



**S F S** THE SCHOOL  
FOR FIELD STUDIES

# PANAMA

## **Program Manual**

Updated August 2018

The School for Field Studies (SFS)

Tropical Island Biodiversity Studies (TIBS)

Bocas del Toro, Panama



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# Overview of SFS Programs

*Note that as a condition for participation in an SFS program, you are required to document that you have read, understood, and accepted all academic, safety, administrative, and operational policies, rules, and requirements by reading and signing the SFS Terms and Regulations Statement.*

*SFS Mission Statement:* SFS creates transformative study abroad experiences through field-based learning and research. Our educational programs explore the human and ecological dimensions of the complex environmental problems faced by our local partners, contributing to sustainable solutions in the places where we live and work. The SFS community is part of a growing network of individuals and institutions committed to environmental stewardship.

The School for Field Studies offers semester and summer programs at our field stations around the world. The academically rigorous and interdisciplinary curriculum of each program is designed to allow students to actively discover and understand the complexities of local environmental, social, and economic issues. Through teaching and research, center faculty and staff introduce students to field research methods, data collection, and analysis, and they promote student interactions and reciprocity with local communities. The curriculum and research projects are driven by local needs and interests. SFS programs integrate academic, research, social, and community activities in a holistic education model.

## Unique Elements of SFS Programs:

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**The Strategic Research Plan (SRP):** The SRP at each SFS field station is the overarching research directive that addresses critical local environmental challenges and explores local solutions working within the community. The SRP is generated by our faculty, local stakeholders and actors, and external research advisors. The SRP also provides the community and students with a framework for the program curriculum and influences how SFS courses, research, and outreach activities fit into the bigger picture of environmental conservation and sustainable development.

**Courses:** Semester programs include three, four credit disciplinary courses and a capstone Directed Research course. Some semester programs may also include a two credit Language and Culture course. Each of our summer programs consist of a single four credit course (six credits in Bhutan). The cours(es) may combine major themes of a semester program into an intense four-week session or may be a special topics course that focuses on a single theme or issue. Many centers offer two sessions each summer, and some summer sessions can be taken back-to-back, offering eight credits in eight weeks.

**Core Disciplinary Courses:** In semester programs, three core disciplinary courses provide the background information and skills needed to understand and address complex environmental issues. Each course is designed to provide students with transferable academic credit according to the U.S. University and College system. Courses are participatory in nature and are designed to stimulate inquiry and active learning. Faculty members provide students with an

interdisciplinary and holistic framework for their process of inquiry into environmental and socioeconomic issues. Problem-based inquiry guides students through an analysis of actual local environmental situations or dilemmas. Throughout the integrated curriculum, students strive to understand the background, context, and relevance of local issues well enough to enable them to explore potential solutions and alternatives through research and critical thinking. Each course combines lectures, field exercises, assignments, tests, and research.

**Directed Research (DR):** The Directed Research course is the capstone of the semester program. Students conduct research that addresses key research questions defined in the SRP, and supports the community with environmental planning and action. Each student will join a faculty-led team that will carry out field research, data analysis and communication of results in one or more disciplines including: ecology, natural resource management, conservation science, environmental ethics, and socioeconomics. DR data is often collected as a team. Students, either individually or in small collaborative groups, will develop findings and incorporate those into their papers (see Directed Research course description for more details). The core skills students will learn through the DR experience are field skills, analytical skills, communication skills and critical thinking, as well as team work and time management. Students present their findings from their Directed Research to classmates, key stakeholders, and other community members.

**Field Experience:** An important component of the SFS learning model is hands-on field experience. Field lectures, exercises and research help students to connect the conceptual material presented in the course to local realities, learn field research techniques, collect and analyze field data, and develop holistic and critical thinking skills.

**Group Living:** At SFS field stations, students live and work with other students and SFS staff. Residential life provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate leadership, good communication, teamwork, and other group-dynamics skills.

**Connecting with the Local Community:** Students engage in a variety of community service projects that are facilitated by the Student Affairs Manager (SAM) and / or other Community Liaison staff. The SAM works closely with the Center Director, faculty, community groups, and students to identify and select projects that will help students become grounded in the local context of the issues they are researching, and give back to the community.

# The SFS Program in Tropical Island Biodiversity Studies (TIBS)

The SFS program in Panama will work with the local community, private businesses, and the government to understand marine, coastal, and terrestrial environment issues and, in turn, determine effective management strategies. SFS's research station in Bocas del Toro (BDT) is located on Isla Colón, the most populous island in the Bocas del Toro archipelago. Located a short distance from Bocas Town, the field station sits on a quiet waterfront. It is common to hear the sounds of frogs, birds, and monkeys in the surrounding area.

## Environmental Issues of the Region

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A large increase in recreational and adventure tourism to Bocas has occurred since 2000 when the government of Panama initiated a concerted marketing campaign to entice people to visit the country. A primary destination for Panama tourist is the Bocas Islands. Much of the tourism is based on reef diving, surfing, and sport fishing. Substantial capital investment has taken place and continues to flow into the region.

The new services-based economy with increased employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in the tourism services sector will continue to evolve. Present infrastructure is currently being improved; Isla Colón now sports new roads, improved parks and recreational areas, and enhanced health care facilities. The impacts of increasing tourist visitation on the coastal and marine environment will likely include diver impact on the coral reefs, commercial harvesting of reef fish, and sport fish. Onshore, the coastal forests and beaches are soon to undergo artificial restructuring, and high impact facilities and utilities will, in many cases, be stretched far beyond their present capacities. Therefore, many actions are needed to prepare for, regulate, and monitor the impacts of these escalations.

## SFS-TIBS Research Plan

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The main question that the SFS-TIBS addresses as the basis for its research and academic programs is: **How can the natural resources of the BDT archipelago best be managed in order to promote conservation and sustainable use considering the complex socio economic environment?**

The people of Bocas del Toro presently depend on tourism, government jobs, commerce, agriculture, or the extractable marine and terrestrial resources for their livelihood. Tourism, especially since the year 2000, has been booming. Since tourism here is based in natural beauty (beaches, blue waters, coral reefs, rainforests, and abundant sea life), the protection and management of the marine and terrestrial environments is vital.

The traditional economies of many Caribbean islands, including Bocas del Toro (BDT), are based upon natural marine resources and commercial agriculture – mostly bananas. The complex coastal and marine ecosystems that surround most of the BDT provide an expanse of food,

physical protection from storms, and a destination for tourist recreational activities such as diving, surfing, and sport fishing. Overexploitation of resources and coral reef damage are evident in many areas in the Caribbean. The coral reefs of Bocas are still attractive, but they do show signs of stress. The health of the associated mangroves and onshore forests is good, but these ecosystems are very fragile. It is one goal of SFS-TIBS program to baseline the health of the complex ecology of the archipelago and to identify practices that yield sustainable and responsible extraction of resources.

Bocas del Toro is fortunate to have a large portion of the archipelago be designated as a national park and sanctuary. The Bastimentos Marine Park encompasses much of the island of Bastimentos, including the adjacent islands of Zapatilla, and the associated coastal and marine environs. While the protected status of the park affords certain securities to the fragile ecology within the park, the high number of visitors puts pressures on the living components of the park and likely threatens the long-term health of the flora and fauna. Outside the park, visitors are beginning to experience the 'pristine' nature of the less traveled regions in the archipelago. The non-local human footprint is rapidly expanding and with it comes the problems of over-exploitation – habitat degradation, waste, and pollution. The entire management system in the region will be a focus of SFS efforts in the islands. We have partnered with local government and non-government researchers and stakeholders to help find solutions for existing—and future—pressures.

The aim of SFS-TIBS research plan is therefore to produce information and knowledge that will help the people of Bocas assess and manage the impacts of tourism on the marine and terrestrial environments, as well as on socio-cultural conditions. The research plan has three thematic components or areas of work to complete: i) assessing and monitoring the coastal and marine environments and species; ii) management of natural resources; and iii) evaluating socioeconomic conditions for development. Specific projects are developed by Center faculty to answer key research questions posed under each thematic component. Specific projects under component one will be undertaken on the biology and ecology of reef fish and finfish, as well as the biodiversity of coral reef, mangrove, and seagrass faunal communities. Terrestrial forest and riverine systems will also be examined. The second component incorporates projects on the restoration of mangroves and reefs and research into increasing the carrying capacity of nearshore rivers and forests. The purpose of the third component is to gather data on local perceptions and expectations of tourism and the awareness of resources important to the Bocas regional economy.

## Semester Course Descriptions

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<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Course Number</i>
Tropical Coastal Ecology	4	SFS 3790
Principles of Resource Management	4	SFS 3740
Environmental Policy and Socioeconomic Values	4	SFS 3020
Directed Research	4	SFS 4910
Language, Culture, and Society of Panama	2	SFS 2070

Grades in SFS-TIBS courses are determined via various assessments, such as exams, quizzes, practical examinations, field exercises, presentations, homework and final papers. The specific grading guidelines for each course will be presented in the course syllabus upon arrival to the Center.

**SFS 3790 TROPICAL COASTAL ECOLOGY** introduces students to the ecology of coastal and marine ecosystems. Students learn to identify the major groups of dominant species in these habitats and understand the complexity of ecosystem functions in a delicate island-based marine context. The concept of island biogeography helps to frame the examination of the status of tropical island systems, especially those prone to perturbations related to climate change. Students conduct field exercises in many coastal habitats including reefs, mangroves, intertidal zones, grass beds, and estuaries.

**SFS 3740 PRINCIPLES OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT** examines terrestrial ecology and land-management principles and practices including timber and non-timber forest products. Students examine land use and land cover change—especially in regard to increasing pastureland and plantation land under cultivation (mostly banana) in close proximity to the ocean and important watershed habitats. Students also investigate how climate change is affecting natural resources and livelihoods on land, sea, and in forests.

**SFS 3020 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND SOCIOECONOMIC VALUES** provides a critical look at the livelihood strategies of island residents, the land use and environmental regulations in place, and actual or recommended responses by society (including government, civil society, and individuals) aimed at mitigating pressures and restoring balance in the environment. Students gain an understanding of the local perceptions of conservation of natural resources and the pressure points between development and preservation. Students measure and examine the economic importance of tourism along with the habitat degradation due to tourism. Gauging environmental awareness and literacy of tourists helps students to understand their impact on the future of endangered island ecosystems that will be put under continuous pressure with the climbing number of visitors.

**SFS 4910 DIRECTED RESEARCH** prepares students to distinguish hidden assumptions in scientific approaches and separate fact from interpretation, cause from correlation, and advocacy from objectivity. Students learn specific tools including: experimental design; field techniques; basic descriptive statistics; and parametric and non-parametric quantitative analysis. Emphasis is placed on succinct scientific writing, graphic and tabular presentation of results, and effective delivery of oral presentations.

**SFS 2070 LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY OF PANAMA** contains two distinct but integrated modules. The Spanish language module offers listening, oral, and written practice of the Spanish language at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels of proficiency. Students engage in oral and written grammar and vocabulary exercises, and develop Spanish language skills and tools required for their research projects. The sociocultural module helps students to develop a more refined understanding of Panamanian culture and the various communities with which we work. Students participate in lectures, field exercises, and other activities—all of which teach them strategies and skills for working with people in a community-based research context and help them to assist with community extension projects.

### Summer Course Description 2018

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<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Course Number</i>
Session I: Tourism and Island Systems: Assessment of Sustainable Practices	4	SFS 3000

Grades in the SFS-TIBS summer course are determined via various assessments, such as exams, quizzes, examinations, field exercises, presentations, homework, and final projects. The specific grading guidelines for the course will be presented in the course syllabus upon arrival to the Center.

**SFS 3000 TOURISM AND ISLAND SYSTEMS: ASSESSMENT OF SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES** (SESSION I) introduces students to the marine and terrestrial ecosystems of Bocas del Toro and the challenges presented by a growing reliance on tourism for economic development in this part of the Caribbean. Students evaluate the impact of tourism on the natural environment and engage with local stakeholders to determine how the tourist industry affects—positively or negatively—social, cultural, and political dynamics within the archipelago. Sustainable practice is a major lens of inquiry during this course. Students will assess the balance between the conservation of the region’s natural resources and economic opportunities for local communities.

## PLEASE NOTE

**Semester students will be presented with course syllabi, case study descriptions, and Directed Research project options, once they arrive at the Center. Summer students will receive their single course syllabus upon arrival as well. Students are also encouraged to check the website for updated materials as well as peruse past syllabi and projects.**

### Outcomes and Program Details of SFS-TIBS Program\*

In addition to learning extensive field skills, you will learn about many different aspects of coastal and terrestrial protected areas. Below is a list of field skills, field exercises, and topics; this will give you an idea of the scope of the program (not all of these may be offered in a single semester):

- Visual survey and identification of reef fish, coral populations, and coastal habitats
- Forest species identification and assessment
- Marine protected area zoning exercise
- Habitat assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment
- Interview techniques and assessment of tourism development
- Experimental design, hypothesis testing, data gathering and analysis, critical reading and scientific writing
- Marine protected area (MPA) management, and how MPAs can be used to maintain or improve the marine resource status in Bocas
- Marine research methods using snorkeling as a tool

\*Note: Because summer programs are limited in scope due to the short duration, not all semester objectives may be obtained in the summer.

### Frequently Asked Question (FAQ)

#### Q: How much time do we spend learning outside?

A: Many of our academic activities are field based. The actual amount will vary depending on the weather and other factors but you will spend time in the field during field lectures, field exercises, trekking, and botanical walks.

#### Q: What is the structure of the program and how much free time will I have?

A: Program activities, including classroom lectures, field lectures, discussions, field research, and community activities will occur six days a week. Students will have very few days off during the programs. The program is intensive and highly structured. On occasion we organize recreational and cultural activities for students. Students will not have the opportunity during the program to spend nights away from the program; although, in some programs, designated weekends off may be planned.

#### Q: What is the basis for grading the course?

A: Your grade will be assessed through a mix of written exams, quizzes, readings, papers, and other assignments; the specifics are described in the course syllabus (which you receive at the

start of the program).

**Q: Can I choose my own research project?**

A: No. Students will work on projects identified by the Center staff and developed and led by SFS faculty, but you may choose between several projects.

**Q: Is the research a group effort or individual work?**

A: Students collaborate for field data collection and analysis. Final papers may be written individually or in small groups, depending on the structure and dynamic of particular projects. Some semester DR projects may only have a collaborative (co-author) option.

**Q: Do we go on overnight field trips?**

A: Yes, it is quite possible that an overnight field trip(s) will be made to an outer island within the archipelago, although most field sites are within a close distance of the station. This will be determined by field staff and student interest.

**Q: How much will we interact with the local community?**

A: Community activities and hands-on work will occur during some classes and also beyond academic work. Exact content and amount are dependent on community group schedules during the semester or summer session. At least two hours of community outreach will be offered each week.

**Q: What recreational activities are available during the program?**

A: SFS-TIBS waterfront staff lead recreational snorkeling trips. Safe beaches are only a short boat ride away. Scuba diving is available on the islands but will not be a formal part of the TIBS program. Students will be allowed to dive on their own on non-program days.

## Academic Affairs

### Academic Expectations

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Our goal at SFS is to create an academic atmosphere that encourages learning and involvement in and out of the classroom. All students are expected to actively participate in the courses, field research, residential life, and community service. Students come from a wide range of colleges and universities, as well as from a variety of academic backgrounds. There are English majors, ecology majors, pre-med students, economics majors, and many others. We view this diversity of backgrounds as a strength of our programs and a learning opportunity for our students. At SFS you will be intellectually challenged by faculty, your classmates, the community, and in areas unfamiliar to you. You will have the opportunity to take a leadership role in those subjects in which you have expertise. Students are expected to critically analyze the drivers of local environmental, social, and economic problems. Students also participate in field research and communicate their findings with the goal of providing information to decision-makers who can address those problems.

Because SFS is a residential study abroad experience, we give credit for program completion, not just course completion. Attendance from the start of the program to the last day of the program is necessary for students to earn credit.

### Student Participation

**All students must participate fully in all Center program activities (academic and non-academic). Repeated voluntary lack of participation (missing class, refusal to perform activities or exercises) or repeated involuntary lack of participation (being physically unable to perform activities or exercises due to illness or injury) may result in student removal from program. SFS gives credit for program completion and completion means more than just “presence on a program”. It means fully engaged learning, participation in academic and non-academic activities and exercises, and completion of academic tasks and assignments – in the field and in the classroom. Our constituents (sending schools) and our School of Record expect that the credit a student earns while at SFS is a result of full participation and successful completion of demanding field-based academic work.**

### Academic Credit

SFS courses are accredited through the University of Minnesota: Twin Cities (U of M). Students in SFS programs are automatically registered at U of M, unless they come from SFS affiliated universities that grant direct credit (see below). Students registered through U of M receive their grades, credit, and transcripts from U of M.

U of M operates on a semester calendar, and all SFS courses are accredited accordingly. An SFS semester consists of four courses carrying four credits each, for a total of 16 credits. Students in Tanzania, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, Cambodia, Kenya, Chile, and Bhutan are enrolled in a fifth course, *Culture and Language*, for an additional two credits, bringing the semester total to 18 credits. At the conclusion of the program, U of M, or SFS for direct credit students, will send one official transcript to the home school of each student. Transcripts are not available until two to four weeks after the close of the SFS program. Summer students participating in one of the summer sessions will receive credit for a single four credit course. Sequential summer students participating in both summer sessions will receive credit for both summer session courses, for a total of eight credits. Transcripts for summer courses are available two to four weeks after the end of Summer Session 2.

**Students from SFS-Affiliate Universities:** Students from schools that have affiliate status with SFS typically receive academic credit for their SFS participation directly through their home institution. Applicants should check with their home study abroad advisor or registrar to determine if they attend an affiliate school (you may also check our website). At the end of each program, SFS reports grades directly to the student’s affiliated home institution. Each SFS course taken and grade received will appear on the student's regular transcript, which can be obtained through normal home institution procedures. Questions regarding these procedures

or requests for information for acquiring course approval at home institutions should be directed to the SFS Admissions Office.

**Credit Transfer:** The amount and type (major, minor, elective) of credit students receive for coursework done on an SFS program is determined by their home institution.

SFS cannot guarantee that students will receive credit for their SFS participation from their home institutions. Students should not assume that a prior student's success with credit transfer is a guarantee that their credits will transfer as well. It is the responsibility of the student to arrange credit transfer with their home school *prior* to SFS participation. Students intending to receive academic credit at their home institution should speak with their academic advisor about how to best proceed. Students should allow time to have their SFS program approved by their advisor and other appropriate personnel before the start of the program.

### Why SFS Grades Matter!

**Students who do not receive academic credit at their home institution (or only receive Pass/Fail credit) are encouraged to perform at their highest capacity while at SFS. Future graduate or other academic programs, as well as certain employers, may request your SFS transcript. Your SFS transcript will have your actual SFS grade (A, B, C, ...), and if you do not perform well at SFS, your poor grade may affect your future admissions or job applications.**

### Obtaining an Official Transcript

As part of the application process, students submit the Transcript Request Form (TRF). The information provided on this form is used when mailing transcripts at the end of the program.

**Students who Receive SFS Transcripts:** If you are a student from an Affiliate Institution that provides direct credit, you will receive your transcript directly from the SFS Registrar.

**You can find out if your home school is a direct-credit SFS Affiliate here:**  
**[www.fieldstudies.org/advisors/partners](http://www.fieldstudies.org/advisors/partners)**

Your official grade report will automatically be mailed to your home school within 4 weeks of the completion of the semester program, or 4 weeks after completion of session 2 for summer programs. An unofficial student copy will also be mailed to your permanent address.

Additional Transcript requests should always be made directly through SFS as you will not have been registered for credit through our School of Record, the University of Minnesota. Please wait until your initial transcript has been received before requesting additional copies.

**Students who Receive University of Minnesota Transcripts:** If you are a student at a Non-Affiliate Institution or an Affiliate Institution that does not provide direct credit, you will have

been registered for credits at our School of Record and will receive your transcript directly from University of Minnesota (U of M) Registrar.

Your grades will be reviewed by the SFS Dean after the end of the session and then sent to the U of M. At that point, it generally takes the U of M about 4-6 weeks after the end of the program (after the Summer 2 session for summer programs) to process the grades into transcripts. Once they are processed, they will be sent to the address you indicated in your Transcript Request Form (TRF).

If you provided a personal address, instead of the address of your home school on the TRF, **please do not open the sealed transcript** envelope as you will need to deliver it intact to the appropriate office at your home school.

Additional Transcript requests should always be made directly through the University of Minnesota. You can find instructions here:

[http://onestop.umn.edu/grades\\_and\\_transcripts/official\\_transcripts/](http://onestop.umn.edu/grades_and_transcripts/official_transcripts/). Please wait until your initial transcript has been received before requesting additional copies.

### **Policies on Grading, Incompletes, and Withdrawal from Courses**

SFS courses are rigorous, challenging, and the field based approach mandates that students demonstrate their knowledge of theory and practice by applying such theory and practice to actual problems. Because SFS exams are based on the application of knowledge and the synthesis of concepts and observations, the courses are generally thought of as difficult. Also, don't expect grading to be exactly the same as at your home institution—many students are surprised that different faculty often have different grading strategies. Be sure to engage with your SFS faculty at the beginning of the semester if you are unsure of the grading system.

Courses may not be taken on a pass/fail or audit basis. Letter grades will be reported to U of M and to SFS affiliate schools for every student. SFS does not "round-up" numerical grades (e.g., a final grade of 89.99% receives a letter grade of B+ and is not rounded up to 90.00, or A-). Letter grades, as determined by the SFS letter grade scale (below), are reported to U of M and SFS affiliate schools.

#### **Letter Grade Scale:**

A	95.00-100.00%	B+	86.00 – 89.99%	C+	76.00 – 79.99%	D	60.00 – 69.99%
A-	90.00 – 94.99%	B	83.00 – 85.99%	C	73.00 – 75.99%	F	0.00 – 59.99%
		B-	80.00 – 82.99%	C-	70.00 – 72.99%		

**Incompletes:** In general, an incomplete is a temporary status for students who have temporarily left an academic program with the intent of completing outstanding coursework by a predetermined date. **SFS programs are internationally-based, field-orientated, and require fulltime on-site participation in all program activities; therefore, SFS does not grant incompletes.**

**Early Departure:** In the case of a student making a permanent departure from an SFS program without completing outstanding coursework, the following will apply:

- **Credit Policy:** SFS does not grant partial or incomplete credit. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of our programs, students must be present from the first day of orientation to the last day of wrap-up and presentations in order to receive credit for all courses. Any student who departs the program prior to completion will receive a “W” (“Withdrawn”) for the course. If the student must leave due to medical reasons and receives a medical withdrawal, some credit may be awarded at the discretion of the Office of Academic Affairs.

## Requesting Review of Final Grades

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It is the responsibility of the faculty to articulate how grades are determined. It is the responsibility of students to consider these explanations and, if there is a lack of clarity, to request clarification immediately, rather than after U or M grades are received.

Students who feel that there are grade inconsistencies should explain their concerns first to the relevant faculty in writing. Their explanation must be in writing and include both their reasons for requesting a grade review and their specific request. Faculty members have the obligation to respond fully, clearly, and promptly to any student grade inquiries. Students must raise their concerns directly with faculty while at the field site. If a satisfactory solution cannot be arranged between a student and her/his faculty, students may make a written request for an explanation of the faculty member’s decision for presentation to the Center Director for further consideration. The Center Director will review the case with the faculty member, and if a resolution cannot be made, the petition for a grade change will be forwarded to the SFS Dean of Academic Programs for review. The Dean’s review will generally be limited to determining whether fair standards were set and followed. After a student departs a program (i.e., when the student physically leaves the Center), the only grade changes SFS will consider are those which involve mathematical or transcription errors.

## Requesting Accommodations for Learning and Physical Disabilities

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Students requesting physical and health accommodations should contact the SFS Safety and Student Life Department. **Students requesting learning accommodations should contact the SFS Office of Academic Affairs.** SFS will work with students, home institutions, and physicians to determine the required level of accommodation and whether or not it can be safely and reasonably maintained on program. While SFS strives to make accommodations for most disabilities, due to the remote nature of our programs, there are varying levels of accessibility, services, and accommodations at each SFS center.

*Send physical disability accommodations requests to:*

[safety@fieldstudies.org](mailto:safety@fieldstudies.org)

Or call: 800-989-4418

*Send learning accommodations requests to:*

SFS Dean of Academic Programs  
The School for Field Studies  
100 Cummings Center, Suite 534-G  
Beverly, MA 01915

Or by email to:

[academics@fieldstudies.org](mailto:academics@fieldstudies.org)

Please be aware that the level of academic support services to which you may have access at your home campus may not be available with SFS. If you have used general academic services on your campus, such as a writing center, math/technology center, or tutoring center and anticipate continued access while on an SFS program, please inform us. We can describe the level of academic support at our centers and advise you on managing the rigors of the SFS experience.

### **Academic and Research Honesty Policy**

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SFS has adopted a zero-tolerance policy towards student cheating, plagiarism, data falsification, and any other form of dishonest academic and/or research practice or behavior (including but not limited to, standards set by any college or institution with which the student is associated). As a result, any SFS student found by SFS to have engaged in or to have facilitated academic and/or research dishonesty will receive no credit (0%) for that particular activity. The faculty make their best efforts to clearly state whenever collaboration between students in the preparation of work is deemed acceptable and the extent of collaboration that is permissible.

In addition to the zero percent (0%) mark for the particular activity, SFS reserves the right, using its sole and unfettered judgment about the severity or recurrence of the transgression, to expel a student from any program in which the student is participating. A student who is expelled from a program may receive a grade of “Withdrawn” (W) or “Failure” (F) for each of the courses of the program. The expelled student will not be entitled to any financial refund from the program.

SFS considers it appropriate to report to a student’s principal academic organization any behavior that reflects on the character, integrity and/or academic ability of a student. Therefore, when a finding of academic dishonesty has been made, SFS will report the decision, as well as the sanction imposed, to any college or institution with which the student is associated, as well as to U of M, the school of record. Through participation in an SFS program, each student shall be deemed to have expressly waived any right to prevent such disclosure that might otherwise exist in law or by contract.

Nothing in this policy shall prevent any college or institution with which the student is associated from reviewing the violation and taking actions pursuant to its own policies on academic misconduct, including its policies on sanctions or the recording of an offense on a student’s record.

### **SFS Intellectual Property, Data and Acknowledgement Policies**

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SFS strongly recommends that students keep copies of written papers, homework assignments, research reports, and other handouts from the faculty. The SFS office does not keep copies of these materials and cannot reconstruct paperwork after students return from the field.

In recognition of this institution’s obligation to transfer technology and useful discoveries to local communities, fellow researchers, and society, SFS encourages the creation of scholarly works by SFS faculty, staff, and students as an integral part of its mission. This section should

clarify the rules for ownership and use of data generated during the SFS program, and it presents guidelines for the production of scholarly works.

**Data and Educational Materials Ownership:** SFS is the owner of all academic products developed and research data collected by students while participating in an SFS program or through the use of facilities or funds provided by or through SFS. No student may utilize these data for any purpose other than scholarly works. This includes, but is not limited to, the production of i) required coursework outputs, ii) reports to approved SFS clients such as Directed Research papers and related products, iii) conference presentations, and sometimes iv) publications, and v) senior theses. The use of these data by students for undisclosed and unapproved personal benefit or commercial application, financially or professionally or in any other way, is not permitted.

Because the research projects conducted at the Center are linked to the SRP, and projects are defined and prioritized by Center faculty, the SFS faculty advisor is considered the principal investigator of the project. As a member of the research team, students who have collected data during their program period will have access to these specific data from their SFS program. Students should discuss their intent to use these data for the explicit purposes of developing senior theses or other scholarly works outside of SFS with their DR advisor, prior to use. In some instances, collected data may not be suitable for these purposes. Please see the next two sections for more specifics on using SFS data for scholarly works and theses.

### Using SFS Data Outside of SFS

**To avoid unauthorized use of SFS data beyond SFS, we require a formal process of requesting permission from the project's principal investigator to use data collected while at SFS to produce scholarly work or use in a thesis. Please submit a written request to the principal investigator, specifying the data to be used and what will be produced with the data. In most cases, the use of such data is not an issue at all, but in certain circumstances it may not be possible.**

**Scholarly Works:** Students may pursue the production of scholarly works using SFS research *only under consultation with and approval by the project's principal investigator* (i.e. the faculty supervising the DR project) or if the principal investigator is no longer with SFS, then approval may be granted by the Center Director or the Dean of Academic Programs. SFS does require students to take the following steps in the development of scholarly works, including a senior thesis, conference presentation, or manuscript for publication:

1. Discuss proposed plans with SFS faculty or Center Director, preferably while still at SFS;
2. Formally request permission from the SFS faculty to use the data for scholarly work outside of SFS;
3. Develop an authorship plan and work plan with SFS faculty, and, in the case of a senior thesis, with their home institution advisor;

4. All authors prepare the scholarly work;
5. Acknowledgements (see below for example) and institutional affiliation details are determined in discussion with SFS and the student's home institution.

In all scholarly works submitted for publication and based upon SFS data, the authors, whether currently or previously students at SFS, are required to acknowledge SFS, the Center, and all SFS employees and students who were involved in the project. In addition, publications or presentations by SFS employees that are based on data obtained by students during the conduct of SFS program coursework will, at a minimum, give acknowledgement to SFS classes who contributed to the research and full acknowledgement to the students who made a significant contribution to the research. The inclusion of students as co-authors by faculty is optional and will be based on merit, contribution, and relevance.

**Use of Data for Thesis:** Students may have the opportunity to develop some aspect of their SFS Directed Research or summer research work into a thesis at their home institution after the program. They may use the data for that purpose after consulting with their SFS faculty advisor but will not necessarily have access to additional data once they have completed their SFS program. Students should discuss this option with the SFS Admissions Counselor prior to starting the program and with the Center Director and the DR advisor once they start the program. It is also critical that the student discusses this option with their faculty advisor at their home institution before, during, and after their participation in the program. The responsibility for seeking clarity on research requirements from both institutions lies solely with the student.

The purpose of the Directed Research project and summer session research is to contribute to a broad and ongoing research agenda that has been defined by local stakeholders and SFS staff. Therefore, we cannot cater the DR projects to independent student interests or academic requirements at a student's home institution. Similarly, since the DR paper and other research assignments are works produced for an SFS course, students must hand in original work, therefore we generally cannot accommodate using data from research conducted at the home institution. Students and home advisors should bear in mind that students will not have the opportunity to pursue independent research or research on a topic unrelated to the DR. Also, data collection is usually completed as part of a team effort. We have had students discover when returning to their home institutions that their efforts when broken down as part of a team were not sufficient to fulfill a research requirement beyond that for which they were credited through SFS.

The SFS faculty advisor is solely responsible for assessing the content and quality of student work for the DR. Likewise, the student's thesis advisor at their home institution will be responsible for assessing subsequent work. It may be appropriate for students to invite their SFS advisor to serve on their thesis committee.

**Research Ethics:** The research our faculty and students conduct complies with the research ethics rules and guidelines in the country in which they are working, and when applicable, permissions are obtained for research on human subjects, animal subjects, and for the extraction of biological samples. Additional vetting for human subjects research is made by the SFS Office of Academic Affairs to ensure standards of ethical practice and protection of subjects are met.

**Photography:** Students are encouraged to bring cameras to the field. Still photography and video photography are allowed during many academic program activities, but may be restricted based on location, social cultural context, and/or the disposition of a speaker or lecturer. Students should understand that US laws do not apply while abroad. Photography in some public spaces may not be allowed by non-citizens and equipment may have to be surrendered to authorities upon request. Students should always check with local staff on standards of use of photography while in the field. Students should not bring to the field camera equipment that is intended to be operated remotely from the user. This means **DO NOT** bring: camera traps, drones, balloons, or other photographic equipment that is not intended to be held by the operator. Remote operated cameras may be seen by international authorities as surveillance equipment – and in many contexts be illegal. SFS faculty often have permissions/permits to use remote photography for research. These uses are permissible and will be performed with SFS approved equipment.

### SFS Acknowledgement Policy

**The appropriate acknowledgement of SFS is as follows:**

**“The Author gratefully acknowledge(s) the key [financial and/or field and/or logistical and/or other] support provided by The School for Field Studies (SFS) Center for [name and location of Center, e.g.: Center for Rainforest Studies, Australia]”**

**NOTE: In the case of both author address and acknowledgement, “The School for Field Studies (SFS)” is always identified and always placed before the name of the Center.**

### Requesting References from SFS Faculty

Some students request references from their SFS professors for graduate study or fellowship applications. Faculty are not obligated to write a student a letter of recommendation, and the decision to write the letter will be based on the professor’s workload and student’s SFS performance. Students are responsible for maintaining the contact information of their faculty and Center Directors. Since SFS instructors are frequently off in the field engaged in teaching or research, it may be difficult to contact them—expect a slow turnaround time and plan accordingly.

### Representing SFS Experience on Your Résumé

Upon completing the SFS program you will have a number of skills and experiences that should serve you in your future studies and professional endeavors. SFS will have given you specific

skills in intercultural competence, foreign language, field research, and data analysis that will make your résumé stand out. Thus, SFS encourages you to take full advantage of the SFS experience by representing your participation in the program on your résumé or curriculum vitae. See the box below for preliminary ideas, and study the materials provided in your closure packet upon your return stateside.

### SFS on Your Résumé

#### Education

Study abroad: The School for Field Studies (SFS), [Name of course], [Name of SFS Center], [Location] (# credits, University of Minnesota: Twin Cities), [Program date].

E.g. The School for Field Studies (SFS), Tropical Rainforest Studies, Centre for Rainforest Studies, Queensland, Australia (16 credits, University of Minnesota: Twin Cities), Fall 2008.

#### Field Experience

[Year of experience] “[Title of your DR project]”, [brief description of the skills you developed; e.g., field survey of birds in forests and roadsides, scientific presentation]. [Location], [Time span; e.g., July-Aug].

E.g. 2008 “Growth rate of *Calycophyllum spruceanum* in fields and forests,” experimental design, field data collection, scientific writing and oral communication. Peru, Sep-Dec.

## Communications & Information Systems Policy

The School for Field Studies is continually developing its technology infrastructure, providing exciting new possibilities for school-wide connectivity, research, and information sharing. The SFS IT Director is responsible for the development and management of these systems. In order to maintain the integrity, reliability, and performance of this foundation, all students must follow the policies and procedures shown below.

### General Equipment Use

- Always check with an SFS faculty member before attaching any personal (non SFS-owned) computers, laptops, printers, or other network devices to the network.
- Borrowed equipment, on and off premises, is the borrower's responsibility until returned.
- Students are expected to uphold the condition of any SFS IT equipment that he/she uses. Be careful not to expose equipment to food, liquids, excessive sunlight, heat, cold, humidity, or magnetic fields.
- Due to the varying weather conditions at our field stations, computers are subjected to

a much harsher environment than they normally operate in. Data should be backed up regularly onto USB thumb drives in the event your computer fails during your program. SFS is not responsible for personal computers or providing a “loaner” to use but every effort will be made to accommodate your need on a case by case basis.

## **Abuse of Systems**

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Abuse of systems is defined as an intentional action that threatens the stability, functionality, or performance of any SFS or non-SFS system. These prohibited actions include, but are not limited to:

1. Downloading or storing music, video, or large quantities of pictures/photographs for personal use.
2. Installing or running any software applications or executable files that are not provided by SFS.
3. Moving, reconfiguring, disabling, or removing SFS-owned equipment or software.
4. Gaining unauthorized access to or abusing SFS systems or any remote Internet systems. This includes spamming, hacking, virus distribution, or taking actions that compromise the security of any network system.
5. Using SFS systems to perform any activities that are illegal in the country where the employee is located. This may include gambling, making illegal purchases, or copying/distributing copyrighted material,
6. Accessing, downloading, uploading, saving, receiving, or sending material that includes sexually explicit content or other material containing vulgar, sexist, racist, threatening, violent, or defamatory language.
7. Deleting or changing digital documents without the consent of the document creator or owner. If the document creator or owner is not known or is not available, obtain a faculty member’s approval before proceeding.

## **Password Policies & Guidelines**

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Passwords are the keys to SFS resources and private student information.

Do not disclose any passwords to other individuals.

Do not e-mail passwords or record passwords where they may be easily obtained by others.

When you are finished using a computer, always log out before leaving.

# **Student Rights and Responsibilities**

## **SFS Rights Policy**

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All members of The School for Field Studies community are entitled to certain basic rights. These rights include, but are not limited to, the right to live in an environment free from harassment based on race, religion, gender, handicap, ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic status, or national origin.

## Learning and Physical Accommodations

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SFS is prohibited by law from making any inquiries about learning and/or physical accommodations prior to an admissions decision. If a potential student voluntarily provides this information during the admissions process, it will be kept in strict confidence and will not affect admissions decisions. If you require learning and/or physical accommodations, please indicate that information during the medical review process. If you wish to request academic accommodation, documentation must be submitted in writing by a qualified professional prior to the start of the program.

## Confidentiality of Student Records

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**Student Right of Access:** The School for Field Studies maintains confidential files on all SFS students. These files contain material submitted as admissions requirements, financial aid application material, all contracts, medical records, and academic grades.

SFS reserves the right to request updated transcripts from accepted students at any time. Unless otherwise detailed in the terms of your acceptance, you are expected to maintain the academic standing achieved at your home institution (as evidenced by enrollment status and GPA) at the time of acceptance. SFS may rescind offers of acceptance made to students whose academic standing changes.

You are free to take reasoned exception to data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion. You are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which you are enrolled. You have protection through orderly procedures against prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation. At the same time, you are responsible for maintaining standards of academic performance established for each course in which you are enrolled, and for full participation in all aspects of the program.

**Directory Information:** Certain information, known as "directory information," may be released by SFS. This information includes your name, address, phone number, place and date of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and teams, dates of attendance, awards received, and other similar information. If you do not wish this information released to others, you must make written notification of this to the SFS Admissions Manager.

The Admissions Office will prepare a list of students on each program. This list, containing names, home towns, email addresses, and home institutions, will be sent to each student approximately one month prior to the start of the program. If you do not wish to have your address or email included on this list, you must contact the SFS Admissions Office no later than two months prior to program departure.

**Third Party Access:** Based on education privacy laws, parents have no right of access to the records of students in post-secondary institutions.

Beyond the directory information mentioned above, only those faculty and employees of the educational institution who have a legitimate educational interest in your record may be

permitted access to it. Information will not be released to any other parties without your written permission. In an emergency, information may be released if your health and safety is at stake, and if the person receiving the information is in a position to act on it.

If you wish to review your file, you must either make an appointment to do so with the Admissions Manager, or make a written request for a copy of specific information.

**Evaluations:** The faculty will complete written evaluations of each student at the end of each program. These evaluations are used in evaluating candidates for SFS internships, and are not made accessible to students or outside parties.

**Questions regarding the above information should be directed to the Admissions Manager.**