed Board of Trustees. Operating profits and surpluses are reinvested for the development of activities functional to pursue the institutional purpose.

Regulatory sources specific to STU are the provisions of education law and specifically licensure regulations of The University of North Carolina System.

1.2 INSTITUTIONAL APPROVALS

An application made by STU to obtain a license for the issuance of non-public degrees for post-secondary activities is being submitted.

1.3 APPROVAL OF THE ACADEMIC REGULATIONS

The President enacts STU's Academic Regulations upon approval by the Board of Trustees.

1.4 MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of St. Thomas University is to provide an international online degree site to deliver higher education courses and degrees primarily for the social and economic development of disadvantaged and underrepresented populations.

1.5 PURPOSES

STU seeks to be an active participant in the educational process of education by focusing on the growing educational needs in the development process that sees a huge gap between Western economies and so-called "emerging" countries that generate significant social and economic tensions.

Access to education is one of the main factors of social inequality and the common denominator of the ills that afflict this historical moment: ills that must be cured addressed the growing awareness of the advantage of solidarity, adapting, first of all, more than the economic model, the educational model which, in this regard, plays a role of primary importance.

STU wants to intervene in areas where quality education is still inaccessible to most of the population to reduce this main factor of social and economic inequality.

The lack of adequate education has lifelong consequences. It is a deficiency that, more than others, tends to make social-economic conditions preclude children from improving their social and economic conditions compared to their fathers, making poverty hereditary.

In addition, new technologies are radically reshaping more or less all areas of educational activity. Their use is a massive opportunity for those who know how to use them and acquire the necessary skills.

They pose a severe obstacle for those who do not possess educational skills and are relegated to the margins of change.

1.6 VISION

In light of the highlighted purposes, STU has developed its academic focus on the following:

- structured academic courses on the use of new technologies
- reduction of the skills gap in the English language
- faculty who can transfer their skills through technology
- logistical and economic accessibility to education through the provision of online academic pathways
- accessibility to U.S. academic education methodologies recognized internationally as the best for preparing knowledgeable and competent future citizens

In addition:

- STU operates from a developmental perspective as a function of progress and with a new and far-reaching vision that involves especially the less affluent classes in building an industrious and meritocratic, resource-conscious society
- STU will provide graduates with opportunities for satisfying job opportunities while strengthening their entrepreneurial attitude
- STU ensures the University's financial security and well-being by managing income and expenditures in a balanced manner, engaging potential donors, and creating conditions for private support of the University.

2. GOVERNING BODIES

2.1 GOVERNANCE

St. Thomas University is a non-profit university headquartered in North Carolina - which, in turn, is supported in this early start-up phase by American E-Learning Investments, Inc., headquartered in Wyoming, which is responsible for its financial sustenance until STU is authorized to operate by the relevant North Carolina authorities and achieves a balanced budget by supporting itself financially from its resources. STU is a "**staff-quality intensive**" organization with dependence and permeability between those who exercise governance and those assonated.

St. Thomas University, through its governing bodies, has established guidelines for activities necessary to carry out its mission:

Bylaws: Founding Principles and Standards of the Institution

General Regulations of St. Thomas University

- Governance Policy
- University Policy
- Student Policy
- Faculty Policy
- Regulations for the Management and Use of Educational Services for Information Technology
- Library Policy

Regulations for Administration, Finance, and Accounting

Ethic Code (Code of Conduct)

Privacy Regulations

Strategic Business Plan

are published in the Catalog and on the institutional website: www.stthomasuniversity.org

In addition, they are regulated by the following:

Academic Senate Bylaw

Self-Evaluation Committee Bylaw

Academic Standards Committee Bylaw

Student Government Bylaws

2.2 IDENTIFICATION

The governing bodies are:

- Board of Trustees
- University President
- Provost
- Academic Senate

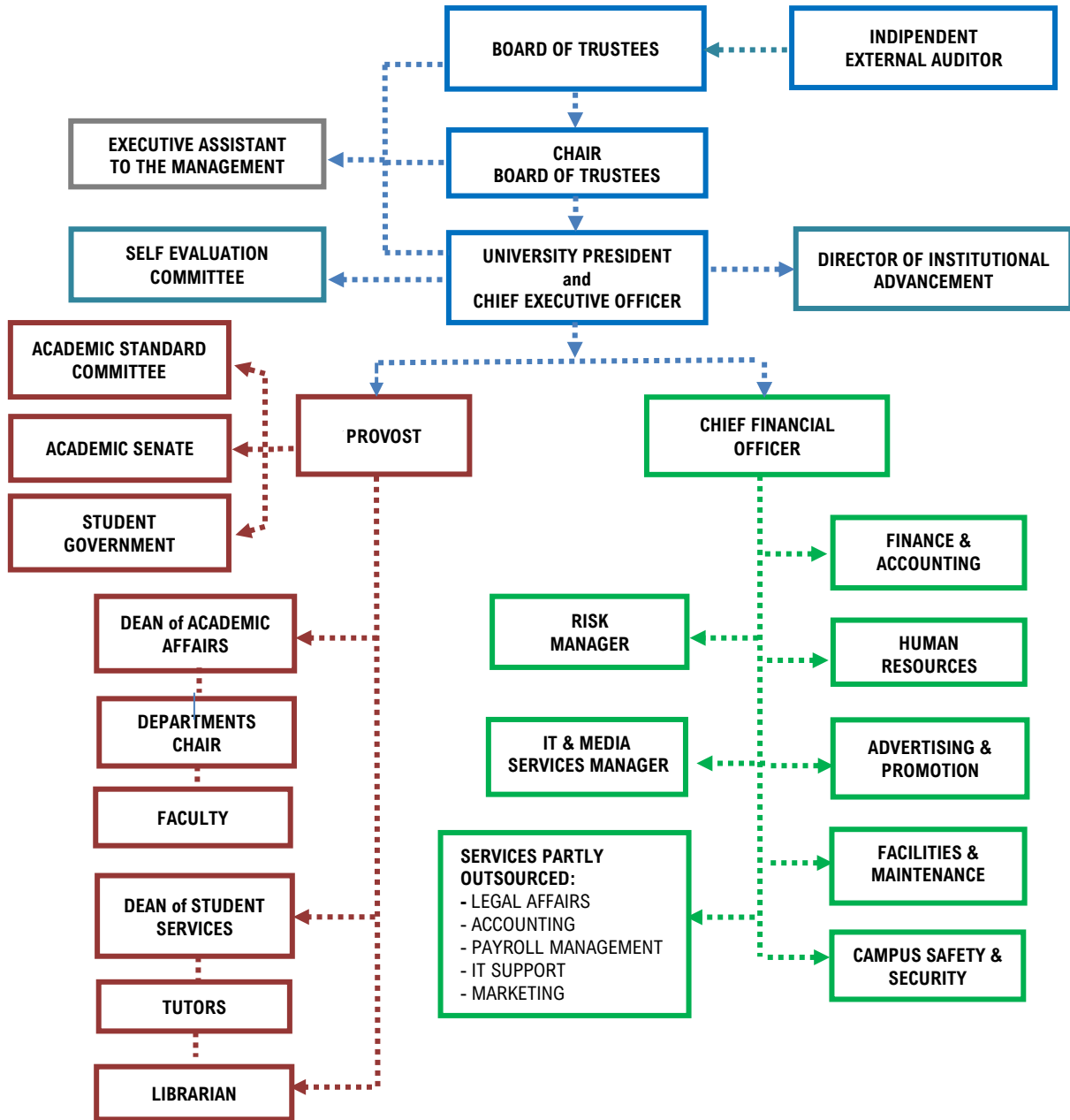
Management body:

- Director of Institutional Advancement
- Chief Financial Officer

Control and evaluation bodies:

- Independent External Auditor (Certified Public Accountant)
- Risk Management Office
- Self-Evaluation Committee
- Academic Standards Committee
- Students Government

2.3 ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



2.4 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities and authority of the governing bodies of St. Thomas University are described under

RESPONSIBILITIES	
BOARD OF TRUSTEES	<p>St. Thomas University is led by a Board of Trustees responsible for the overall direction and management of the University as an institution of higher education and research. It determines the guidelines for the organization and long-term strategic policy, planning, and development of the University.</p> <p>Specifically, the responsibilities of the Board of Trustees are, but are not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Approving the Mission of St. Thomas University B. Fulfilling legal requirements related to the establishment and operation C. Formulating institutional policies D. Selecting, appointing and evaluating the President/CEO E. Ensuring economic and fiscal stability of the institution G. Ensuring that regulations are consistent with STU's mission H. Approving an annual budget and budget planning for multi-years
CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES	<p>The Board of Trustees Chair is appointed by a majority vote among the Board of Trustees. The Chair is responsible for calling and presiding over meetings of the Board of Trustees and has the authority to cast the deciding vote in the event of a tie vote.</p> <p>The Chair is responsible for overseeing the affairs of the non-profit organization.</p> <p>The Chair keeps the Board of Trustee members informed of the non-profit organization's activities.</p>
UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER	<p>The President is appointed by the Board of Trustees and has the legal representation of the University before public authorities.</p> <p>Under the supervision of the Board of Trustees, the President shall generally manage and direct all activities and affairs of the University.</p> <p>The President has the authority to sign, together with the Secretary or other designated Officer or such matters as deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts, and other instruments that the Board of Trustees has authorized to be executed, except where the Board of Trustees expressly delegates the signing or execution of such devices.</p> <p>The President will be an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees and will serve as an advisory member.</p> <p>The President's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Hires the Executive Vice President, Provost, Dean of Academic Affairs, Dean of Student Services, and Chief Financial Officer b. Hires Department and Faculty Chairs in consultation with the Provost c. Supervises the departments of the University to ensure efficiency d. Manage the finances of the University e. Chair decision-making bodies or delegate necessary powers f. Intervene and resolve conflicts g. Serve as the official means of communication between the institution and the Board of Trustees, as well as internal groups (faculty, students, staff) h. Manages the administrative and academic affairs of the University i. Chairs the self-evaluation committee j. Attends meetings of the Academic Standards Committee k. Provides an annual report to the Board of Trustees that includes an evaluation of the University's personnel and academic programs. This evaluation is based on research/surveys, Academic Senate meetings, and the Self-Evaluation Committee report

<p>PROVOST</p>	<p>The Provost is the senior academic officer of the University, responsible to the President and CEO.</p> <p>The Provost is the liaison between the Faculty and the President.</p> <p>The Provost's duties include, but are not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Participating in and leading the development and implementation of long-term strategic planning for the University B. Providing academic vision and leadership; supporting excellence in teaching and curriculum development; facilitating faculty assessment, program review, program accreditation, and evaluation; providing leadership for the improvement of STU's commitment to teaching, research, and community engagement C. Serve as the senior official responsible, in consultation with the President, for investigating, negotiating, establishing, evaluating, and continually improving inter-institutional partnerships with colleges, universities, and organizations to advance STU strategic interests D. Develop, administer, and evaluate, in consultation with the President, policies, and procedures to ensure effective inter-institutional collaboration and development of programs necessary to support STU's diverse needs E. Serve as a liaison between the University's institutional partners and the STU Administration to ensure that their needs and perspectives are well represented in the University's decision-making process F. Coordinate and develop STU's academic programs and curriculum in collaboration with department chairs G. Recruit, support, and evaluate STU faculty. While the STU President hires faculty, the Dean oversees the assignment of faculty positions and the recruitment, review, and promotion of faculty H. Monitor and improve STU student learning through comprehensive approaches to outcomes assessment. STU embraces the standards of excellence outlined by the NCS and will develop measures to assess student learning at the course and program levels I. Work with appropriate accrediting agencies to obtain accreditation, as well as specific program certifications and accreditations J. Assist in drafting procedures and overseeing academic affairs, student affairs, and the library K. Approve budgets and requests for print and software library resources and department purchases, conferences, and agreements with faculty and research before seeking approval from the President. L. Chair the Academic Senate M. Participate in strategic planning and budgeting forecasting N. In the absence of the President (or Vice President), the Provost may act as the President's representative if authorized O. Administer, coordinate, develop and supervise academic staff and related programs and services, including educational strategic planning P. Manage the STU's educational programs and ensure that they comply with established policies Q. Conduct faculty orientations R. Undertake other activities as assigned by the President to ensure the university's institutional integrity and organizational health S. Provide an annual report to the President and CEO that includes an evaluation of academic staff and academic programs
<p>ACADEMIC SENATE</p>	<p>The responsibilities and duties of the Senate are to determine, by the published mission and goals of STU, key areas such as curriculum, course content, teaching methods, research, faculty status, and matters that directly affect educational advancement.</p> <p>The STU Academic Senate is composed of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provost who sets the agenda, convenes and presides over meetings of the Academic Senate, and verifies that all sessions and committee meetings are transcribed appropriately by the Secretary appointed for the purpose, meeting by the meeting • Department Chairs • Dean of Academic Affairs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean of Student Affairs • Librarian • Two Students <p>With attendance at Senate being mandatory. Faculty members who have completed at least two years of STU service may attend meetings, but attendance is not mandatory. More specifically, the Academic Senate shall advise on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approval of new courses • approval of significant changes in an existing course (i.e., change in credit, in course level, significant change in course content) • discontinuance of a course • review of new academic and technical programs and discontinuance of existing programs • eventual revisions to General Education Criteria • interdepartmental curricular problems • undue proliferation and duplication of course offerings. <p>Catalog course names, course number changes, and minor editing changes in course descriptions for clarification are not submitted for a Senate vote. The Senate is responsible for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expressing an opinion on courses and academic activities • making and submitting proposals to the President regarding the University's academic activities • proposing and evaluating academic research activities • recommend teaching faculty to the President • monitoring and evaluating the academic performance of the University • Provide consultation for the annual report on the University's academic performance <p>Proposals and recommendations shall be submitted in writing by the Provost to the President submitting. If such proposals or recommendations are not deemed acceptable, they will be referred back to the Senate for review.</p>
<p>DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT</p>	<p>The Director of Institutional Advancement is appointed directly by the President. Responsible for planning, managing, and implementing activities that increase, diversify, and sustain STU's Mission and its affiliates from individuals, corporations, foundations, and government. In this role, the director of the institutional advancement identifies, develops, and fosters relationships with donors. The office is responsible for conceptualizing, organizing, and implementing annual funds and developing appropriate strategies to meet yearly goals. The office works closely with the CEO, finance director, and executive staff to conduct programming and develop new program initiatives. In addition, the office coordinates and assists with publicity and marketing for all STU special events; supports the development and production of STU's written marketing materials, including, but not limited to, annual reports, Web pages, and releases; monitors and reports regularly on the progress of the development program. The Director Reports directly to the President.</p>
<p>CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER</p>	<p>The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is appointed directly by the President to whom he reports. The position is responsible for managing and planning STU's financial activities. The position is responsible for financial administration, including developing proposed budgets and long-term financial planning, as well as accountable for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overdoes the sight of seeing all external accounting and auditing activities ▪ Manage the procurement of materials, equipment, and services ▪ Manage the hiring of all University personnel (Human Resources) ▪ Ensure the financial security of the University ▪ Maintain and manage the University's facilities ▪ Manage the budgets of the various departments of the University ▪ Prepare regular reports for the President • Develop and refine revenue and expenditure policies and procedures

<p>RISK MANAGER</p>	<p>The Risk Manager will oversee the program and risk management of the organization by assessing and identifying risks that could hinder the University's reputation, safety, security, or financial success.</p> <p>The Risk Manager must, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct risk assessments by collecting and analyzing documentation, statistics, reports, and market trends • Establish policies and procedures to identify and address risks in the services and departments of the University • Review and evaluate risk management policies and protocols • Make recommendations and implement changes as approved • Recommend and implement risk management solutions such as insurance, safety, security policies, business continuity plans, recovery measures • Review and analyze data such as cash flow, inventory, and employee activity • Draft and submit risk reports and proposals to the University executive leadership • Perform other tasks related to enterprise risk management as directed by executive leadership.
<p>INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL AUDITOR (CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT)</p>	<p>The Independent External Auditor is appointed directly by the Board of Trustees, chosen from professional accounting organizations with a record of international experience. Conducts independent evaluations of STU's financial statements and information. Reviews financial statements and related data, analyze business operations and processes, and makes recommendations to achieve greater efficiency. Evaluates the company's assets for valuation and determine fiscal responsibility, ensuring compliance with the tax code and laws.</p>
<p>SELF-EVALUATION COMMITTEE</p>	<p>The Self-Evaluation Committee is responsible for monitoring and ensuring compliance with the enabling standards and procedures and for continuously assessing the quality of STU's programs and services for students.</p> <p>The Self-Assessment Committee will monitor and assesses the quality of the following standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission and purpose • Planning and assessment • Organization and governance • Academic program • Faculty • Students • Library and information resources • Physical and technological resources • Public disclosures • Integrity <p>The Self-Evaluation Committee may request the information necessary for its evaluations from STU members.</p> <p>The Self-Evaluation Committee is composed of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University President • Provost • Director of Institutional Advancement • Chief Financial Officer • Risk Manager • Departments Chair • Librarian • Three faculty members • Two students • Two administrative staff <p>Faculty and students will elect representatives for the Self-Evaluation Committee. The President will choose the two administrative staff members. All members will serve one-year terms and may be re-elected or reappointed for additional terms.</p> <p>The Provost, Director of Institutional Advancement, Chief Financial Officer, Risk Manager, Department Chair, and Librarian, must serve on the Self-Evaluation Committee.</p>

	<p>The President of the University shall chair the Self-Evaluation Committee, convene its meetings, set the agenda for each session, appoint the Secretary of the Self-Evaluation Committee by selecting them from among the members of the Committee, promote the purpose of the Self-Evaluation Committee as defined in the STU's Bylaws, Catalog, and Regulations.</p>
<p>ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEE</p>	<p>The Academic Standards Committee monitors and maintains academic standards in general. This Committee consists of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provost • Department Head • Dean of Academic Affairs • Dean of Student Services • Two student representatives <p>Students serve for one year and may be re-elected for additional terms.</p> <p>The Committee is responsible for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upholding the rules outlined in the Student Code of Conduct • evaluating and acting on cases of academic dishonesty • deciding on exceptions to academic policy • deciding on student petitions • monitor the academic progress and standing of students. <p>The Committee is chaired by the Dean, who determines the agenda, convenes the members, and ensures appropriate minutes be kept.</p>
<p>STUDENT GOVERNMENT</p>	<p>The Student Government represents the student body.</p> <p>The Student Government promotes the common welfare of students by sponsoring programs and services and acting as the student body's voice.</p> <p>The goals of the Student Government will be implemented through appropriate means, including but not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide effective liaison between the student body and the administration, faculty, and staff of the University • ensuring meaningful representation of STU students on the Academic Senate, Self-Evaluation Committee, and Academic Standards Committee • identify and sponsor appropriate social, cultural, and academic activities that benefit the student body • support STU's organizations and activities <p>All Student Government members must attend Student Government whenever possible.</p>

3. ACADEMIC POLICY

3.1 STU SYSTEM

St. Thomas University recognizes the value of the didactic methodology used to deliver "knowledge" in distance education in the American university system. It has as its primary objective the creation of an educational environment within which, even in space-time distance, the aspect of human and personal relationships is preponderant over that of the mere transit of information.

The Innovative Didactics adopted by STU takes full advantage of the potential of computer-educational technologies and, in particular, multimedia, interactivity with learning materials, human interactivity, the possibility of customizing learning paths, the interoperability of the systems used and generated during the use of technological systems, the accessibility of content and the flexibility of student use.

The educational activity of STU is carried out in a web-based environment (Learning Management System - LMS).

In this system, the student is never left alone, even if isolated by the space-time distance; students are guided by the tutor and stimulated to interact with other actors in the educational process, thus realizing moments of sharing and collaborative learning.

The system adopted by the STU makes it possible to:

- significantly reduce the logistical pressure on the physical facilities
- reduce disadvantages due to student travel
- improve educational offerings by adapting the structure of teaching to the different needs of the student population (student-workers, off-campus students, students with disabilities)
- improve students' ability to participate in the learning process
- improve teaching effectiveness and student performance
- improve the student-university relationship both from an academic (connection with the teacher and fellow students) and administrative (access to secretarial procedures) point of view
- enhance interactive classroom moments
- provide monitoring of learning achievements through tracking.

Functionality and effectiveness in program management are ensured by the departments listed below, all supported by the Academic Senate and Curriculum Committee:

- Department of General Studies and Digital Education
- Department of Economics and Technological Innovation
- Department of Computer Science and Technological Innovation

A Self-Evaluation Committee has been established to evaluate the success of STU's educational program, which is essential to its continued growth. This committee is responsible for the ongoing evaluation of the educational program and the assessment and improvement of STU's programming.

3.2 TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODOLOGY

The teaching model adopted by STU has, at the center of the educational process, the student. This allows the student to construct their learning path according to their educational needs and level of competence. The learning environment thus developed is not limited to offering rigidly defined static courses but offers dynamic content that can be enriched by other online content. The student is guided throughout the course by the new figure of the lecturer/tutor, who provides them with the appropriate tools to facilitate learning and communicating online in synchronic and diachronic forms.

The primary teaching tool is the Internet learning environment, where teaching and learning are done in English, and it enables the implementation of a psycho-pedagogical model that characterizes the transition

- from the centrality of the teacher to the centrality of the student
- from the transmission of knowledge to the construction of knowledge
- from the integration of theory and practice
- from passive and competitive learning to active and collaborative learning

In the Didactic Cyberspace, students actively create learning environments guided by experienced teachers/tutors. The recommended path leads the learner to the various designed virtual places, in each of which a training intervention based on a specific method of communication has been implemented:

- with the video lecture, the learner uses a linear learning model, still related to the classical mode of teaching; but thanks to the links to different learning materials, the learner takes advantage of a hypertext mode to study and consult books related to the subject matter
- In the virtual laboratory, the student has the opportunity to check and increase his knowledge in a "learning by doing" mode
- with the chat systems, forums, wikis, Interactive Classes, and Virtual Classrooms, the student, using the network conversation, can activate collaborative learning by sharing the stages of the training process with other students belonging to different linguistic and social realities.

Within each environment, it is possible to simultaneously integrate each learning mode with the others, enriching them with different potentials. The term multimedia is understood in this way in its most total sense, and the learning activity is structured in such a way as to avoid dispersion and confusion and to encourage the transfer of knowledge through different modalities:

- from the simple to the complex (video lecture and intelligent library)
- from theory to application projection ("learning by doing" in the virtual laboratory)
- from guided exercises to research on the World Wide Web (Internet)
- from individual study to interactive dialogue between teacher and students (collaborative learning through synchronous and asynchronous communication and sharing tools).

The teaching methodology concentrates on a single learning object (unit of learning content), a plurality of teaching tools that act synergistically on the student's learning path. The student has:

- written text of the lesson
- slides (enriched with text images, graphs, etc.) commented in audio by the lecturer
- self-assessment tests to check his learning status.

3.2.1 MODES OF INTERACTION

To curb the risk of the isolation effect, resulting in a drop in learning progression, STU is committed to fostering interaction on different levels:

- Student/student (among virtual classmates)
- Student/ tutor (main level of interaction)
- Student/teacher (privileged interaction)

3.2.2 INTERACTION TOOLS

Teaching tools useful in fostering interaction are:

- Mailbox
- Forum
- FAQ system
- Chat
- Online knowledge verification
- Interactive synchronous events
- Accessibility to training activity tracking and self-assessment test results.

3.2.3 COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN INTERACTIVE CLASSROOMS AND 3D VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS

Particular emphasis is placed on collaborative learning activities through the Interactive Classrooms system and in the three-dimensional worlds of Virtual Classrooms on NIC-TOM embedded on the STU platform.

Both of these collaborative learning environments allow the pedagogical model of "flipped classrooms" to be adopted: students are directed to previously document themselves on the topics related to the planned discussion, then study video lectures, reference texts, books, handouts, articles, essays, thus preparing themselves for the conversation with the faculty member.

3.2.3.1 INTERACTIVE CLASSES

In STU's Interactive Classrooms, faculty members and students use interactive tools, carry out practical exercises, intermediate assessment tests, exam simulations, and dialogue, learn cooperatively and collaboratively, and become active builders of knowledge.

STU's Interactive Classrooms allow faculty members and students, in addition to those above "flipped classroom" mode, various modes of teaching interaction:

- **Teaching processes and procedures:** the faculty member sets up a workspace that will enable participating students to operate practically on documents and software prepared by the faculty member; in the first phase of the session, the faculty member shows students specific procedures and processes, using the application-sharing features integrated by the Interactive Classroom system; in the second phase, the faculty member offers students a real-time practice time in which students replicate the procedures they have just learned; the faculty member intervenes when the student deviates from what the expert model provides;
- **Collaborative project work:** the faculty member sets up an exercise in which students are asked to practically and collaboratively manipulate the theoretical knowledge they have learned; the lecturer shares the prepared workspace with the participating students for activities ranging from collaborative creative writing, to the creation of a technical paper (e.g. : business plan, marketing plans, analysis and reports) in groups, to cooperative work on specific specialized software; the lecturer/tutor at the beginning of the session presents the exercise and shares the workspace with the students; in addition, the lecturer grants control of the workspace, in turn, to one of the students, who will physically operate on the activated software, following the indications emerging from the collective discussion; the product produced can be taken up in subsequent sessions, while not only the final product but also the individual "revisions" collaboratively created in each of the sessions can be evaluated on the tracking system.

3.2.3.2 VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS

The 3D Virtual Classrooms environment, through the manipulation of variables such as space, roles, and interaction between Avatars of natural subjects, creates a dimension connoted by a strong sense of reality, in which the real person-Avatar perceives the potential to interact with the available environment and with the other Avatars present.

The student is immersed in a new dynamic reality where they are spectators and actors. The experience in this reality is dense with sensations and involvement; the subject is "drawn" within a new virtual world with all the characteristics of the real world. The Avatars of students and faculty members meet in the three-dimensional virtual world and take their places inside the classroom. The Avatar of the faculty member asks questions to the Avatars of the students to understand their level of preparation. At this stage, the questions asked to assume more importance than the answers; they form the basis on which the discussion, or rather the disputation, is initiated. With disputation - inspired by the didactic model of medieval universities - a learning process that arises from dialogue and confrontation, learning from others and reflecting on one's ideas is stimulated.

In the virtual classrooms, students and faculty Avatar develop learning processes by experiencing an immersive-collaborative teaching dimension. Students use interactive tools, carry out practical exercises, intermediate assessment tests, dialogue and learn cooperatively and collaboratively, and become active builders of knowledge.

Learning becomes a process that engages the student in reflection and the development of multiple perspectives and points of view. Creativity and critical sense in approaching knowledge are stimulated. Interaction, dialogue, and discussion add value to this type of learning. Three-dimensional environments and other immersive 3D worlds allow you to penetrate the digital body and perceive yourself no longer in front of a computer screen but in a virtual classroom animated by real teachers and students.

3.2.3.3 VIRTUAL LABORATORY

In the Virtual Laboratory, the student can put into practice the knowledge acquired according to a "learning by doing" mode: the tutor can clarify doubts and provide suggestions using Interactive Classes or by using a forum; the student can carry out an exercise followed in an Interactive Class by the expert Lecturer/Tutor who can thus observe the way the activity is carried out, follow the student step by step and send feedback on intermediate processes and errors.

Also included in STU's Teaching Cyberspace are Interactive Exercises, through which the student can verify in real-time and practice the theoretical principles learned from the video lectures, activating a "learning by doing" leather process.

With interactive exercises, new learning models are developed that shift human cognitive operation from the symbolic-constructive mode to the perceptual-motor mode. Students can reflect on their experiences and theoretical principles made operationally and memorized through problem-solving activities.

The types of questions that make up an interactive exercise are different:

- Open-ended questions: the student is asked to solve a problem or answer a question to be completed within a text field.
- Multiple-choice tasks: the student is asked a question and several possible answers, only one of which is correct. The student responds by selecting one of the answers.
- Advanced multiple-choice questions: the student is asked a question and N possible answers, of which one or more are correct. The student responds by selecting one or more solutions.

The execution of the interactive exercises is triggered automatically during the enjoyment of the video lesson after each of the topics covered by the teacher in the video lesson itself. Through a database of questions semantically related to each of the issues of the video lectures, the system generates batteries of different questions at each access, making the self-check phase for the student relevant and practical. Interaction is fast and intuitive, and students get a real-time evaluation of the exercise as a whole based on the parameters established in advance by the faculty member, who:

- designs each question and determines the correct solution;
- establishes the pass threshold for each exercise (e.g., if the exercise consists of 10 questions and the pass threshold is 60%, the student must do at least 6 of them correctly)
- provides textual feedback and remedial directions in case of passing the exercise and in case of incorrect answers.

If the student passes the exercise, the system invites them to join the video lesson from the next point. Conversely, in the case of incorrect answers, the plan suggests that the student return to the video lecture topics necessary for the correct resolution of the exercise before continuing to study more advanced topics.

At the end of the lesson, students and teachers/tutors, through STU's Learning analytics system, can consult statistics on the performance achieved in the interactive exercises of the study and the entire course, which through graphs and data, provide the student with a clear picture to self-assess their progress in learning the subject, and the teacher/tutor with a fundamental tool to guide their interventions in the Interactive Classroom or Virtual Classrooms based on the critical issues that emerged from individual students and classes on specific topics.

3.3 LEARNING PATHWAY VERIFICATION AND MONITORING METHODS

St. Thomas University uses the following activities to identify and verify the learning pathway:

- a. The tracking of training activities by the system, with reporting on the data tracked

- b. Didactic and technical monitoring and continuous feedback from tutors (at the level of quantity and quality of interactions, adherence to didactic deadlines, delivery of scheduled papers, etc.); the related data and, specifically, qualitative data, are made available both to the teacher for evaluation activities and to the student for their self-assessment
- c. Formative knowledge verification in the syllabus, both the one subjected to teacher evaluation and the one in self-assessment (e.g., multiple choice test, true/false, sequence of questions with different difficulty, simulations, concept maps, papers, group projects, etc.)
- d. Final profit exam in which the work done online will be considered and valued (activities carried out at a distance, quantity, and quality of online interactions, etc.)

3.3.1 TRACKING AND REPORTING

This feature makes it possible to track a student's activity during all phases of their learning journey: access to a learning unit, the fruition of different learning contents, time spent on individual learning units, frequency of interventions in the virtual classroom, evaluations, and self-assessment on midterm tests, and assessment of the quality of interventions in virtual meeting sessions. Information on time spent on the learning content, learning units visited, participation in forum discussions and chats, tutorials conducted, and associated evaluations and self-assessments are stored on the database for later viewing by authorized users within the reporting system. The information thus stored can be used:

- **by a faculty member** to improve and increase, through continuous monitoring of student and group activities, the effectiveness of problem-solving learning interventions, playing a role in guiding and stimulating training
- **by teachers** to complete the final evaluation process, which will have to take into account the results of intermediate tests proposed to individual students and student groups, as well as quantitative data on the use of learning materials and participation in collaborative activities, and the qualitative judgments made by tutors at synchronous and asynchronous virtual meetings
- **by students** to check their progress and, through a self-assessment process, adjust their pace to achieve their educational goals.

3.3.2 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

The faculty member is also able to assign performance evaluations, and ratings based on personal observation of student activities; the faculty member is put in a position to make an assessment that takes into account both quantitative data displayed in the reports of each student and the groups of students they follow (online presence of the student, use of learning materials, participation in both synchronous and asynchronous online activities, both personal and group) and qualitative data, being able to record on the system their judgments on the quality of the student's interventions and interactions in synchronous and asynchronous group sessions.

3.3.3 MONITORING STATISTICS

The tutor will be able to view statistics regarding the times and percentages of the student's use of the didactic units used, the results of the tutorials, his previous evaluations, and the student's time of attendance at synchronous and asynchronous group training activities (chats, forums); as well as the tutor can enter evaluations on the quality of these training activities.

Statistics can be viewed either individually, student by student, or by classes of students.

3.4 OUTCOMES

3.4.1 EDUCATION

GOAL 1:

Create the conditions to reach enrollment targets and recruit students from an increasing number of countries.

Tools:

- Develop marketing policies and opening of remote educational hubs to assist students internationally
- enhancement of teaching facilities for online training
- involvement of qualified and complementary external faculty
- communication initiatives related to educational content, its evolution, and new pedagogical methods
- opening of professionalizing pathways
- Develop training paths in close relationships within an emerging global world
- development of training paths for the enhancement of English language skills
- increasing the quality, quantity, and cost-effectiveness of services
- staff acquisition who are proficient in English.

GOAL 2:

Target the percentage of women enrolled in the first year to 35 percent within the next six years by achieving full gender parity in the proposed degrees.

Tools:

- engagement and mentoring for female students in collaboration with institutions
- development of pre-registration and enrollment incentive measures.

GOAL 3:

Include in St. Thomas University curricula knowledge of the global sustainable development goals outlined in the UNITED NATIONS Agenda 2030.

Tools:

- empowerment actions directed at faculty and students to make them more familiar with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, with particular attention to the creation of integration pathways dedicated to students from emerging countries for whom the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) have been specially designed
- verification of the actual correlation between the specific SDGs characterizing the various teachings, content, and students' knowledge advancement.

GOAL 4:

Recognize the importance of the Sciences and Society and the interdisciplinarity importance.

Tools:

- integration of specific catalog teachings
- implementation of educational pathways that enhance interdisciplinarity and provide for the contamination of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and SSH (Social Sciences and Humanities) disciplines, recognizing their essential value for advancing knowledge.

GOAL 5:

Continuous improvement of professors' teaching and the qualifications for new faculty.

Tools:

- conferring awards to those who have particularly distinguished themselves in teaching
- provision of computer, multimedia, and language support compartments
- structured investment in new pedagogical software and technical support for the use
- investment in new educational delivery technologies and support for their use.

3.4.2 RESEARCH**GOAL 1:**

Create a research agenda allowing quick, effective, and transparent identification.

Tools:

- archiving of publications and patents
- maintain a database related to scientific production, research projects, patents, and all relevant research activity (contracts, doctoral dissertations, etc.)
- definition/acquisition of algorithms/software for extracting information
- systematic use and improvement of the registry to ensure full representation of research opportunities in different fields.

GOAL 2:

Increase the self-financing capacity.

Tools:

- develop and implement agreements with companies for collaboration
- increase the number of industrial partnerships and their specific financial scope, enhancing the sharing of medium- to long-term goals
- strengthen services to support the drafting of project proposals
- consolidate research infrastructures, including those shared with entities in the area (e.g., universities and other research centers, and create new ones
- represent research initiatives through an ad hoc portal and showrooms for visitors
- provision of specific bootstrap funding for strengthening resource acquisition opportunities for faculty research agendas.

GOAL 3:

Aim for increasing quality.

Tools:

- Revision of internal criteria for evaluating scientific research, focusing on quality instead of quantity
- Using a peer review system for an authoritative and transparent evaluation of scientific research and proposals that are not the sole use of bibliometric parameters.

GOAL 4:

Direct interdisciplinary research to respond to the Agenda 2030 sustainable development goals.

Tools:

- Mapping our scholarly activity and verifying responsiveness, projects reporting, and publications, to the planetary and societal challenges encapsulated in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, to which Horizon Europe's five priority clusters will be linked.

3.4.3 TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

GOAL 1:

Generate new intellectual property.

Tools:

- awareness and support of faculty on intellectual property protection
- enhancement of patent submission for academic career purposes
- increase administrative and legal support to researchers at the patent drafting stage.

GOAL 2:

Direct students to the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship by involving them in the various educational initiatives below.

Tools:

- contamination of educational pathways with elements of entrepreneurship and innovation, including problem setting/solving, human and social sciences, learning-by-doing, and soft skills
- opening training tracks to contributions from entrepreneurs, start-uppers, and innovation practitioners both for testimonials and to lead project workgroups
- support collaborations on the frontier of entrepreneurship and innovation training.

GOAL 3:

Strengthen Human and Social Sciences expertise for training, research, and technology transfer.

Tools:

- create paths for coordination in science, technology, and society
- establish structures to support strategic choices and the conception and writing of new ideas (e. g., techno-economic feasibility studies, ethical-legal evaluations, social impact studies, dissemination actions, etc.).

3.5 ACADEMIC PLANNING

Through its departments, STUs offers four-year programs of study aimed at earning Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degrees and two-year programs aimed at earning Master's degrees that represent excellence in the respective field of education.

3.5.1 ACADEMIC CALENDAR AND CLASS SCHEDULE

The academic year is individualized for each student in that it begins with the first course in a degree program and ends when the student has completed the required credits and weeks of class time.

A week of instructional time is seven consecutive days in which classes are held. In asynchronous distance learning courses, the instructional time is based on the student completing the instructional activity.

Courses related to a bachelor's degree program last five consecutive weeks; courses related to a master's or doctoral program last six straight weeks. When students finish a course, they may begin the new one immediately the following week.

A maximum of two courses may be enrolled in at the same time. However, STU suggests that students take one course at a time, as this intensive mode allows the student to focus more attention and resources on a single topic and is an instructional mode that enhances learning and helps students achieve their educational goals in a more time-efficient and outcome-oriented manner.

Class time is generally measured from the first day of class or examination and does not include vacations, scheduled academic breaks, or orientation periods.

3.5.2 ASSIGNMENT OF CREDIT HOURS

Student work is measured in credit hours (CH).

To earn a bachelor's degree, the student must complete a minimum of 120 approved credit hours.

To earn a master's degree, the student must complete a minimum of 60 approved credit hours.

One credit is equivalent to 15 hours of 60 minutes of virtual classroom instruction and 30 hours of homework for reading, research, study time, and homework development.

Courses at STU generally involve three units of credit totaling 135 hours, divided into five weeks, corresponding to 27 hours of work per week (class + homework).

3.5.3 CURRICULA AND PLANS OF STUDY

Each student's study plan includes the compulsory activities referred to in the preceding paragraph, any educational activities envisaged as optional, and independently chosen activities.

Credits acquired as a result of examinations that may have been successfully taken for teaching addition to those countable to complete the path leading to the degree remain recorded in the student's career and may give rise to subsequent recognition. Still, the evaluations obtained should be included in the calculation of the grade point average of the profit examinations.

The courses offered are numbered:

- Numbered less than 100 are preparatory courses and do not give credit

- Numbered 100 to 299 are courses for first-year students, sophomores, or other introductory-level courses
- Numbered 300 to 399 are junior or senior-level courses that require in-depth knowledge of the subject matter
- Numbered 400 to 499 are senior-level courses
- Numbered 500 to 900 refer to post-graduate level courses.

Course objectives, prerequisites, syllabi, requirements, and evaluation procedures will be clearly stated and made available to students in a written syllabus.

Students must meet all prerequisites before registering for a course. Requirements are listed at the end of each course description.

3.5.4 ACTIVATION OF COURSES OF STUDY

The Academic Senate and the Board of Trustees, based on the proposals made by the Dean of Academic Affairs or the Heads of Departments, by January 31 of each year, shall deliberate on the courses of study to be activated in compliance with the requirements and observance of the objectives and criteria of the planning of the university system and subject to the favorable report of the Self-Evaluation Committee.

The following shall be understood as requirements for the activation of bachelor's and master's degree programs:

- the requirements for transparency and the necessary conditions for proper communication aimed at students and all those involved in the characteristics of the courses;
- the requirements for quality assurance of educational processes;
- the requirements for facilities and faculty that must be available to support the courses; and
- the size rules regarding the sustainable number of students for each course of study.

Verified for each course of study to be activated the possession of the requirements indicated in the previous point and acquired the favorable opinion of the NCU System, the courses are entered into the database of educational offerings.

3.5.5 ACADEMIC PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

STU provides for ongoing academic program improvement incorporating such elements as:

- Graduation notes
- Course completion rates
- Graduate job placement
- Student course review
- Use of particular advisory review group
- Faculty participation in conferences, workshops, and professional development seminars.

3.5.6 ACADEMIC PROGRAM LIFE CYCLE

STU uses the University Program Lifecycle (UPL) process, which involves building, maintaining, and managing STU's academic programs through periodic review and examination of existing programs, courses, outcomes, competencies, and faculty and student feedback to identify opportunities for improvement. All academic programs must be developed, maintained, and withdrawn according to the basic steps described below:

Program construction. This phase develops a program idea or update of an already offered program and focuses on curriculum development.

Program Health. This phase includes reviewing programs, courses, outcomes, competencies, and faculty and student feedback to identify opportunities for improvement. After this assessment, there are two decisions:

- Maintenance of the program as is or with limited revisions
- Revision of the program leading to a new version.

Withdrawal of the program. The program is no longer available for the enrollment of new students but will continue to be delivered for students already enrolled in that version of the program.

Program expired. The program is permanently expired when all students who started that version of the program have completed the program or are unable to complete it.

3.5.7 DEACTIVATION OF COURSES OF STUDY

In the case of deactivation of an undergraduate or master's degree program, STU guarantees students already enrolled the completion of their studies and the attainment of the relevant degree while still regulating the option for the same students to opt for enrollment in other activated courses of study.

3.5.8 DEGREES OFFERED

St. Thomas University offers the following Bachelor's and Master's Degrees:

Bachelor of Science in Computer Science with concentrations in:

- Innovative Technologies for Digital Communication
- Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence
- Information and Knowledge
- Languages and Systems
- Networks and Information Systems

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with concentrations in:

- Accounting
- Finance
- Management
- Marketing
- Digital Economy
- International Business
- Green Business Management

Bachelor of Arts in Digital Education with concentrations:

- Instructional Designer in Digital Contexts
- Psycho-social Educator in Digital Contexts

Master of Science in Cybersecurity

Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence Systems with concentration:

- Computer Vision
- Methodologies
- Intelligent Robots
- Artificial Intelligence and Innovation

Master in Business Administration with concentrations:

- Green Management, Energy, and Corporate Social Responsibility
- Marketing and Digital Communication
- International Banking and Finance
- Cyber Risk Strategy and Governance
- Circular Economy Management

Master in e-Learning, Digital Didactics, and Media Education

3.5.9 STU BACHELORS DEGREES

Minimum requirements for admission

1. A high-school diploma (or equivalent) *or* if the certificate was not earned in the U.S., proof of completion of secondary school that allows for university enrollment in the applicant's home country.
2. Candidates whose native language is not English must demonstrate proficiency in the English language.

General requirements for the acquisition of a bachelor's degrees

To receive a Bachelor's Degree, STU students must:

1. Complete at least 120 credit hours divided as such:
 - a. General Education Requirements - 30 CH
 - b. Core Curriculum, Major Elective, and General Elective courses - 90 CH.
 - c. Within the 120 credits, at least 45 CH must be obtained in upper-level credits (300-400 level).
2. At least 70% of the coursework must be completed at STU.
3. Complete core requirements and major requirements as outlined in each major.
4. Maintain a minimum of a 2.0 cumulative GPA on a 4-point scale.

General Education Requirements

A minimum of 30 CH or the equivalent is required for General Education courses. General Education course work addresses the broad areas of human knowledge essential to a liberal arts education. Across the curriculum, particular attention is placed on written and oral communication skills. To achieve STU educational goals and be in alignment with the STU mission, students must complete the following General Education courses in the following categories:

1. **Humanities and Fine Arts**
2. **Business/Social and Behavioral Sciences**
3. **Mathematics, Natural Science, and Computer Science**
4. **Global Perspectives and Diversity**
5. **Writing Intensive**

Core curriculum and Major elective requirements

Within each degree program, the core curriculum and essential elective requirements establish the requirements of each area. For some majors, in addition to the core requirements, students must complete additional major electives supporting needs.

3.5.10 MASTER DEGREES

The graduate programs represent excellence in their respective curricular areas.

Master's degree programs aim to provide students with the following:

- quality through an international environment and a highly qualified faculty and student body
- Innovative skills and competencies

- career entry employment skills
- provide regional opportunities for private economic development through national and international development programming.

Minimum requirements for admission

Students must meet the following criteria:

1. A bachelor's degree from an American college, university, or equivalent from a non-US institution.
2. Applicants whose mother tongue is not English must demonstrate knowledge of the English language. Students who attended university schools where English was the primary language of instruction for all subjects are exempt from this demonstration.
3. A GPA of **2** on a 4-point scale or equivalent
4. Evidence of adequate knowledge to support a degree course:
 - To enter **Masters of Cybersecurity** or **Informatics** programs, students must know of the following: Programming by major paradigms and languages; hardware and software architectures; computer networks and security; data and knowledge management; operating systems; databases and information systems; algorithms; formal languages, computability and complexity; discrete and continuum mathematics.
 - To enter the **Master of Business Administration** program, students must know of: Introduction to business; introduction to accounting; microeconomics; macroeconomics theory; basic quantitative methods.
 - To enter the **Master of E-Learning, Digital Didactics, and Media Education** program, students must have basic knowledge of computer science.

General requirements for the acquisition of a Master's degree

To receive a Master's Degree, STU students must successfully:

1. Complete the curriculum with at least 60 credits
2. At least 70% of the coursework must be completed at STU
3. Maintain a minimum of a 3,0 cumulative GPA on a 4-point scale
4. All 60 credits must be completed within five years of enrollment.

3.6 ACADEMIC POLICIES

3.6.1 ATTENDANCE POLICY

A successful academic experience depends on collaboration between faculty and students. At STU, participation in lessons and discussions is an integral part of the learning process, and the student must seek assistance from the tutor advising as needed.

3.6.1.1 Good Standing

A student is considered in Good Standing when the semester grade point average (GPA) and cumulative GPA are 2.0 or higher (undergraduates) or 3.0 (graduates) or in initial Good Standing during the first semester after transferring from another college or university, regardless of the transfer GPA.

3.6.1.2 Disqualified for Verification

Students who have been admitted with provisional admission status and still need to receive verification or official academic documents by completing the third course may only attend classes or change programs once documentation is received.

3.6.1.3 Academic Probation

At the end of three courses, students with a grade point average (GPA) below 2.0 for undergraduate students and 3.0 for graduate students. The Academic Standards Committee will inform students of their placement on academic probation. During academic probation, students may take three more courses and maintain an average of 2.0 for undergraduates and 3.0 for a graduate student or better. The university can exercise the right to dismissal if a student cannot maintain significant improvement.

3.6.1.4 Academic Suspension

Students on Academic Probation will be placed on Academic Suspension if:

- (a) After the granted probationary period, they maintain a CPA of less than 2.0. for undergraduates or 3.0 for graduates.
- (b) For failing to achieve the minimum required grade after the second attempt of a course required for progression in their degree program.

Academic suspension is notified to the student by the Registrar and prohibits enrollment in courses and the university for six months. After an academic break of six months has passed, students may be readmitted. The student must apply for readmission by the University's admission procedures, explaining the reasons for their previous academic deficiencies and why they should be readmitted. The Academic Standards Committee will review the readmission file and decide on readmission. If approved, the student must complete all program requirements in effect at the time of reinstatement and

will be placed on Academic Probation for the first three courses and must maintain a cumulative average of 2.0 for undergraduates or 3.0 for graduates to avoid permanent academic suspension.

The University will note on the student's transcript the date the student was placed and removed from academic suspension.

3.6.1.5 Academic Suspension Review

The Dean of Academic Affairs shall review the records of students proposed for academic suspension and submit to the Academic Standards Committee that a student whose history shows promise of success in achieving a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 (for undergraduates) or 3.0 (for graduates) be retained on academic probation for an additional three courses.

3.6.1.6 Disciplinary Suspension

Students may be suspended from the University for some time or indefinitely due to violating the Student Code of Conduct. The University will note on the student's transcript and personnel record the date the student was placed on and removed from academic suspension.

3.6.1.7 Appeal to Academic Suspension

Students can appeal an academic suspension by completing the Academic Suspension Appeal Form. The appeal must be submitted to the Academic Standards Committee within one week of receiving notification of the rest from the University.

3.6.1.8 Program Completion Deadlines

Program completion deadlines have been established for all programs offered by the University and apply to all continuously enrolled students. Program completion deadlines are calculated based on the first date of positive recorded attendance in the first program-suitable course and are listed below:

Program	Years for Completion
Bachelors	Within seven years
Masters	Within five years

Please Note: For any questions about progression requirements or academic disqualification, the student must contact the approximate university office.

3.6.2 COURSES POLICY

3.6.2.1 Course Prerequisite Waiver

A student may register for courses even if they do not meet the prerequisite requirement with the permission of the course faculty member to waive the prerequisite. A student without prerequisites or the faculty member's consent to waive conditions will be automatically dropped from a course unless the Registrar's Office has received proof of prerequisite completion or the prerequisite waiver approval form.

3.6.2.2 Major

During the admission process, students will have the opportunity to choose one of STU's majors. If students do not declare their major at the time of admission, they will be classified as undeclared majors.

After admission and enrollment, students may declare or change their major by completing the Declaration and Change of Major or Concentration form available in the Registrar's Office.

As specified in each degree program, applicants must fulfill all course requirements to graduate. If the student decides to change majors, they must inform their faculty advisor and complete a new declaration of change of major or concentration form. Students are required to declare a major by the completion of 60 credits.

3.6.2.3 Program Changes

Students who wish to change their course of study may consult their academic representative. The student must sign a new enrollment agreement and meet the admission requirements of the new program. The student must then complete the curricular or degree requirements of the new program. If some previously completed courses meet some provisions of the new program, these are recognized.

3.6.2.4 Repeating a Course

A student may choose to repeat a course for which an "F" grade has been assigned. The "F" grade will remain on the student's transcript regardless of the passing grade for the repeated course.

The new passing grade, not the "F," will be counted in the cumulative GPA, and a mark of "NC" (No Credit) will be placed next to the original "F" grade on the transcript.

Only in exceptional cases may a student repeat a course for which they have earned a passing grade, and they must obtain permission from the Academic Standards Committee. This may be done only once, and the second grade will determine the GPA. To obtain permission, the student must submit a written request to the Academic Standards Committee.

The repeated course must be identical to the original system in title and credits. Some changes to the curriculum may require an exception. Credit for a course may be given only once.

If the student receives a grade of W or AU in the repeated course, the previous step will remain in the student's cumulative GPA.

Courses taken at other institutions cannot be used to replace grades earned.

Students must file a repeat request form with the Registrar's Office whenever they wish to repeat a course.

3.6.2.5 Incomplete Courses

Students may petition the Academic Standards Committee in cases where they believe they have a justifiable reason for failing the course or being absent from the final exam. Such petitions must be submitted in writing to the Dean of Academic Affairs at least seven days before the termination date of the course in question. If the petition is approved, a grade of "I" (Incomplete) is assigned.

After completing all course requirements, the instructor will review the student's final grade. It is STU's policy that incomplete work must be completed within the first month following the date the Incomplete was assigned. The professor and the Academic Dean will decide the due date for completing the work.

If the student fails to finish the Incomplete work by these deadlines, the "I" grade will become an "F" grade, which is a failure for that course.

Students must complete a course completion agreement form available in the Registrar's Office. The form must be signed by both student and faculty member and submitted to the Registrar's Office for the "I" grade to be recorded.

3.6.3 TRANSCRIPT AND GRADING POLICY

3.6.3.1 Official Transcript

Formal report cards are available on the student website at the end of each course. The grade reports indicate the approach taken, the credits received, and the grade assigned. **If a student has not paid tuition and fees for a period, the rate will be withheld until payment is made.** Faculty are required to post final grades within seven days of course completion.

3.6.3.2 Academic Standing

St. Thomas University has established the following grading guidelines adhered to by the faculty.

STU uses the 400 scale to evaluate students' academic performance, where 4,00 is the highest grade and 0,00 is the lowest. Before STU calculates grades using the 4.00 scale, the faculty member assigns letter grades on the 100-point scale based on each student's performance in their class.

	Points/100	Letter Grade	Grade Point Average
Outstanding	93-100	A	4,00
	90-92	A-	3,67
Above Average	86-89	B+	3,33
	82-85	B	3,00
Average	79-81	B-	2,67
	76-78	C+	2,33
Below Average	72-75	C	2,00
	69-71	C-	1,67
Failure	66-68	D+	1,33
	63-65	D	1,00
	60-62	D-	0,67
	0-59	F	0,00

A = Outstanding Achievement. The student demonstrates intellectual initiative in achieving course objectives through a high level of originality and creativity.

B = Excellent work. Student's performance meets course objectives by demonstrating a good understanding of course material.

C = Average work. The student's performance demonstrates average understanding and satisfactory achievement of course objectives.

D = Acceptable work. The student's performance demonstrates acceptable performance in meeting course objectives.

F = Fail. The student's performance could be better or below the minimum threshold of acceptability in meeting course objectives.

The following grades do not have a numerical equivalent and are not used in GPA calculations:

I = Incomplete—the grade assigned to the student who has been granted an extension to complete assignments. If the student completes the course, the I grade will be replaced with the grade earned, and the I grade will no longer be displayed on the student's record.

P = Pass. The student has satisfactorily completed the course.

W = Withdrawn. The student has withdrawn from the course.

NC = No credit.

Please Note: *D-* is the minimum grade to pass a course; however, students are reminded that a GPA of 2.0 for undergraduate courses and 3.0 for Master's systems must be maintained for course continuation.

3.6.3.3 Grade Point Average

The University uses the numerical value associated with a letter grade to compute the student's Grade Point Average (GPA). Grade Value represents the numerical value associated with a letter grade. The sum of all grade values earned for each class is referred to as the GPA Points. The number of Grade Points earned in one course is determined by multiplying the Grade Value by the credit hours earned in the class. For example, a grade of "A" in a 3.00 credit hour course will contribute 4.00 (grade value) x 3.00 (credit hours) = 12 Grade Points to a student's GPA. GPA Credit Hours is the sum of the credit hours for courses with a grade of "A" through "F."

Please Note: *The credit hours for courses in which a grade of "F" is earned will NOT be counted towards degree credit, but they are counted in the GPA calculation.*

The GPA is the sum of the grade points for all courses divided by the total number of GPA Credit Hours for all courses attempted. Please refer below for a sample GPA calculation.

Course	Credit Hours Attempted	X	Letter Grade (Grade Value)	=	Grade Points
	3		A (4)		12
	3		B (3)		9
	3		B (3)		9
	4		C (2)		8
TOTALS	13				38

$$\begin{array}{rcccl} \text{Grade Points} & & \text{CH attempted} & & \text{Grade Point Average} \\ 38 & \div & 13 & = & 2.923 \end{array}$$

The letter grade for each course and the cumulative GPA appears on the university transcript. Grades are reported to the registrar's office and recorded at the end of each course.

3.6.3.4 Grade and Transcript Report Policy

- At the end of each course, the lecturer sends and publishes each student's grades
- Grades are available to students who have paid all fees and tuition due
- Students can view their course information, including grades, GPA, program information, and scheduled courses, online at register@stthomasuniversity.org
- Grades cannot be communicated to students by phone
- Student's official transcript shows courses, grades, credits, and teaching dates for each course
- Credits earned are recorded on the transcript as assigned, and grading fees are paid
- The transcript shows only a summary of credits transferred by the institution
- The deadline for changing an incomplete grade is seven days from receipt of the student's completed assignments. Students must wait approximately two weeks to change their rates.
- If a student repeats a course, only the grade and credit from the most recent repeat are used to calculate the total hours earned and cumulative grade point average. Still, the original quality and the repeated grade remain on the transcript, indicating that a particular course was repeated
- Transcripts will be issued only to students who have paid all tuition, fees, and fines
- Transcript request forms are available online
- The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 requires that all mailed transcript requests be submitted in writing and signed by the student
- Students can request official transcripts from the University website by following the directions for requesting a transcript
- The University cannot release transcripts received from other institutions. Copies of such transcripts must be requested from the originating institution.
- All official transcripts sent to St. Thomas University become the property of the University and will not be returned to the student
- All student academic records must be retained, protected, and disposed of by local, state, and federal regulations
- All student information is maintained in the University's computer system on paper and an electronic imaging system.

3.6.3.5 Disputing grades

Students who dispute a grade received may contact the Dean of Academic Affairs or designee, who will help them get the faculty member to discuss the grade dispute. The faculty member's decision is final.

A grade dispute must be initiated within one week after the grade is posted. Grade disputes are not appealable outside the University.

The faculty member may only change student grades after grades are posted if the student initiates the formal grade challenge procedure or if the faculty member determines that the actual rate was improperly calculated.

Student grades represent the work and level of knowledge achieved during regularly scheduled course dates. Students may only submit work to increase their grades after the end of the course, as this grade would no longer reflect the level of proficiency achieved at the end period course.

3.6.3.6 Application for Graduation and Conferral of Degree

Students must apply for graduation to confer the degree. Once graduation requirements have been completed, students can download the application form directly from the student section of the website. If students cannot download the state, they can contact their academic representatives to obtain a hard copy of the graduation application. Once the Registrar's Office has received the graduation application and the student has fulfilled financial obligations to the University, official verification of the student's record will be conducted. If all graduation requirements have been met, the student will be issued a diploma, and the diploma transcript will be ordered and mailed to the student.

3.6.3.7 Participation in the Graduation ceremony

St. Thomas University organizes graduation ceremonies in which undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students who have completed all required credits for graduation and are in good standing can participate.

Graduation ceremonies are held at the learning centers of the University according to a schedule that will be posted on the University's website.

When a student submits the graduation application form, they must indicate whether they intend to participate in the graduation ceremony and reserve their cap and gown for the ceremony. Students may only attend the graduation ceremony with a lid and dress.

The university recognizes as an online university that student physical participation in a graduation ceremony will be limited because of time, place, and cost - an online graduate ceremony will be arranged.

3.6.3.8 Diploma Registration

Diplomas are recorded on the student's transcript every month. A student's certificate is recorded on their transcript on the last day of the month in which all graduation requirements have been completed. Graduation requirements are considered fulfilled when all credits have been recorded in the academic record. The date of completion of the student's degree is recorded on the transcript, indicating that all academic requirements for graduation have been met on that date. Diplomas are ordered with the graduation registration date for all students who have completed degree requirements and paid all fees and tuition.

Diplomas are processed and mailed approximately two weeks after graduation.

Students who are ineligible for graduation are informed by their academic representative of their deficiencies.

3.6.3.9 Graduation with honors

Students who complete their degree with a grade point average of 3.85 or higher graduate with honors. The Honors designation will appear on the university diploma and permanent transcript.

3.6.3.10 Honorary Degree

The university will grant honorary degrees based on service to the university mission and academic initiatives.

3.6.3.11 Records Retention and Disposition

The maintenance, retention, and disposition of documents relating to student educational records are governed by institutional policy.

A listing of documents and disposition schedules filed in the Registrar's Office includes:

- The permanent academic records of students **are retained indefinitely**.
- Applications for admission and–admission, transcripts issued by other institutions, military service documents, undergraduate admission evaluations, national testing results, program changes, and pertinent correspondence **are retained for five years** after the student's last date of attendance.
- University policy prohibits the reproduction of transcripts and similar documents issued by other educational institutions.

4. STUDENT POLICY

St. Thomas University is committed to providing students with quality academic service by facilitating their developmental potential and contributing to the development of professionalism by the established general and specific educational objectives described in each course of study and applying the fundamental principles set forth below:

Equality: the procedures and rules adopted are the same for all STU students, regardless of sex, age, race, language, religion, political opinion, or geographical area of use.

Impartiality: STU delivers its services and assessment activities inspired by criteria of objectivity, justice, impartiality, and fairness.

Continuity and Regularity: through STU and its departments, STU ensures the continuity and regularity of its services smoothly and uninterrupted. In the event of the suspension of educational activities and the malfunction of the technological infrastructure, STU is committed to promptly notifying students of the interruption and arranging for the restoration of services, minimizing the time of the disruption in the educational process.

Participation: to promote all forms of involvement, STU ensures maximum simplification of procedures and gives complete and transparent information.

Efficiency and effectiveness: STU's educational activity is based on the criteria of efficiency, energy, and flexibility in organizing administrative services, teaching activities, and integrated educational offerings. This is done in compliance with the principles and standards enshrined in the law and the application of the relevant contractual provisions.

4.1 STUDENT SERVICES

In pursuit of the educational objectives understood as the set of knowledge, skills, and competencies in terms of expected learning outcomes that characterize the cultural and professional profile of a course of study, the services offered to students at St. Thomas University are as follows:

4.1.1 COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE

St. Thomas University pays special attention to those who make such an important choice as a major. Wrong orientation is among the leading causes of dropouts among students in the stakeholders served by STU.

STU's educational offerings were created to propose pathways to young people entering the university that meet specific needs for acquiring skills adherent to their cultural interests, but above all, once they graduate, expendable in the labor market. In addition, the offerings innovatively interpret the demand for specialized skills, considering the latest technical and scientific developments and, simultaneously, the socioeconomic system and the people working in it.

The St. Thomas University faculty are available to provide the necessary information for an informed choice: assistance, courtesy, and professionalism are the requirements possessed by faculty, staff, and administration.

4.1.2 ADVISING

The STU provides information to resolve doubts and problems that students encounter in their university life, supporting them in organizational and educational difficulties. Provides assistance aimed at students throughout their university journey:

- Degree course orientation
- Compilation of study plans
- Assistance in studying
- Bureaucratic assistance
- Support in organizing a work plan
- Dissertation advising
- Creation of study groups
- Creation of teaching workshops

The STU not only provides informational and didactic support services for students but also brings to fruition that conscious accompaniment in progress that is part of the broader complex of services that invest the student from the time they manifest the desire to enroll at STU to when, after graduation, they begin to be productive in the world of work. In an integrated and participatory vision, this new design perspective aims to increase academic achievement and student well-being.

The email address of the assigned faculty member will be sent to the student upon registration.

Advising records will be kept strictly confidential and will not be available to third parties to our privacy policy.

The goal of stimulating students throughout their education, and creating a social context for learning, is also achieved by organizing students into working groups run by experienced tutors trained in the technical-communication aspects of online education.

Students in the same group (virtual class) collaborate in developing joint projects, discuss teaching content in forums, and support each other in understanding range and developing papers.

Tutoring modes are mainly carried out in four forms:

1. Guidance/advice
2. Monitoring of overall performance
3. Monitoring of individual learning paths
4. Student group coordination.

Tutoring is carried out mainly in individual and personalized modes via e-mail and collective through virtual spaces of synchronous and asynchronous interactivity.

Communication features allow students to exchange information with each other and with faculty members, facilitating learning consolidation and knowledge dissemination and creating a widespread space for collaborative learning. Faculty members and students are provided with Forums, Interactive Classrooms, and 3D Virtual Classrooms.

4.1.3 HELP DESK

The service provides information and clarification by phone during office hours indicated in the contact information or by institutional e-mail.

4.1.4 STUDENT SECRETARIAT

The secretarial service provides information by phone or e-mail on enrollment, matriculation, credit recognition procedures, and various study paths. It issues documents such as attendance certificates, enrollment certificates, graduation certificates, etc.

4.1.5 SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

In promoting the inclusiveness of its educational offerings, STU relies on technology platforms that adhere to international accessibility standards and refer to the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium). Visually impaired students can take the test on the computer using special text magnification tools. For all students who certify that they have learning disabilities, STU grants an increased period of attendance to take the end-of-course exams at no additional cost.

4.1.6 SERVICE QUALITY ASSESSMENT

STU ensures that it provides quality services and active participation in university life for students.

Questionnaires directly verify satisfaction with the services provided to students covering organizational, educational, and administrative aspects. In addition, information on any complaints and nonconformities that have arisen during service delivery is evaluated.

The Self-Evaluation Committee carries out the evaluation functions, are provided for participation as members of two students.

Active participation of students in university life is ensured by participation in the governing bodies of STU, namely:

- presence of two students in the **Academic Senate**
- presence of two students in the **Academic Standards Committee**
- **Student Government** has as its primary objective the promotion of the common welfare of students by sponsoring programs and services and acting as the student body's voice to the STU's governing bodies.

4.2 COURSE DELIVERY AND USE

Students and STU interaction through STU's e-learning platforms. Upon admission to the university, students are given a personal STU email address that serves as their primary communication link with the university and their program of studies. Advisement, courses, tutorials, mentoring with faculty, library access, and course resources such as video and project assignment sharing are delivered at a distance through the Internet. The platforms allow asynchronous activities (lecture study, self-assessment tests, participation in forums, etc.) and synchronous activities (video conferencing, live seminars, etc.).

Students enrolling in a Bachelor's or Master's degree program will be able to start within a maximum of five working days after receiving the acceptance of their application.

4.3 APPLICATION AND ADMISSION

St. Thomas University operates an open admissions policy. Therefore, students who apply are accepted without any admissions test, with the only exception of non-admission for students residing in countries blocked by the U.S. unless they are U.S. citizens or affiliated with the U.S. Armed Forces.

4.3.1 Minimum program admission requirements

A) A student must have earned the following degrees before applying to enroll at STU:

- Secondary school diploma (or equivalent) for enrollment in degree programs.
- Bachelor's degree (or equivalent) for enrollment in master's programs

Suppose the secondary school diploma, Bachelor's degree, or Master's degree is not earned in the United States. In that case, it is required that the degree submitted allows for university enrollment in the applicant's home country.

B) A student who intends to enroll in an undergraduate or graduate program whose native language is not English must demonstrate proficiency in English.

This proficiency may be demonstrated in one of the following ways:

- (1) Demonstrating that they attended a high school or university where English was the primary language of instruction for 75 percent of all subjects or courses;
- (2) Provide the results of one of the following tests:
 - TOEFL® exam - Test of English as a Foreign Language: Passing score 213
 - TOEIC® exam - Test of English as an International Communication: Passing score 750
 - IELTS® exam - International English Language Testing System: Passing score 6.5
 - CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH ASSESSMENT: Passing score 170

STU recognizes the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program as a recognized college-preparatory program for credit and actively seeks students with this academic preparation. The University considers Diploma candidates for advanced standing. It is possible to receive up to a full year's credit (30 credits). Higher level courses will be considered on a course-by-course basis with a grade of 3 or better for credit toward an STU equivalent course to be determined by the Registrar in consultation with the appropriate Department Chairs.

4.3.2 Enrollment process

A student who wishes to enroll must have the following documents received:

- A. Application form
- B. Official transcripts
- C. Copy of an identity document

Documents must all be in English. For original documents in another language, these must be translated by the U.S. Consulate in the country where the student resides.

4.3.3 Credit Recognition

A student, who intends to request recognition of examinations, coursework, or other activities, including activities relevant to the degree program of interest, must submit a request for credit recognition and abbreviation exclusively by completing the Credit Hour Recognition.

4.3.4 Admissions

STU recognizes three admission statuses:

- **Admitted:** a student is considered accepted when the admissions office has received and evaluated all documents submitted and all admission requirements have been met.
- **Provisional:** students who submit incomplete information or documentation may be placed in provisional admission status until STU receives all necessary information or documentation to make an appropriate admission decision. Students may take a maximum of three courses in temporary admission status. Students must obtain full admission and enroll in the fourth course.
- **Denied:** the applicant for admission has violated STU policies or procedures.

All students seeking admission to STU are responsible for submitting a complete and accurate application, including all required academic and professional credentials. Submission of incomplete, false, or misleading information is grounds for dismissal at any time.

4.4 TUITION AND FEES

STU's course tuition and related costs are aimed at international students primarily from low-income family areas.

The decision to offer lower tuition fees than those charged by U.S. universities is consistent with STU's mission, which addresses its interest as an institution of higher education in countries where access to quality university programs is still tricky because of the costs required to attend them.

Tuition and fees are determined annually by the Board of Trustees.

There will be no extra tuition and fees for courses after university admission.

The student may choose two contractual modes of payment:

1. The first is where the student fixes the entire bachelor's or master's degree by keeping **the same annual amount from enrollment until graduation.**
2. Partial period of bachelor's or master's degree (not less than one year). **STU does not change the agreed amount during the student's year of attendance.**

STU needs to know who is responsible for paying the fees. If this person is NOT the student, a Statement of Financial Responsibility form must be completed using the form from STU's website to confirm acceptance of payment obligations.

The responsible party or parties must inform STU of any change of address or bank details.

In case of late payment, the student's registration may be canceled, with an additional fee for re-registration.

4.5 CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY

Students who withdraw from STU must notify the Office of the President and Registrar in writing immediately. Any financial adjustments are calculated when the Office of the President and Bursar receives written notification.

All withdrawals require the approval of the President. The student is considered enrolled, and their academic and financial responsibility continues for all courses they have registered until the President's Office notifies them that the withdrawal has been approved and accepted.

The student will retain the right to a refund if they comply with the withdrawal procedure described above.

Stopping payment or not attending classes does not constitute a withdrawal.

No refund will be given for unofficial withdrawal or dismissal from STU.

Students enrolled who withdraw before the start of the course(s) will be entitled to a refund of 100% of the tuition paid.

Students enrolled who withdraw in the first and second week of the course will be entitled to a refund as per the table below:

Before the 1 st week	100%
1 st week	50%
2 nd week	30%
After the 2 nd week	0%

Administrative and Resources fees are non-refundable unless prohibited by some provision of law. A student who withdraws from a course will have access to the electronic course materials at no additional cost if the student re-enrolls in the course within 180 days of the withdrawal date.

Students enrolled in one or more courses after the second week of the course will be responsible for full payment and will not be entitled to any refund.

Students enrolled in one or more courses will be responsible for full payment to STU at registration in their national currency. Bank fees incurred are the student's responsibility and funding source, not STU's.

Reimbursements do not include bank fees incurred and are not the responsibility of STU.

4.6 GENERAL STUDENT RIGHTS AND DUTIES

St. Thomas University recognizes and respects students' rights which are the basis of the charter of services:

1. RIGHT to quality education with high-profile faculty, effective teaching methods, and advanced technological infrastructure
2. RIGHT to be informed in a timely, complete, and up-to-date manner about everything related to the activities of the University and teaching in particular
3. RIGHT to access and use learning materials on the 24-hour learning platform
4. RIGHT to use administrative services during the hours established by St. Thomas University
5. RIGHT to be assisted in their educational journey by faculty members by the established procedures and schedules
6. RIGHT to technical support provided by technical assistance
7. RIGHT to submit complaints and suggestions on any inefficiencies
8. RIGHT to confidentiality and protection of personal data by relevant laws.

As an institution of higher learning, St. Thomas University:

- GUARANTEES the right of all able and deserving students to achieve the highest level of education. Students who are eligible for scholarships due to academic merit or financial need will be assisted in seeking financial assistance
- ASSURES its students with the necessary conditions for developing their personality and civic knowledge. The right to participation, free expression, and cultural autonomy are recognized
- GUARANTEES that students with disabilities will not be excluded from participation in any program or activity as long as they meet the minimum course admission requirements
- ASSURE students with correct and timely information they may need to succeed in their academic endeavors.

Students must:

1. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY to strive to achieve the academic goals they have set for themselves. Accordingly, each student must comply with the rules of the University and the courses in which they have enrolled
2. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY for knowing the entrance requirements of their specific courses
3. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY for knowing STU policies or procedures. A student's lack of knowledge of STU policy or methodology will not be accepted as grounds for a waiver or exemption from a policy
4. RESPECT the organizational and safety STANDARDS outlined in STU's policies and procedures.

4.7 PRIVACY REGARDING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC AND EDUCATIONAL RECORDS

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act gives STU students certain rights regarding their educational records.

Educational records are directly related to a student and maintained by STU or a party acting for STU.

The term "**educational documentation**" does not include the following:

- a. Records of a teaching, supervisory, administrative and educational nature kept by STU officials for personal use only.
- b. Documentation of student employees.
- c. Alumni documentation.

- d. Student health, psychiatric and counseling records are maintained in connection with students' treatment. (These records may be protected by other laws that protect health records).

Students' rights regarding educational documents include the following:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's educational records within 45 days of the day STU receives an access request. The student must submit a written request to the Register identifying the documents the student wishes to inspect. The STU Register will make access arrangements and notify the student of the time and place the documents may be inspected.
2. The right to request amendment of student education records that the student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or violate the student's privacy rights under FERPA. A student who wishes to ask STU to amend a document must write to the STU official responsible for the record, clearly identifying the part of the document the student wishes to amend and specifying why it should be amended. If STU decides not to amend the document as requested, STU will inform the student in writing of the decision and their right to a hearing on the request for amendment. Further information about the hearing procedures will be provided to the student upon notification of the right to a hearing.
3. The right to provide written consent before STU discloses personally identifiable information in a student's education records, except where FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.
4. FERPA allows disclosure of student education records to university officials with a legitimate educational interest in the records without requiring the student's written consent. STU discloses academic records without the student's prior written consent under this exception to FERPA requirements. A "Chief University Official" is a person employed by STU in an administrative, supervisory, academic, research, or staff support position (including law enforcement, personnel, and health care personnel); a person or company with whom STU has contracted as its agent to provide a service, such as an attorney, auditor, or collection agent; a person who serves on the Board of Trustees; or a student who serves on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or who assists another school official in performing their duties. A school official has a "legitimate educational interest" if they need to review an educational document to fulfill their professional responsibilities for STU.
5. FERPA allows disclosure of student education records without the student's prior written consent to schools where the student intends to enroll or is already registered. Upon request, STU will disclose school records without written approval under this exception to FERPA requirements. STU will make a reasonable attempt to inform each student of these disclosures.
6. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education regarding alleged failures by STU to comply with FERPA requirements.

Directory Information

FERPA allows the disclosure of "**directory information**" without the student's prior written consent.

FERPA also allows students to request that their information not be disclosed. STU discloses "confidential information" without the specific prior consent of the student unless the student has requested that their confidential information not be disclosed by following the procedure described below.

For this purpose, directory information is defined as follows:

- Last and First Name (including maiden and married name, if applicable)
- Address, telephone number, and e-mail address
- Date and place of birth
- Main field of study
- Enrollment status (Bachelor or Master)

A student who does not want *directory information* released without their consent **MUST** explicitly state this in the **enrollment document - Privacy section**.

4.8 ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

STU's community is expected to maintain high personal standards of Academic Honesty and to uphold Academic Honesty in its activities. At STU, **Academic Dishonesty** is considered an act by which a student seeks to reap benefit from another individual's intellectual or artistic work, uses materials unauthorized by STU, or fabricates information in any academic assignment.

This includes (but is not limited to):

- Plagiarism: using someone else's work, ideas, or words without attribution. It may also involve misrepresenting the sources that were used. The plagiarism issue applies to any job, including exams, papers, other writings, and IT, artistic, photographic, or video-related works
- Assisting or receiving assistance in tests or examinations
- Impeding or damaging the academic work of another student
- Submitting material from books, internet sites, or articles without including bibliographic references or proper citations
- Editing or revising works for others or allowing one's work to be edited or altered by others
- Submitting the same work in more than one course without all the instructors' consent

- Acting as an accomplice to other students in any of the above acts
- Deliberate falsification of data or distortion of supporting documentation for coursework or other academic activity
- Copyright violations

Faculty members will promptly report cases of suspected academic dishonesty to the Academic Standards Committee. By so doing, a faculty member does not relinquish the right to assign the student a grade consistent with the grading policy and academic dishonesty statement contained in the University Catalog.

After consultation, Academic Standards Committee may recommend that the faculty member handle the situation solely as a classroom issue, that a letter of concern is sent to the student, and that the case is officially referred to the office so that formal hearing procedures can be initiated.

Any student referred to the Academic Standards Committee for academic misconduct is entitled to notice of charges being made against them and a full hearing. The student and faculty member must document their allegations and refutations in writing and include supporting material (i.e., copies of the student's work and other materials used but not referenced in the student's work, etc.) relevant to the case. If suspension or dismissal is recommended, the student is further entitled to an appeal procedure and will not be suspended or dismissed from the University while appeals are in process.

The Office of the Registrar has available a written statement of policy assuring fair consideration of students in cases of alleged academic dishonesty, specified hearing procedures, possible sanctions, and routes for appeal of decisions.

4.9 JUDGMENT OF ACADEMIC INFRACTIONS

Students who violate the standards of conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. Academic cases arising from alleged violations of the University Code of Conduct are the responsibility of the Academic Standards Committee, chaired by the Dean of Academic Affairs and composed of all Department Chairs and two Student Government representatives. Students can express their personal feelings on the matter in writing to the Dean of Academic Affairs up to three days before the Committee meeting.

Jurisdiction over academic charges is continuous, and depending on the severity of the infractions, the Academic Standards Committee may also provide for the immediate expulsion of the student from the University. Some violations of the University Code of Conduct are related to specific acts of academic dishonesty. Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty will receive at least one failing grade on the work in question or the entire course. This will be determined based on the evaluation of the teacher, the Academic Standards Committee, and the level of the violation.

If a student fails a course for academic dishonesty, they cannot subsequently withdraw from the course. The standard practice for repeating a course in these situations still applies. In the case of a repeated course, the failing grade "F" will be replaced by "NC," which indicates that the failing grade is no longer calculated in the student's grade point average.

If academic dishonesty is repeated, the Academic Standards Committee will immediately expel the student from the university.

4.9.1 SANCTIONS

Violations of STU's policies may result in a verbal warning, suspension, OK, and expulsion.

4.9.2 DISCIPLINARY APPEALS

Students who believe a disciplinary action taken against them by the Academic Standards Committee is unfair may appeal in writing to the President. All appeals must be filed within 15 days of the disciplinary action being assigned to the student. The decision of the President is final and unappealable.

4.10 STUDENT CONTRACT

This contract governs the relationship between STU and students enrolled in distance learning courses in conjunction with the General Regulations of the University, published on the STU institutional website.

FOREWORD

STU is a nonprofit entity and, in compliance with the statutory and organizational autonomy recognized to universities in general, has the power to determine autonomously, through its regulatory activity, the tuition fee and university contributions for all courses of study activated.

The amounts charged to students by specific fees or contributions do not represent a consideration for opposing services but an individual contribution to covering the cost of services offered by the University to realize the above purposes. All amounts with payment methods and exemption cases are published on the STU's website.

ARTICLE 1 - NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CONTRACT

This contract, the preamble to which is an essential part, represents the formal act by which the student adheres to the services offered by the distance learning course of their choice, which St. Thomas University provides in compliance with the general requirements and specific requirements contained in the Catalog and the General Regulations of the University, both of which are published on the University's website.

The contract also regulates how the relationship may be terminated at the student's request and guarantees the completion of their education.

ARTICLE 2 - GUARANTEE TO THE RIGHT TO STUDY

The University guarantees the right to study of every student enrolled in its distance learning courses, committing itself to organize and provide educational services by the methods, curricula, and rules established in the Service Charter and to respect the teaching methodology adopted and the service levels offered.

STU guarantees that the teaching material has been certified by a special committee composed of faculty members and that the student's evaluation will occur through its verifications. The examinations are generally held at the University's premises unless an exception is made.

STU issuance of degrees by committing to maintain the standards set by accreditation for distance learning according to the criteria, requirements, and procedures

ARTICLE 3 - DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES AND GUARANTEE OF USABILITY

The University undertakes to provide online educational activities. It supports the student about the distance learning course chosen by the latter, described in the Student Services and the POLICIES FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND USE OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, Educational Services, Information Services, Tutoring Services, Intelligent Library Services, Orientation Services, Administrative Secretarial Services, and Research Services.

The University guarantees maximum flexibility in distance learning courses, allowing the student to select the maximum number of annual credits that can be earned and dilute these credits over a multi-year scope.

The University guarantees access to educational services to students with disabilities, committing to adopt the measures provided in the University Teaching Regulations and the Service Charter and keep them updated according to technological standards.

The University undertakes to keep online educational activities and supports usable systematically, continuously, and without interruption.

ARTICLE 4 - DESCRIPTION OF TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS AND GUARANTEE OF USABILITY

The student has access to the educational services, training, and information supports of the chosen distance learning course through the following tools: Interactive classroom, e-learning platform, and web portal.

The University guarantees that these tools are characterized by the following:

- a. the use of network connection for the benefit of learning materials and the development of educational activities based on interactivity with teachers/tutors and other students
- b. the use of the student's personal computer, possibly supplemented by other interfaces and devices as the primary tool for participation in the learning process
- c. a high degree of independence of the learning path from constraints of physical presence or specific timetable
- d. the use of standard, interoperable, and modularly organized learning content that can be customized concerning the characteristics of end users and delivery paths
- e. continuous monitoring of the level of learning, both through path tracking and frequent moments of evaluation and self-assessment.

ARTICLE 5 - UNIVERSITY FEES AND OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS, EXEMPTIONS, AND WAIVER OF STUDIES

The University determines at the beginning of each academic year the University Tuition and Fees and other contributions due by the student for the chosen course of study.

The student must pay the University Tuition and Fees and other contributions: annual enrollment in the degree program, transfer to another university, graduation, and information of need on STU's website.

A student who is late in payment cannot be admitted to the next course, nor can they obtain any certificate related to their educational career in the part to which the late payment refers, nor can they get permission to transfer to another university.

No refund will be given for unofficial withdrawal or dismissal from STU.

Students enrolled who withdraw before the start of the course(s) will be entitled to a refund of 100% of the tuition paid.

Students enrolled who withdraw in the first and second week of the course will be entitled to a refund as per the table below:

Before the 1 st week	100%
1 st week	50%
2 nd week	30%
After the 2 nd week	0%

Administrative and Resources fees are non-refundable unless prohibited by some provision of law. A student who withdraws from a course will have access to the electronic course materials at no additional cost if the student re-enrolls in the course within 180 days of the withdrawal date.

Students enrolled in one or more courses after the second week of the course will be responsible for full payment and will not be entitled to any refund.

Reimbursements do not include bank fees incurred and are not the responsibility of STU.

The student, at any time, may terminate the contractual relationship with the University by notifying the secretary of their renunciation of studies.

Renunciation results in the loss of the student's status and extinguishes their career without prejudice to the credits acquired; therefore, the student may obtain the certificate for their previous job, duly pursued, supplemented by the annotation attesting to the renunciation of studies.

ARTICLE 6 - STUDENT'S COMMITMENT

The student, for the achievement of their educational and professional goals and within the framework of the chosen study plan, commits themselves to full compliance with the rules of the University Teaching Regulations, the teaching regulations and orders, the general student rights and duties regulations, as well as the Catalog published on the institutional website. The student must complete the "Student Opinion" questionnaire at the end of each course. Submission of the questionnaire is a mandatory condition. The University guarantees that the data will be used anonymously.

The student agrees to attend lectures, tutorials, seminars, and in general, all educational activities organized by the University for the program-base of the Course of Studies.

Students who have interrupted their studies without formally renouncing them may not enroll in another university.

ARTICLE 7 - DURATION

The duration of this contract is equal to the student's stay at STU until the completion of the course of study or its discontinuation.

The academic year starts from the day of the first enrollment and lasts one calendar year.

5. FACULTY POLICY

At STU, the term "Faculty" refers to the collective group of academic officers of the University, including the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Student Services, the Provost, and the President of the University.

The STU Faculty plays an essential role in developing its mission and achieving its academic goals. STU Faculty comprises established managers, professional educators, technology leaders, and financial officers from many countries worldwide, selected for their academic achievements and broad cultural and professional backgrounds.

5.1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

St. Thomas University is an equal opportunity employer. Applicants or employees will not be discriminated against because of race, religion, age, disability, color, creed, sexual orientation, or ethnic/national origin.

5.2 FACULTY SELECTION

St. Thomas University faculty have been and will be selected based on very high standards.

STU actively seeks highly motivated faculty with international teaching experience and an M.A. and Ph.D. degree or equivalent from an appropriately accredited institution in the field of specialization in which they teach. Applicants must be fluent in English.

The selection process will consider the candidate's credentials, Curriculum Vitae et Studiorum, specific experience in the field, and publications. It will include an interview with the Chair of the department involved, the Dean, and the President of the University. The President will make the final hiring decision and issue an appointment letter outlining the conditions of employment and personnel policies on academic freedom and economic security.

The number of Faculty will correspond to the needs of the University.

STU will seek stability within the faculty by providing adequate salaries and good working conditions.

5.3 CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT

For the Faculty, ordinarily, the terminal degree is the Ph.D. or equivalent. The relevant academic department will design another academic rank as an appropriate terminal degree in consultation with the Provost and submit it for approval to STU's President. It will be recorded in the original contract.

The terms and conditions of each appointment to the faculty will be stated in writing, and a copy of the appointment document will be provided to the faculty member. Any subsequent extension or modification of an appointment, as well as any special agreements or notices that either party is required to provide, shall be outlined in writing, and a copy shall be provided to the faculty member.

STU may hire a person under a term contract. The term contract is an appointment by the faculty for a fixed period. The University has no obligation to retain the person employed under a term contract beyond the expiration date of their appointment.

Most faculty members at the University serve a probationary period, the terms and conditions of which are clearly stated in the original contract.

Like all other STU workers, faculty must also submit university credentials, a certificate of no criminal convictions, and no pending criminal charges before employment.

5.4 FACULTY TITLES

The faculty who out teaching and research functions consistent with the universities' teaching delivery models via telematic and satellite networks (internet, television, and videoconferencing systems) at STU are divided into the following types:

5.4.1 FACULTY AREA

Coordinate teaching activities by teaching areas

- Coordinates the research and teaching activities of the disciplines about the subject areas related to the degree classes.
- Identifies and proposes to the Academic Senate the Professors who are authors of video and content to be included on the web portal
- Identifies and proposes the Tutors who will follow the students in the learning paths; given the fundamental role of the Tutor in the teaching-learning model of the University, the Tutors chair, also with the Area Faculty
- Structures, in collaboration with the Tutors, the program of area teachings
- Ensures the educational planning of the area's teachings
- Coordinates the work of the tutors.

5.4.2 FACULTY AUTHORIZING CONTENT

Produce the video lectures and process the content and materials to be included in the learning environments of the teaching portal.

- Implements the video lesson
- Prepares teaching materials to be linked to all video lesson topics for inclusion in the appropriate teaching portal.

5.4.3 TUTORS

Follow with technologies the learning processes of the students.

The tutor guides Students' learning processes through synchronic modes of teaching (video lecture, chat, video chat) and diachronic methods (forum and wiki).

5.5 ACADEMIC FACULTY

5.5.1 PROFESSOR

Faculty members who hold the doctorate or other appropriate terminal degree, who have extensive teaching experience at the rank of Associate Professor in an accredited senior college or university (usually five or more years), and whose achievements as teachers, scholars, and contributors to the work of the University are consistent with its highest Faculty rank usually hold the position of Professor.

Faculty appointed to the rank of Professor are ordinarily expected:

- to hold the doctorate or other terminal degree of the discipline or to have equivalent training and experience as appropriate to the particular appointment;
- to have an acknowledged record of continued success in undergraduate and graduate teaching, including successful direction of doctoral candidates, to the completion of their degree programs, as applicable;
- to have sustained explicit national recognition and, where applicable, to have achieved international recognition for a productive program of research, scholarship, or creative work of high quality, supported by substantial, significant publication (or equivalent) of high scientific quality.

5.5.2 ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Faculty members who hold the doctorate or other appropriate terminal degree, who have significant teaching experience at the rank of Assistant Professor in an accredited senior college or university (usually three or more years), and whose achievements as teachers, scholars, and contributors to the work of the University indicate growing competence and stature typically hold the rank of Associate Professor.

They are expected to have served at the rank of Assistant Professor for some time sufficient to have established a record in teaching, research, scholars, or creative work, and service that meets the criteria below seriously consistent with eventual promotion to Full Professor.

Faculty promoted or appointed to the rank of Associate Professor are ordinarily expected:

- to hold the doctorate or other terminal degree of the discipline or to have equivalent training and experience as appropriate to the particular appointment;
- to have an acknowledged record of success in undergraduate and graduate teaching, including successful direction of doctoral and master's candidates, as applicable;
- to have recognition for a productive program of research, scholarship, or creative work, supported by substantial, significant publication (or equivalent) of high scientific quality;
- to have participated in the professional activities of the discipline in ways other than teaching and research;
- to have established an appropriate record of departmental service.

5.5.3 ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Faculty members appointed to the rank of Assistant Professor are ordinarily expected to hold the doctorate or other terminal degree in the discipline or experience as appropriate to the specific appointment; to show promise in teaching; and to have begun a promising program of research, scholarship, or creative professional work consistent with eventual promotion to Professor.

5.5.4 LECTURER

Lecturers are faculty members with at least a Master's degree or professional qualifications in their teaching subject. They are experienced individuals with qualifications that enable them to teach satisfactorily in their assigned classes. This position entails full responsibility for teaching courses, advising students, and participating in committees.

5.6 SPECIAL APPOINTMENTS

A department at STU may provide an academic home to professional persons through special appointments.

Persons with these appointments receive an annual letter of appointment from the President that describes the nature of their work with an appropriate title.

The President makes appointments upon recommendation from a Provost, and copies of the appointment letter go to the interested Department Chair.

Persons granted these appointments must have the appropriate qualifications to pursue a program of research, scholarship, or creative activity. This program may also include proposal and report writing, grant solicitation, publication of results, and performance and exhibition.

5.7 FACULTY EVALUATION

The Provost will conduct periodic evaluations of professors to ensure the quality of instruction. Evaluation of professors will be based on the following:

- student evaluations
- classroom observations conducted by colleagues and Department Chairs
- evaluations of classroom materials
- publications, scholarship, and research
- any other kind of academic activities.

Numerous student complaints or dissatisfactory evaluations of a professor can lead to probations to be determined by Department Chairs and the Provost.

5.8 FACULTY GRIEVANCES

Faculty members with grievances unrelated to reappointment, promotion, or tenure should raise their grievances with their Department Chair. If the discussion does not lead to an acceptable resolution, the faculty member should bring the grievance to the attention of the Provost.

5.9 NOTICE OF FACULTY RESIGNATION

STU requests that all faculty members who intend to resign from the University contact the President in writing in advance.

5.10 FACULTY TERMINATION PROCEDURES

The term "termination" refers to the premature end of a faculty member's contract. Once the University has determined to terminate a faculty member's agreement, the procedures will follow the policies issued by the STU Human Resources Office.

5.11 PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

5.11.1 STATEMENT ON PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

St. Thomas University adopts the Statement on Professional Ethics and Academic Freedom as follows:

1. Faculty, guided by a deep conviction of the value and dignity of advancing knowledge, recognize their particular responsibilities. This primary responsibility to their subject consists in seeking and affirming the truth as they see it. To this end, they devote their energies to developing and improving their scientific competence. They accept the obligation to exercise self-discipline and judgment in using, extending, and transmitting knowledge. Faculty members must practice intellectual honesty. Although they may follow secondary interests, these interests must never seriously impede or compromise their freedom of research.
2. As teachers, professors encourage the free pursuit of learning in their students. They keep before them the best academic and ethical standards of their discipline. Professors show respect for students as individuals and abide by their role as intellectual guides and advisors. Professors make every reasonable effort to promote honest academic conduct and to ensure that their evaluations of students reflect the true merit of each individual. They respect the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student. They avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students. They recognize meaningful academic assistance from students. They protect the academic freedom of their students.
3. As colleagues, faculty have obligations that arise from joint membership in the scholarly community. Lecturers do not discriminate against or harass colleagues. They respect and defend the free inquiry of colleagues. In the exchange of criticism and ideas, professors show due respect for the opinions of others. Professors acknowledge academic debt and strive to be objective in their professional judgment of colleagues. Professors accept their share of faculty responsibility for the governance of their institution.
4. As members of an academic institution, professors seek to be effective teachers and scholars. Although professors observe the institution's regulations, they retain the right to criticize and ask for a review. Professors give due consideration to their primary responsibilities within their institution in determining the amount and character of work done outside it. When considering interruption or termination of their service, professors recognize the effect of their decision on the institution and duly inform their intentions.
5. As members of their community, professors have the rights and obligations of other citizens. Professors evaluate the urgency of these obligations considering their responsibilities to their subject, their students, their profession, and their institution. When speaking or acting as private persons, they avoid giving the impression that they are saying or working for 'the university. As citizens engaged in a profession that depends on freedom for its health and integrity, professors have a special obligation to promote conditions of free inquiry and to foster public understanding of academic freedom.

5.11.2 ACADEMIC FREEDOM

As an institution dedicated to learning and teaching, STU is committed to the free expression and exploration of ideas in an atmosphere of mutual respect and civility. Like other freedoms, academic freedom requires risk-taking and

responsibility. With all its potential controversies, STU recognizes that the free play of ideas is indispensable to discovering and disseminating knowledge. However, just as the freedom to act brings responsibility for those actions, the freedom to express ideas brings responsibility and accountability.

STU adheres to the principles of academic freedom enunciated by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) as follows:

- 1) The faculty member has the right to complete freedom in research and publication of results, provided they adequately perform other academic duties; however, research for profit must be based on agreement with the institution's authorities.
- 2) The teacher is entitled to the freedom to discuss his subject in class, but he must be careful not to introduce into his controversial teaching topics that have no relation to his matter.
- 3) The university teacher is a citizen, a member of a learned profession, and an official of an educational institution. When he speaks or writes as a citizen, he should be free from censorship or institutional discipline, but his unique position in the community imposes special obligations.

As an [person] of culture and in charge of education, he must remember that the public may judge his profession and institution by his statements. For this reason, he must always be accurate, exercise appropriate restraint, show respect for the opinions of others, and make every effort to indicate that he is not an institutional spokesman.

6. LIBRARY POLICY

6.1 MISSION

The library's mission is to support the University's educational programs by providing access to high-quality resources and services, creating a technology-rich environment conducive to learning, and offering individual attention to and assistance designed to foster lifelong success and personal growth through library instruction and research skills. The University works to improve society by providing quality education, while the library enhances education by teaching patrons to use resources effectively through instruction and research.

6.2 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Objective one

Ensure library users are aware of resources available at St. Thomas University and encourage using them.

Proposed Policies for Objective 1

- Produce library guides for each discipline highlighting the specific library resources that complement the curriculum and assignments within that program.
- Conduct a library introduction class to share library resources.

Objective two

Ensure accessibility for library users to take full advantage of library resources and services by providing an environment favorable for student research and scholarship.

Proposed Policy for Objective 2

- Maintain the technology and equipment needed to provide continued access to all library electronic resources.
- Conduct ongoing tests and evaluations to ensure ease of use.

Objective three

Provide electronic information access services to library users.

Proposed Policy for Objective 3

- Maintain access and delivery services from other libraries by establishing and maintaining borrowing agreements with libraries in the state and globally.

6.3 STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION

The library will maintain an adequate number of librarians and other staff with appropriate education and experience to accomplish the mission of St. Thomas University.

Librarians will hold a graduate degree in library science from an accredited institution. In most cases, librarians have a master's degree in a library science program from an institution by the American Library Association (ALA), according to the **Statement on the Certification and Licensing of Academic Librarians**. "The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) has affirmed that the master's degree from a program accredited by the ALA is the appropriate terminal professional degree for academic librarians. Library hiring standards for library support positions, including library assistants, library managers, and library technical assistants. Library staff members traditionally have varied educational levels and expertise. Therefore, the required skills and knowledge are specified in the position descriptions.

The library will maintain open office hours online with regular business hours of St. Thomas University administrative offices weekly. Communication between the library staff and the St. Thomas University community will be primarily through email.

Librarians: Librarians will be hired aligned with specific subjects, assist students with research activities, and work with departments to offer course and program-specific sessions and electronic support materials. Librarians are considered faculty. Librarians are evaluated annually and held to standards of excellence as traditional teaching faculty. This evaluation consists of an updated CV and a statement of goals and evidence in four areas: librarianship, teaching, university service, and professional development. The head librarian or dean of the library will report to a senior member of St. Thomas University's academic affairs division.

Library Support Staff: Library support staff aid in the management and operation of the library. Primary duties may be assisting with the organization of electronic resources, fulfilling resource requests, maintaining the library catalog, and providing access services and library inquiry support to St. Thomas University students and faculty.

6.4 LIBRARY COLLECTION

The library will develop a collection best to support the mission of the University's program. These resources support the curriculum, the University's programs, and the academic success of the St. Thomas's University community. The library will leverage partnerships with consortia for interlibrary loans of materials. Using University programs as a guide, the library will acquire electronic resources like databases, journals, and electronic books to support the university's programs. The library will evaluate the collection using the following:

- state and national directories

- annual review of circulation statistics
- interlibrary loan (borrowing and lending)
- requests from faculty and students.

The library will conduct individual evaluations of library resources by the program to maintain current and relevant resources that support students enrolled in licensure programs.

6.4.1 CONSORTIA AGREEMENTS

St Thomas University will work to become part of the Carolina Consortium. The Carolina Consortium established this consortium in 2004 to work with three of the largest publishers of library material. Today, the Carolina Consortium is a large group of diverse libraries spanning two states and working together to save millions on various library resources and services. St Thomas university will foster a relationship with the UNC community and create an interlibrary loan reciprocal agreement. The agreement will be if mutual support for sharing resources. The Interlibrary loan process is governed by the ILL policies and procedures established by both the lending and borrowing libraries.

6.4.2 VIDEO LIBRARY

The video library will contain digitized video lectures and related slides.

The enjoyment of digitized video lectures enables symbolic-reconstructive learning processes related to a classical linear teaching mode.

In addition, the modular organization of content, indexing of topics, and bookmarks develop hypertextual and multimedia learning processes, which enable the enrichment and enhancement of metacognitive strategies, fostering personalization of learning paths.

Each video lesson is created with topic indexing that makes the video lesson a hypertextual path. Bookmarks make it possible to link the topics of the video lessons to the learning materials that are part of the Digital Library, to make available contextual insights represented by texts, books, articles, multimedia materials, bibliographies, sitographies, interactive exercises, virtual labs, and interactive lessons conducted that have the function of integrating the theoretical knowledge acquired with practical application, through a Learning Process of the learning by doing type.

6.4.3 DIGITAL LIBRARY

The digital library will consist of the learning materials linked to the video lectures - e.g., handouts, movies, images, diagrams, animations, site references, and bibliographic references - collected in an Intelligent Bibliographic System.

The objects that make up the Virtual Library represent insights into the content covered in the video lectures and can be associated with a topic, a set of issues, an entire video lecture, a set of video lectures, or the entire course.

The library's objects are books and Articles, Multimedia, Bibliography, and Sitography.

In the Digital Library, students can access teaching materials linked to video lectures, always organized with hyperlinks to study topics.

6.5 USING LIBRARY RESOURCES

Access to the virtual library is free for faculty and students who can access all educational materials in cyberspace. Entering the online virtual library provides access to an Intelligent Bibliographic System (IBS). The purpose is to provide dynamic bibliographic selections linked to the content of interest, educationally organized and related to all topics covered in the video lectures.

Users can initiate two types of consultation of their virtual library:

- **Simple consultation:** the system provides the student with "pre-packaged" bibliographical indications related to the subject matter. This is a static and automatic bibliographic.
- **Intelligent querying:** allows dynamic bibliographic indication targeted to individual student requests.

IBS allows for continuous updating, and its database can be continuously enriched by adding new teaching materials. Faculty members and experts, wherever they are in the world, can enter the results of their research work and augment the database.

In these virtual spaces, faculty members and students have a wealth of teaching materials in various languages that they could hardly have found in actual libraries. It is, therefore, not just an American virtual library but an international, multimedia, and interactive one.

Each student who enters the STU virtual library can begin - alone or with the support of the faculty member - on a journey of exploring topics of their interest, broadening their cultural horizons, and traveling in all the directions that a virtual library offers.

In the search form, some sections correspond to a category of information that the student can search for: teaching materials (degree, course, course, teaching materials), lecturer (lecturer, video lecturer, tutor), communications (news, events, topics) or an advanced search form.

6.6 OTHER SERVICES OFFERED

6.6.1 VIRTUAL ORGANIZATIONS

The library of St. Thomas University is located Virtual Organization. Students use this tool to simulate situations they might encounter in the real world. STU provides students with a few organizations to choose from: business, education, government, and service demand.

6.6.2 WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS

The three labs offered in the Student Labs section of the University Library are

- Creative Writing Lab
- SQL/Database Concepts Lab
- Student Java Programming Lab.

The labs offer a forum to post questions and get answers and where students can ask for and receive help from faculty members and fellow students.

7. POLICIES FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND USE OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

7.1 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The definition of criteria and requirements is fundamental and necessary for the activation of telematic educational facilities to meet the educational needs of users, to enable them, with academic success, to achieve the final goal and result, that is, the acquisition and certification of skills and educational credit, together with the attainment of the degree within the timeframe of the courses of study.

1. The technological platform offers students, faculty/tutors, and administrators maximum flexibility and comprehensiveness in the management of every activity necessary for the delivery of distance learning courses, from the time of course creation and storage of learning content to that of actual course delivery to that of monitoring student activity to that of administrative procedures for enrollment and document requests. The system offers organized learning content (Learning Content System and Learning Object) services to ensure interactivity and participation in teaching and learning processes.
2. The system allows a very high degree of flexibility and customization of the various courses of study at all levels of users (student, teacher, tutor). It aims to create a collaborative and "social" learning environment thanks to the interactive communication tools and the implemented student group management system.
3. The training activities and related teaching aids, their usability, and the technological features of the platform are summarized below:
 - a. **Content Aggregation System.** The system for metadata, aggregation, and packaging of courses will be delivered. Based on SCORM 1.2 international standard specifications and designed with graphical interfaces that allow it to be used by users who are not highly computerized, the system enables individual Learning Objects of whatever type and format they may be (text, images, MS Office or Adobe PDF documents, animations, audio, video, etc.), to be cataloged and metadata, managed, aggregated and sorted according to paths established by the teaching committees. In addition to allowing the creation of "learning units" composed of multiple Learning Objects, and thus entire courses composed of multiple learning units, the use of descriptive languages (XML) and shared vocabularies (SCORM) allow the reuse of not only learning teams, but also individual Learning Objects at a minimum level of granularity, both within the same platform (reusability) and on third-party platforms designed according to international standards (interoperability).
 - b. **Learning Content Management System (LCMS).** It is the module intended for the delivery of courses according to the rules (data model) set on individual lectures and individual courses in the Packaging and Authoring phase, and which allows the management and control of teaching-learning activities on individual students, study paths, and teaching calendars, by teachers and tutors. This module offers students the opportunity to calibrate their course of study, which on the one hand, offers flexibility and the possibility of endless customization according to the choices of the individual student, and on the other hand, demonstrates adaptive capacity concerning what are the actual times, ways, styles of use of the delivered material by the individual student. Tutors and Teachers, thanks to the tracking of the activities of the individual student and of the classes of students that will be organized, will be able to follow and update their learning paths, intervening in the timing of access to the platform and individual materials, managing evaluation and self-assessment of the progress made, and having available analysis reports of the actual participation in the planned group activities.
 - c. **Web Publishing System.** This module is responsible for "translating" the input from the LCMS to make it usable through the Web. Great attention has been paid to usability issues: the generated code is validated according to W3C standards, while content and representation are handled separately through style sheets optimized according to the media of fruition (personal computer, WebTV, mobile phone, printable formats). More advanced multimedia content is published in different versions to reach the most comprehensive user base. Accessibility to the platform for disadvantaged user groups is ensured through the implementation of W3C specifications (WCAG, WAI guidelines) on providing web services for people with disabilities.
 - d. **Communication tools.** To create a networked social context and stimulate students to collaborative modes of learning and study, great attention has been paid to the communication systems offered. The organization of Chats, including audio and video and Forums, allows free student/student exchange in dedicated environments and the creation of thematic rooms, manageable by faculty/tutors, with moderation systems and automatic tools for quantitative analysis of individual student interactions in the various environments. Lecturers/tutors can also annotate quality, and thus not only "quantitative," assessments of the individual student and class interactions. Additionally, available tools are a personal Weblog system and a web instant messaging system among online users.
 - e. **Interactive classroom.** The interactive classroom is realized through web-conferencing video-communication systems. The interactive classroom allows sharing applications, shared whiteboard, teaching interaction with a faculty member, administration of tests, and ongoing assessment of learning processes. With the activation of the Online Agenda, the faculty member can plan support meetings, supplementary seminars, and synchronous testing

sessions; all online activities are recorded on the web so that they are available to all students and to enrich the available Learning Objects.

- f. **Tutoring mode.** Through the implemented communication systems, the "Interactive Classroom" environment, and the administration of the On-line Agenda, the Faculty member has the possibility of following up with students by periodically indicating the content to be studied in depth to follow the deadlines indicated at the beginning of the course, to propose and evaluate online papers/tests/tests, both synchronous and asynchronous, to conduct sessions of online lectures/on-line seminars scheduled in the agenda. In addition to following the individual student on their learning path, the lecturer/tutor can create and manage groups of students to enable work on "classes." The system manages the "class" by providing its online calendar agenda marking individual appointments and tasks, a work and file exchange area for managing group projects, and Chat, Forum, and Video-chat rooms dedicated to individual classes.
- g. **Online administrative activities** This module allows the student to matriculate and enroll entirely online, including making tuition fee payments, in a completely secure manner thanks to the adoption of security protocols for online transactions and the "encryption" of personal data. The system allows storing, downloading, and printing documents regarding an individual student's academic career, making inquiries to the Registrar's Office, registering for an exam, and evaluating and approving personalized changes to Study Plans.
- h. **Technological Solutions.** The platform is organized on a network of servers, each intended for a specific service, according to an architecture that favors server redundancy to prevent any possible system blockage. Different services such as staging learning materials (Learning Object Repository), web delivery of information, video on demand, management of economic transactions, and sensitive data are managed on different machines. A fully scalable bandwidth management system also ensures immediate response times, nullifying the risks of blocking sensitive operations and adapting to the simultaneity of many server requests.

7.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF E-LEARNING PLATFORMS

STU delivers its educational offerings through two LMSs: STU Platform and Moodle.

The main features of the **STU platform** are:

- Personal desktop for each user with information on the latest courses visited, catalog of available courses, new emails, or announcements in the forums
- Study environment with personal annotations, tests, glossaries, print function, search and download environment
- SCORM 2004 and AICC compliance
- Course management system
- Internal e-mail system, forum, and chat
- Management of system-wide and local groups for collaborative work with an organization of specific events and educational resources;
- Events and curricula for courses.

The **Moodle environment** has the following features:

- Personal desktop for each user with information about the latest courses visited, catalog of available courses, new emails, or announcements in the forums
- Study environment with personal annotations, tests, glossaries, print function, search and download environment
- SCORM 2004, AICC compliance exAPI
- Course management system
- Internal e-mail system, forum, and chat
- Management of system-wide and local groups for collaborative work with an organization of specific events and educational resources
- Integrated authoring environment (Editor) for creating HTML courses and content
- Metadata support for each Learning Object
- Context-sensitive help for both students and authors
- User and system administration interface
- Scalable and accessible layouts
- Events and curricula for courses
- Numerical, text subset, and anonymous user tests, functional as prerequisites for access to courses
- Support for authentication via CAS, SOAP, and LDAP.

7.3 WEB PORTAL OF ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY

Introduction: St. Thomas University Web Portal is the environment for faculty members and students to participate in online classes. Students can access any material provided by STU and can gather in a virtual classroom environment experienced by other faculty and other students.

St. Thomas University Web Portal is the environment for students to participate in online classes.

Students can access any material STU provides and gather in a virtual classroom environment participated by faculty and other students.

1. **LOGIN AND HOME SCREEN:** St. Thomas University has a standard authentication for users, which is as follows: **username and password.**
2. **PROGRAMS SECTION:** The Program section of the web page is used by students to review and view their degree progress and contains helpful links and information about University policies and vital online resources. First, each student will find the contact information of two of the most influential people they should contact during their time at St. Thomas University:
 1. His academic representative
 2. His financial advisor.
 - a) **Alerts:** alerts are displayed at the top of the Program page and inform you of any critical or relevant information regarding the university and your account.
 - b) **My program:** in this tab, the student finds the chosen curriculum, the progress of the degree program the progress of the curriculum. It also contains vital information about your degree program, including:
 - GPA
 - Total credits required
 - Credits completed
 - Transfer, waiver, and evaluation of credits
 - Remaining credits
 - Payments
 - c) **Classroom:** the classroom page allows you to choose which class to access. If there is only one classroom in a student's program, the student portal will automatically access that classroom.
 - d) **Class:** once the student has entered the desired class, they can work on homework and read material specific to that class.
 - e) **Weeks:** courses at St. Thomas University take place in five (5) week intervals. Students can access the weekly materials by selecting the specific week(s) tab and working within each week. Within each week(s) tab, the following areas are available:

Goals/Competencies: goals and competencies are the objectives of that week's materials.

Learning activities: learning activities are the recommended reading and study materials for that week and are divided into:

 - **Required:** required reading material for current weeks
 - **Advised:** recommended reading materials and documents for recent weeks.
 - f) **Homework:** in the homework section, the student can find the current week's homework, participation, and points associated with each one. Within each assignment, the student can find the following sections:
 - **Instructions.** Description of materials assigned
 - **Task files.** Select the files to submit for the task and click the "Submit Task" button, which starts the submission process
 - **Assessment.** Material submitted by students in the homework file section and feedback from the lecturer.
 - g) **Class activities:** class activities if a forum-style chat in which students can actively participate. Facilitators post updates and news about course information and materials. Students can also ask questions of the facilitator and other students in this area. Private messaging is also available.
 - h) **Syllabus:** The entire course syllabus allows the student to view all weeks in succession and helps view the course as a whole. The student can then delve into each class and do assignments specific to that week.
 - i) **eBooks:** in this section, students have online access to all textbooks needed to complete each course. The books needed to complete all courses are provided free of charge, and links to these books can be found in the classroom of the course the user is taking. Users can choose to download or read the materials online; however, downloading is an option for users who wish to read in locations that do not have an Internet connection. Adobe Reader is required to view books. St. Thomas University Library study areas include General Studies, Education, Business Management, Information Technology, and Doctoral.
 - j) **Skillsoft:** The Skillsoft section is designed to give the student access to a database of tutorials for any business and technology topic. The tutorials offer activities that help reinforce the user's knowledge in that area. Upon clicking on the link to Skillsoft, the user will be taken to a loading page with skillport in the upper left corner. In the case of class or homework assignments, the specific names of the exercises must be given. Next to the search field is a drop-down menu by category that allows the user to search for specific materials such as books, simulations, or videos.
3. **FINANCIAL SECTION**

My payments: the financial contract signed by the student, the payment schedule submitted and payments made, and any reminders for late payments are reported.

4. MY-STU

It is an academic, social network that serves the St. Thomas University community. This place is designed for personal use by students, faculty, and staff for academic and professional interests and is the place where you can meet and make friends. There are several communities, groups, and blogs that you can access to meet other students.

To access My-STU

- Log on to the St. Thomas University portal.
- Click the My-STU tab
- From here, you can access Communities, Groups, Blogs, and Support Communities.

Community: There are three central communities on this page:

1. **Learning Community:** here, students find information about courses or ask questions about their academic interests. Students can participate in conversations already in progress and answer questions from other students.
2. **Career and Professional Development:** This place is usually used by students graduating soon. Students will find advice on the best approach to job interviews and resume writing.
3. **Campus Life:** In this place, you can connect with other students with similar interests after class. Several categories can be found here, from politics to religion, from volunteering to community service, to name a few. Some students post and tell everyone that they want to meet friends.

Groups: Here, you can search for anyone in the school by name, professional goals, hobbies and activities, academic history, or personal biography. You can stay in touch with people you meet through group chat and e-mail.

Support community: students who need support while attending classes can access different support areas, from financial services to technical support.

5. GUIDELINES AND TIPS

In this section, students, faculty, and staff can access information on how to use the STU platform best. This section also contains community guidelines, the Student Code of Conduct, and the Virtual Campus Terms and Conditions of Use, indicating the policies and guidelines to follow to belong to My-STU.

7.4 VIRTUAL CAMPUS AND DIGITAL LEARNING MATERIALS

Central learning processes and curriculum organization will be managed via the Internet through the password-protected virtual campus of St. Thomas University. The login information will be provided to the student at the beginning of their course of study, who must be vigilant that unauthorized third parties can access the virtual campus or program learning materials.

STU must provide the student with the technical equipment to access the courses. Therefore, the student must have or have ongoing access to, a **computer with an Intel i3 or AMD Ryzen 3 processor (or higher) and 8 GB RAM (or higher) equipped with speakers/headphones, a microphone, and a web camera.**

Operating systems should be Microsoft® Windows or Apple® Mac OS, with which the student should already be familiar.

St. Thomas University supports only the **web browsers** listed below, of which we recommend using the most recent versions:

Windows latest versions:

- Google® Chrome
- Mozilla® Firefox
- Microsoft® Edge

MAC OS latest versions:

- Apple® Safari
- Google® Chrome
- Mozilla® Firefox

7.5 TEACHING CYBERSPACE

The Didactic Cyberspace is STU's Internet-based learning environment. In the Didactic Cyberspace, for each of the teachings delivered in all Degree Courses, the student has at their disposal:

- **Learning support and planning tools** (Program of the Teaching, Concept Map, Didactic Planning, Examination Guide, Agenda)
- Instructional materials for **Symbolic-Reconstructive** and **Hypertextual Learning** (in the learning environments Video Library and Smart Library)
- Learning materials for **Learning By Doing** (in the Virtual Lab learning environment)
- Interaction tools for **Collaborative Learning** (in the Online Tutoring environment through Forums, Interactive Classrooms, and 3D Virtual Classrooms)
- **Tracking and Reporting** of student and class activities.

7.5.1 SUPPORTING TOOLS AND LEARNING PLANNING

The teaching schedule is structured to contain the following:

- the description, objectives, and content of the teaching
- the identification of the necessary prerequisites
- a reference to the exercises related to the video lectures
- the course textbooks and supplemental learning materials
- the keywords of the teaching
- the methodological directions and suggestions for studying the subject.

The **Concept Map** of the teaching presents the lessons' titles, the articulation of topics within each task, and bookmarks linking to teaching materials (books and articles, multimedia, bibliography, sitography, interactive exercises, virtual labs, interactive classes conducted) related to the various topics covered.

Educational Planning is linked to the value of educational credits, depending on the student's commitment. In Didactic Planning, the Area Lecturer indicates the mode and time of delivery of their teaching, the parameters for awarding training credits to students, and other information related to their teaching.

The **Agenda** is the tool that follows the student during the academic path to support the student's schedule of commitments, providing the online calendar of appointments and proposing learning materials to the student according to the way established both by the student himself and by the teachers and tutors who follow him. Specifically, the Agenda:

- displays online appointments, such as Interactive classes or virtual classroom sessions, on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis
- indicates reception appointments scheduled by Lecturers/Tutors for in-depth one-on-one in-person or distance learning through Skype for Business or telephone appointments
- highlights deadlines for each student, e.g., turning in exercise appointments for collaborative class work.

The faculty, through the agenda, can set up a series of online events by reporting the date and time of the event and its type. The events can be timed according to the training calendar and student availability. They may involve synchronous training appointments in Interactive Classroom or Virtual Classroom, online assignments on forums, collaborative group activities, and seminars with experts. The new appointment set by the faculty member is automatically displayed in the "online agendas" of students referring to that given tutor so they can book themselves for participation.

7.5.2 SOFTWARE EQUIPMENT FOR TEACHERS

A Gmail e-mail account (name.surname@sthomasuniversity.org) with associated Google Drive space where it is possible to share lecture recordings with students. Zoom Educational license linked to the professor's assigned e-mail account for streaming lectures and recording the lecture.

Access to the STU platform to request the opening of a course to share with students the link to Zoom rooms, Google Drive folders containing recordings, and any other teaching materials.

7.5.3 INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS PROVIDED

The teaching materials provided for each lesson are:

- Written text of each lesson
- Lecture slides, enhanced by pictures, graphs, summaries, tables, etc.
- Synchronized teacher audio comments for each slide or video lecture
- Self-assessment test
- Any further study materials
- Documentary and bibliographical sources.

STU's e-learning platform also makes available the following:

- Virtual classroom for synchronous (live) event management;
- Forum
- Chat
- Mailbox

8. GENERAL POLICY

8.1 UNIVERSITY CODE OF CONDUCT

The St. Thomas University Code of Conduct describes the standards of daily conduct, rights, and responsibilities of the academic community. With the acceptance of the contract of cooperation by faculty and non-teaching staff or the enrollment of students at STU, all regulations and codes of conduct of the University are accepted, and their contents are shared.

8.1.1 VIOLATIONS OF LAW ON AND OFF CAMPUS

St. Thomas University takes a firm stand concerning law violations on and off campus to protect our educational mission. Deliberate illegal activity that comes to the attention of STU members will not be tolerated. At STU, each individual is responsible for their behavior.

8.1.2 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

St. Thomas University does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, gender, ethnic or national origin, age, marital status, or sexual orientation in the administration of academic and admissions policies, scholarships and financial aid, school-administered activities, programs, or employment practices.

8.1.3 POLICY ON CIVIC AND PERSONAL VIOLATIONS

St. Thomas University, with respect for the rights of all members of the university community, will administer disciplinary action in the event of any of the following violations. This list includes, but is not limited to:

Violations related to harm to the community.

These actions include public safety violations and the people's peace on and off campus. These violations include:

- a. The possession or use of dangerous objects.
- b. The use of flammable materials or incendiary items.
- c. Theft or duplication of keys belonging to the university complex.
- d. Smoking on University property.
- e. Disturbing the ordinary course of classes and all activities conducted by STU.
- f. Damaging security equipment.
- g. Throwing false alarms.
- h. Stealing or borrowing items without the owner's permission.

Violations related to damaging the integrity of persons.

These violations include all actions that demonstrate a lack of individual responsibility and, in extreme cases, can be dangerous to personal safety:

- a. Providing false information.
- b. Committing acts of academic dishonesty.
- c. Consuming or possessing alcoholic substances.
- d. Consuming or possessing any drugs.

Violations involving the dignity, safety, and welfare of others.

These include actions involving harassment, humiliation, cheating, and harming other members of society:

- a. Spying on or stalking other people.
- b. Photographing or filming other people without permission.
- c. Using violent behavior. This violation also includes verbal violence and forcibly restraining another person.
- d. Applying psychological pressure, frightening or isolating individuals or groups of people.

8.1.4 SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment implies unprofessional behavior, verbal or non-verbal, explicit or implicit, which consists of sexual advances, sexual, spoken language, or requests for sexual favors. Sexual harassment occurs in cases in which the behavior is unwelcome. All members of STU's community are expected to use their time solely for educational and administrative purposes. If an action, whether sexually inspired or not, interferes with these activities at the University in an offensive or perpetually disturbing manner, STU will intervene in the situation promptly.

The following are examples of sexual harassment:

- A discussion or request for information (either directly or indirectly) concerning an individual's sexual orientation and experiences
- Unwelcome touching, whistling, leering, insulting, or suggestive comments of a sexual nature
- Any unwelcome sexual advances
- The possession/diffusion of sexual material (whether pornographic or material with sexual overtones) on STU property
- Comments or jokes of a sexual nature
- Using sexual acts as a means of educational or institutional advancement or employment

It is important to note that STU, as an international University, congregates many ethnicities and cultures within its community. Inevitably, misconceptions regarding cultural differences may arise, though STU's policies must be respected in every case and are the decisive factor for determining misconduct.

STU understands cultural differences and will consider these factors while deliberating the case. However, acts such as sexual harassment, regardless of the cultural background of the University Community Member, will not be tolerated in any way.

Sexual harassment is not permitted in any form at STU.

This policy affects the entire institution and includes every member of its community, including students, faculty, staff, and administrators. In cases involving sexual harassment, STU will maintain the utmost confidentiality and ensure justice in every case. If found guilty, the community member risks, at a minimum, expulsion or the termination of their contract.