



M.S. in Applied Artificial Intelligence (MS-AAI)

**Graduate Student Handbook
2026-2027**

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Introduction

The Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering Graduate Student Handbook is intended to provide students with the current graduate student policies of SMSE. Students are expected to read and become familiar with each policy. SMSE may change, delete, suspend, or discontinue any part or parts of the provisions of this manual at any time in its sole and complete discretion.

About Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering

Our mission is to provide engineering and computer science students with a holistic education so they are prepared to take on society's challenges and opportunities in socially, ethically, and professionally responsible ways.

Our vision is to deliver a high-quality student-centered engineering and computer science education that provides distinctive, authentic, and supportive experiences that inspire students to make a positive difference.

Our core values that are critical to the success of our mission and vision are:

- Academic Excellence
- Caring
- Collaboration
- Curiosity
- Empathy
- Innovation
- Diversity
- Global Awareness
- Practical Experiences

Engineers and computer scientists make a world of difference by making our lives safer, more enjoyable, and more productive. Our students emerge from our programs as engineers who have the foundation to be leaders who are thoughtful, informed, and engaged participants in the global community.

Code of Ethics

University of San Diego Policy 1.6

As members of the University of San Diego community, we commit ourselves to:

1. Support the University of San Diego's Mission Statement and Core Values.
The University of San Diego is a Roman Catholic institution committed to advancing academic excellence, expanding liberal and professional knowledge, creating a diverse and inclusive community, and preparing leaders dedicated to ethical conduct and compassionate service. We support the institution's mission. We practice the institution's core values of academic excellence, knowledge, community, ethical conduct, and compassionate service in our daily work and activities.
2. Act with Integrity and Honesty.
We act with integrity and adhere to high moral and ethical standards. We are honest, and we keep our commitments. We act responsibly and are accountable for our actions. We actively seek to distinguish right from wrong. We comply with the ethical codes that govern our particular professions.
3. Pursue Excellence.
We strive for excellence and encourage excellence in others. We conform to the highest standards of professional conduct. We seek truth, knowledge, and achievement as individuals and as a university community. To that end, we encourage the free expression of ideas, and we listen respectfully and with civility to the views of others.
4. Treat Others with Dignity and Respect.
We treat others with dignity, respect, fairness, and compassion. We care about their well-being. We embrace diversity, which enriches our academic, professional, and life experiences with one another. We strive to create a welcoming and inclusive community. We do not tolerate degrading behavior towards others or unlawful discrimination or harassment.
5. Use University Resources Responsibly.
We are responsible stewards of the university's resources. We use university resources for their intended purposes and not for personal gain. We prepare honest and accurate reports regarding university resources.

Diversity

University of San Diego Policy 2.2.9

The University of San Diego's mission statement and stated goals reflect its commitment to the view that a community is enriched by the diversity of points of view that individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds bring to it. When shared and put to use, diversity in culture, life experience, and perspective among students and employees informs, enriches, and expands upon the university's central mission to pursue truth, academic excellence, and the advancement of knowledge within the values provided by its Catholic heritage.

Accordingly, within the general framework provided by its educational mission, academic standards, Catholic heritage, and conformity to applicable law, the university commits to a process of formal and verifiable assessment of campus diversity in pursuit of the following goals:

1. Continuing development of university culture, policies, and programs that demonstrate respect for and encourage the sharing, consideration, and accommodation of a wide variety of points of view, experiences, and traditions.
2. Promotion of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, habits, beliefs, and behaviors that enable individuals to define themselves, to understand and to negotiate the interactions between individual self-definition and collective identities successfully (whether historically given, socially imposed, or freely elected), to relate successfully to others, and to function constructively in diverse social environments.
3. Active recruitment and retention of students and employees who contribute to a campus culture characterized by respect, tolerance, inclusion, and belief in the importance of diversity to its academic enterprise.

This policy does not alter any existing university policies, including diversity policies (for example, on employee recruitment, non-discrimination, and harassment) and diversity-related policies (for example, on academic freedom, and guest speakers). Instead, this policy provides a way to assess the university's progress in the pursuit of diversity. More information about USD's Inclusion and Diversity efforts can be found at www.sandiego.edu/student-experience/inclusion-and-diversity.php.

Academic Regulations & Integrity Policy

All members of the University community share the responsibility for maintaining an environment of academic integrity since academic dishonesty is a threat to the University. Acts of academic dishonesty include a) unauthorized assistance on an examination; b) falsification or invention of data; c) unauthorized collaboration on an academic exercise; d) plagiarism; e) misappropriation of resource materials; f) any unauthorized access of an instructor's files or computer account; or g) any other serious violation of academic integrity as established by the instructor.

It is the responsibility of the instructor to determine whether a violation has occurred. An act of academic dishonesty may be either a serious violation or, if unintentional, an infraction (a non-serious violation of course rules). If the instructor determines that an infraction (as opposed to a serious violation) has occurred, the instructor can impose penalties that may include: a) reduction in grade; b) withdrawal from the course; c) requirement that all or part of the course be retaken; and d) a requirement that additional work be undertaken in connection with the course or exercise. Students may formally challenge the instructor's determination of infraction (see below).

Instructors shall report all violations, whether infractions or serious violations, both to the Dean's office and the student using the Academic Integrity Violation Preliminary Worksheet. The Associate Dean will contact the student and ensure they are aware of the Academic Integrity policy. The Associate Dean will appoint a hearing committee only when: 1) the instructor reports that a serious violation occurred, or 2) the instructor reports that an infraction occurred and the student wishes to appeal the determination of the infraction.

The hearing committee will include, in addition to the Associate Dean, a faculty member, two students from the Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering, and a faculty member from outside the SMSE. If the hearing committee determines that a serious violation has occurred, it also will determine sanctions to be applied, which may include: a) expulsion from the University; b) suspension from the University for up to one year; c) a letter of censure, and d) imposition of a period of probation. If the hearing committee determines an infraction has occurred the penalty imposed by the faculty member will be upheld. If the hearing committee determines that no serious violation or infraction has occurred, it will request the instructor to take action consistent with that determination. If the hearing committee determines that expulsion is the appropriate sanction, the student may appeal to the Provost. The complete University of San Diego Academic Integrity Policy is located at <https://graduate.catalog.sandiego.edu/academics/academicregulations>.

Generative AI Guidelines

1. **Transparency:** If you are using ChatGPT and similar programs, you must be transparent about your use and disclose any generated content as being produced by an AI program. This includes, but is not limited to, written assignments, research papers, and other forms of communication through citations and documentation.
(Example) Note: Responses generated by ChatGPT, an AI language model developed by OpenAI, were used as a source of information for these guidelines.
2. **Responsibility:** You are responsible for critically evaluating the accuracy, reliability, and quality of any information generated by ChatGPT and similar programs and verifying it through additional sources if necessary.

3. Critical Thinking: You are encouraged to use ChatGPT and similar programs as a tool to support your own learning and critical thinking, but not as a replacement for independent research and analysis. The use of ChatGPT and similar programs must be accompanied by the development of your critical thinking skills and an understanding of their limitations.

Registration Policies and Procedures

SMSE follows the university's registration policies and procedures, which are located at:

<https://graduate.catalog.sandiego.edu/academics/academicregulations#registration-policies-and-procedures1>

Students will sign an enrollment agreement and be manually enrolled for each semester (including Spring, Summer, and Fall terms) by the Student Success Team. Once registered, students will receive an email confirming registration. It is the student's responsibility to notify their Program Coordinator if they do not wish to be enrolled in a given semester. In cases where a student does not wish to be enrolled for a given semester, a Leave of Absence will be required (see below). Tuition payment is due on the first day of the semester. Unpaid student accounts are subject to late fees. For drop and withdrawal policy and deadlines, view the academic calendars found on the Student Success Center webpage:

- Online Part-Time: <https://onlinedegrees.sandiego.edu/studentsuccess/msaai/>
- On-Campus Full-Time: <https://onlinedegrees.sandiego.edu/studentsuccess/msaai-ft/>

In-Person Class Participation (On-Campus Programs Only)

Checking your course daily and monitoring/tracking your progress is crucial. Your participation and regular attendance are **required** and are an integral part of your overall success in the course. You can expect to spend 15-18 hours per week working on this course.

Class participation will be made up of the weekly labs and participating in lectures. For full credit, you will need to turn in all of your lab work and participate in class exercises. Please notice that attendance at the resident learning classes is mandatory and important to learning effectiveness. Missing these classes may have negative implications on your final grade; your instructor reserves the right to modify your final grade based on lack of in-person attendance.

If you anticipate that you may not be able to attend a future class session, please notify your instructor at least 24 hours in advance to explore potential alternative assignments and makeup work. The instructor reserves the right to deduct points based on multiple absences.

MS-AAI Program Academic Calendar

Refer to your student success center for your academic calendar and respective dates. Program information can be found here:

- Online Part-Time: <https://onlinedegrees.sandiego.edu/studentsuccess/msaai/>
- On-Campus Full-Time: <https://onlinedegrees.sandiego.edu/studentsuccess/msaai-ft/>

Dropping Courses

Students will register for two prescribed courses each semester. All courses must be dropped prior to the first day of the **semester** to receive a 100% tuition refund* and within the first three days of the start date of the semester to receive a 95% tuition refund*. **No refund** will be provided after the third day of the semester for **either** class. *During the first semester of enrollment, any tuition refund amounts will not include the non-refundable enrollment deposit amount (5% of tuition). Students located in Oregon should contact their Program Coordinator for information on tuition refund schedules. After the first three days of the start of the semester and before the start of the fifth week/module, students have the option to withdraw from their courses with a 0% refund and a grade of “W” on their transcript (not included in GPA). Once the fifth week of the course starts, students are no longer able to withdraw from their course and will receive the grade earned.

Students who receive any form of financial aid must consult with the Torero Hub team if their registered units drop below the required number of units for continuation of aid.

Students who discontinue class attendance and neglect to withdraw officially from the course are subject to failing the class. Courses dropped before the drop deadline will not be included on the transcript. Courses officially dropped between the last day to add classes and the last day to withdraw from classes will receive a grade of ‘W’ (not included in the GPA). After the drop deadline, a grade will be reported for all courses.

Registered students who withdraw from the university (e.g., terminate all courses in progress) must officially drop their courses by filing a Notice of Withdrawal form and submitting it to the Torero Hub team. The same drop policies and deadlines apply to students who withdraw from the university as to those who drop only one course. Withdrawal is effective on the date that the completed form is received by the Graduate Records Office.

Continuous Enrollment/Leave of Absence

A Leave of Absence is an approved, limited suspension of participation in a graduate program during all three semesters. A Leave allows students in good academic standing to take time off and return to the University without applying for readmission. Students who are unable to maintain continuous enrollment need to complete a [Petition for Leave of Absence](#). The Academic Program Director must approve the leave of absence. Leaves may be granted for up to one year, and only under extreme circumstances will a student be granted a second leave of absence. Because students are not registered during a leave, they may not be eligible for the campus privileges for which a current ID card is necessary.

Financial aid is typically suspended for students on leave of absence, and the leave may trigger the beginning of the loan repayment period for students with loan deferments. Students should petition for leave before the requested leave period. Students who find it necessary to discontinue enrollment during a term may also petition for leave; however, they must be in good standing and officially withdraw from their courses by submitting a Notice of Withdrawal form within the approved deadline.

Notice of Withdrawal

Students who terminate their enrollment in a graduate program must file an official [Notice of Withdrawal](#) with the Graduate Records Office. If they are currently registered for courses, students must withdraw before the deadline to withdraw from classes. Courses dropped on or before the deadline will receive a

grade of 'W' (not included in the GPA). Filing a Notice of Withdrawal after the deadline will make the withdrawal effective at the end of the current term and will result in the posting of grades for the term. Students forced to discontinue enrollment after the withdrawal deadline due to a documented emergency may petition the Graduate Records Office for an exception to this policy; however, the petition must be filed before the last day of class and is subject to review. International students must follow the same procedures and, in addition, obtain clearance from the International Resource Office at the University Center.

Students should petition for leave prior to the requested leave period. Students who find it necessary to discontinue enrollment during a term may also petition for a leave; however, they must be in good standing and officially withdraw from their courses by submitting a Notice of Withdrawal within the approved deadline.

Grading Policy

All candidates for the MS-AAI degree must maintain a **minimum** GPA of 3.00.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	94.00 - 100%
A-	90.00 – 93.99%
B+	87.00 – 89.99%
B	83.00 – 86.99%
B-	80.00 – 82.99%
C+	77.00 – 79.99%
C	73.00 – 76.99%
C-	70.00 – 72.99%
D+	67.00 – 69.99%
D	63.00 – 66.99%
D-	60.00 – 62.99%
F	59.99% and below

To avoid late penalty deductions, assignments should be submitted on or prior to the due date listed in the course. For each day after the deadline that an assignment is turned in late, its point value will be reduced by 10% per day, per the instructor's discretion. Work submitted after 48 hours/two days past the original due date will not be accepted and will receive a zero unless the matter is discussed with the instructor in advance.

Incomplete Grades

The grade of “Incomplete” (“I”) may be recorded to indicate that at least 75% of the requirements of a course has been completed, but, for a legitimate reason, 25% or less of the work remains to be completed; and that the record of the student in the course justifies the expectation that he or she will complete the work and obtain a passing grade by the deadline. It is the student's responsibility to explain to the instructor the reasons for non-completion of the work and to request an “incomplete” grade before the posting of final grades. The instructor should discuss with the student the conditions

and deadline for completion, whenever possible, and should document the conditions and deadline using the Petition for Grade of Incomplete. The “incomplete” grade is not counted in the computation of the grade point average, nor is credit earned for the semester/session for which the grade was authorized.

Students who receive a grade of “incomplete” must submit all missing work a maximum of two weeks after the course end date; otherwise, the “I” grade will become an “F.” A faculty member assigning a grade of “incomplete” will complete a Petition for Grade of Incomplete, indicating the reason for the “incomplete”, and attach a copy of the form to the grade roster when turning in grades. A copy of this form will be placed in the student’s file.

Students receiving financial aid should be aware that taking an “incomplete” grade might affect their eligibility for financial aid due to their failure to earn the appropriate amount of credit within a year. When the work is completed, a Removal of Incomplete or Change of Grade form will be completed by the instructor and signed by the Associate Dean. One copy is then placed in the student’s file, and the original is sent to the registrar.

Academic Probation

To be in good academic standing and to be eligible to graduate, graduate students in the Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering must maintain a 3.0 semester and cumulative grade point average (GPA) in their programs. A student who has completed at least six (6) units of coursework and whose cumulative or semester USD GPA for graduate program courses falls below a 3.0 will be placed on academic probation. At the end of each semester, the Registrar notifies the Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering Dean’s Office of students eligible for probation. The Academic Director will send a letter to the student indicating probationary status and a copy to the advisor. The student should meet with the Academic Program Director to develop a plan for academic success. A review will take place at the end of the next term, in which the probationary student has registered for six (6) units. If students have not raised the cumulative and semester USD GPA for graduate program courses to at least 3.0 at the end of the subsequent academic term, they will be disqualified from the program. Students who wish to appeal their disqualification must do so in writing to the Academic Director within ten calendar days of receiving such notice.

Student Dismissal

Students may be dismissed from the Graduate Programs in the Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering for the following reasons:

1. Failure to maintain a semester or cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or above.
2. Failure to make satisfactory academic progress toward their degree.
3. Failure to complete the time limits for their degree.
4. Failure to make satisfactory progress in the development of academic and practitioner skills and dispositions.
5. Violations of ethics code(s) as established by the applicable field of study and program area.
6. Violations of USD policies and the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities, including academic dishonesty and plagiarism, as published online at <https://www.sandiego.edu/conduct/the-code/>
7. Failure to maintain cooperative relationships with other students and/or faculty or failure to maintain satisfactory delivery of services to clients during fieldwork, including, but not limited to: internships, student teaching, practicum, or service-learning.

When any of the above concerns are raised, the student will meet with the Academic Program Director to discuss the concern. The Director will provide the student with a written plan for improvement that specifies the nature of the concern(s) along with required steps for remediation for the successful completion of the program. The Academic Program Director will, on an ongoing basis, evaluate the student's progress, and a written evaluation of progress will be sent to the student and placed in the student's file. If satisfactory progress is not made within the time limits set by the plan, written notification of dismissal will be sent to the student.

Students who are terminated for any reason may appeal for reinstatement in writing to the Academic Director of the program in the Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering within ten calendar days of receiving notice of termination.

Student Reinstatement

Students who fail to make satisfactory progress toward the required deadlines, who have dropped out of the program for any reason, or who have failed to return from an official Leave of Absence will be dismissed from the program. Students may apply for readmission. Depending upon the time and circumstances, the procedure for readmission may require a complete application, including a new personal statement of interest in the program, three (3) new letters of recommendation, and a complete set of current transcripts. If the student is readmitted, the faculty may recommend redoing any or all of the student's coursework and clinical/field/practicum/internship work, depending on the length of the time away from the program and the circumstances for leaving the program. There is no guarantee of readmission.

Petition to Transfer Courses

It is recommended that students petition during their first semester to plan their academic program accurately. Transfer petitions for previous work will not be accepted in the student's final term unless the transfer course is being taken in the final term. Upon matriculation at USD, students must receive approval prior to taking coursework outside USD if they plan to transfer it into a degree program. Immediately upon completion of the course, the student must request that an official transcript be sent to the USD Graduate Records Office.

Students may petition the Associate Dean of the Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering for an exception to these regulations, but should do so only after consulting with the adviser and department chair or director of the graduate program, whose recommendations must appear on the Petition for Transfer of Graduate Credit. The student must also request that an official transcript of the course be sent to the Graduate Records Office if the transcript was not included among the admissions documents. When both the petition and transcript are on file, they will be reviewed in the Graduate Records Office for conformity to USD policies. Grade(s) awarded by the issuing institution will not be included in the calculation of the student's overall grade point average or considered during a probationary review.

Students may petition to transfer credit from another university under the following conditions:

1. Credit must be from an accredited, USD-approved university.
2. Credit must be at the graduate level at the university of origin. The student is responsible for submitting acceptable supporting documentation.
3. Credit must be relevant to the USD degree program and be approved by the

department chair or program director.

4. Transfer courses cannot repeat essentially the same content of work taken at USD.
5. Credit may not be used (or have been used) toward any other degree.
6. Credit earned more than five (5) years prior to matriculation at USD will not be accepted.
7. A grade of "B" or higher must have been earned (grade of "pass" or "satisfactory" ordinarily is not acceptable).
8. Students must supply satisfactory documentation regarding course content for independent study or self-directed courses.
9. The number of credit hours transferred will be based on USD's semester credit system, rounded down to the nearest full or half unit (multiply the number of quarter hours by .67 and round down). For example, four (4) quarter-hours x .67 = 2.68, which will be recorded as 2.5 USD semester-hour units. It is the student's responsibility to make up the difference if the total number of degree credits falls short of the requirement for the degree. The amount of USD credit awarded may not exceed the equivalent amount on the originating transcript.
10. Although transfer credits from other universities will be posted on the USD transcript, grades will not be posted or included in the computation of the USD grade point average for probation/disqualification review.
11. See the table below for the maximum number of non-USD credits allowed:

<i>Maximum Number of Semester Units Transferable</i>	<i>Program</i>
6	30-44 unit Master's
9	45-53 unit Master's
12	54-63 unit Doctorate

Exceptions to these limits require the written permission of the Associate Dean.

Transferring Courses Taken Prior to Enrollment at USD

Prospective students should discuss the possibility of credit transfer with the SMSE Office of Admissions and Outreach. If a student has already matriculated at USD, then the student should discuss the possibility with their advisor or department chair. The number of prior units allowable for transfer varies from program to program. The student must apply to a SMSE graduate program as a new graduate student and be accepted prior to formally requesting a transfer of graduate credit. Once accepted, the student should secure the appropriate signatures on the [Petition for Transfer of Graduate Credit](#) and submit it to the Torero Hub team. The official transcript of the course(s) must be included among the admission documents when the student applies. When both the petition and transcript are on file, they will be reviewed for conformity to USD policies and posted appropriately.

Transferring Courses Taken While Enrolled at USD

USD students planning to take a degree requirement or elective at another university must process the transfer petition as described above prior to taking the course. Immediately upon completion of the course, the student must request that an official transcript be sent to the USD Office of the Registrar. A grade of "B" or better is required to receive credit (units only) when transferring a course from another institution. Grade(s) awarded by the issuing institution will not be included in the calculation of the student's overall grade point average. After the petition and transcript are on file, they will be reviewed by the Registrar's Office for conformity to USD policies.

Waiver of Requirements

Students who have taken an equivalent course prior to enrollment at USD may petition to waive a course requirement; however, the total number of required program units will remain the same. Consequently, if a waiver petition is approved, students must enroll in coursework approved by their advisor and/or program director to make up the difference in the total number of units required.

USD has the discretion to approve or deny course waivers based on the content of the course and when or where it was taken. The administrative coordinator for your program can provide you with a [Request for Substitution/Waiver of Graduation Requirements form](#). The completed form with appropriate signatures from the department chair or program director and the SMSE Associate Dean must be submitted to the Torero Hub team.

Petition to Graduate

The University's policy is located at:

<https://graduate.catalog.sandiego.edu/academics/academicsandadmission#completion-of-degree-requirements-the-petition-to-graduate>

In order to be cleared for degree completion, students, in consultation with the Academic Program Director, must file a Petition to Graduate in the Graduate Records Office by posted deadlines. There are three graduation dates: January 31, May 31, and August 31. Students who meet the deadline for May graduation will receive their degree at that time, and students who fulfill all requisites for their degree in the summer will have their degree recorded in their transcript effective August 31st. Students who fail to meet the stipulated deadlines will not be permitted to graduate, even if all other graduation requirements have been met. In order to receive permission to attend commencement, eligible students must register and pay in full for their remaining units at USD no later than May 1st. The University of San Diego holds only ONE graduation ceremony each year. All graduates during the relevant academic year are welcome to participate in this May graduation ceremony.

Graduate students scheduled to receive their degree the following August who have nine (9) units or fewer remaining work may participate if their work falls in the category of coursework, portfolio, practicum/fieldwork/student teaching, or internship. Such August graduates must take the remaining summer work at USD, and they must register and pay for their remaining units by May 1st. If a candidate does not graduate at the expected time, the registrar will automatically roll the Petition for Graduation over to the next graduation period if it is in the same calendar year. If the graduation period extends beyond the calendar year for which the petition was filed, a new petition must be completed.

Students scheduled to graduate in August whose remaining program requirements include any of the following will not be allowed to participate in the preceding May commencement: comprehensive exam, final project or paper, master's thesis, or doctoral dissertation.

University Policies of Importance to Graduate Students

SMSE follows the University's policies regarding equal opportunity, discrimination and harassment, family educational rights and privacy, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. These policies, as well as others, are located in the graduate academic course catalog at <https://graduate.catalog.sandiego.edu/overview/aboutusd#policies>

Student Complaint Policies

SMSE encourages students to give voice to concerns that arise in the course of their programs of study. When individual student complaints are governed by a specific University or SMSE policy, the complaint should be handled in a manner consistent with that policy. Examples include, but are not limited to grade grievances, complaints of harassment, discrimination, or research misconduct.

Complaints about courses, other than grade grievances, should be brought directly to the instructor of the class in question to seek resolution through a face-to-face discussion. If this meeting does not resolve the student's concern, he or she should meet with the appropriate program director or department chair to seek assistance. If, after taking this step, the student's concern is still unresolved, he or she should contact the Associate Dean of the SMSE, who will work to resolve the issue in conformance with the policies of USD, SMSE, and the student's program. There is no appeal beyond this level.

Complaints of a non-academic nature, as well as personal issues that are interfering with academic progress, should be brought directly to the Associate Dean of the SMSE.

Grade Grievance Procedures

The University's Grade Grievance Procedure is located at
<https://graduate.catalog.sandiego.edu/academics/academicregulations>

The instructor's judgment regarding assessment and grading is presumed to be correct. Therefore, the burden of qualifying a grievance rests with the student. At every level in the grievance procedures, all participants should understand this presumption. Grading criteria, course content, assignments, and other requirements are set by instructors and provided to students in writing. The presumption is that students have been given ample opportunity for clarification of class requirements, including assessment, at the beginning of a given course. A student has the right to question a final grade given by a faculty member.

1. Any student may at any time consult their instructor about a grade. The exercise of this right does not require a fixed procedure, nor is it subject to procedural conditions.
2. If a student feels that she or he has been given an unjust grade, the student should first approach her or his instructor to resolve the difficulty. However, if the student believes she or he has a reason not to approach the instructor, the Department Chair (or her or his delegate) shall be the judge of the advisability or inadvisability of making this first step.
3. In cases where the dispute cannot be resolved in direct consultation with the instructor, the student may take their concerns, along with any graded work, to the Department Chair. The student may request that the instructor provide the student with a copy of the work in question. The Chair shall review the disputed grade in consultation with the instructor. After this review, the instructor may decide whether to change the original grade or not. The Chair will communicate the instructor's decision to the student.
4. If the matter is not satisfactorily settled at number "3" above, the student may present his/her case to the Associate Dean for review.
5. If the efforts described in steps "2" through "4" do not resolve the dispute, the student may formally challenge the assigned grade. The policy regarding a formal challenge of a grade in the Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering is as follows:

- a. An academic grade may only be formally challenged on grounds that it reflects criteria other than those stated in the course syllabus.
 - b. Students may only challenge grades when they claim to have earned a grade at least one full letter higher than the grade assigned by the instructor (e.g., the student is assigned a grade of C+ and alleges that the actual grade should have been B+ or higher).
 - c. A written petition presenting evidence concerning step “5.a.” must be submitted to the Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering Associate Dean no later than the end of the seventh full week of instruction in the semester following that in which the grade was given.
6. The procedure following the submission of the petition by the student is as follows:
- a. Upon receipt of the petition, the Associate Dean will promptly appoint a committee consisting of two faculty members and one student. The student and at least one of the faculty members will be associated with the student’s program. The committee’s membership is privileged information.
 - b. The committee will promptly decide whether the evidence presented by the student warrants an investigation. If it does not warrant an investigation, the committee will take no further action on the case, and the student will be so notified. If the committee so finds, it will conduct an investigation.
 - c. During the investigation, the committee must provide a fair proceeding for the instructor and student, including information as to the character and object of the proceedings, knowledge of the allegations and evidence produced by the student in making out their case, and an opportunity for both parties to respond in writing and/or orally.
 - d. If, during this investigation, the instructor voluntarily decides to change the original grade assigned, the instructor will report this decision to the student and the Associate Dean, and the committee will take no further action.
 - e. If no agreement is reached, the committee must decide whether the grade reflected criteria other than those stated on the syllabus, and if so, the criteria that were reflected.
 - f. Their conclusions shall be made in the form of a preliminary written report, copies of which are to be sent to the Associate Dean, the instructor, and the student. The instructor and the student will have the opportunity to submit written responses to the committee within ten days of receipt of the preliminary report. The committee will review the written responses, if any, before issuing its final report to the Associate Dean.
 - g. The submission of the final written report to the Associate Dean will be the final action taken by the committee.

NOTE: All other student academic appeals in SMSE will follow a similar process.

General Policies and Procedures

USD Graduate Student Email Requirement

All USD students are required to have a @sandiego.edu email account. The university may conduct official business by sending notices or other information to the student's USD email address. It is the student's responsibility to check regularly his or her account and to respond to any notices or information in a timely manner. Failure to do so will not be considered a legitimate reason for a policy exception. The University's policy is located at:

<https://graduate.catalog.sandiego.edu/academics/academicregulations#registration-policies-and-procedures1>

Change of Address

Updating your address is done through the 'MySanDiego' portal. If you are unable to access that, complete the attached form. The [Change of Address Form](#) must accompany a signature. Please include your ID number or Social Security number, along with your local, permanent, and billing address, current phone number, and signature. You can either mail or fax your request. Email is not accepted.

Children on Campus

SMSE provides a supportive environment for parents attending SMSE programs and classes. However, children of students are not permitted to attend class or course activities except in the case of a last-minute, unforeseen emergency.

USD Smoking and Tobacco-Free Policy

Effective August 18, 2015, the university's Smoking and Tobacco-Free Campus policy will promote a healthful environment and a "Culture of Care" for all students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Smoking and tobacco use will be prohibited on all University of San Diego property. The university is also providing resources to support those students, faculty, and staff who are interested in smoking cessation programs. The university's policy is located here: <http://www.sandiego.edu/smoke-free/policy.php>

Technical Requirements

Students in the MS in Applied Artificial Intelligence (AAI) program must have access to a modern computer and a reliable high-speed internet connection throughout the program. Courses include online learning, technical assignments, collaborative projects, multimedia content, and the use of evolving industry-standard technologies and cloud-based platforms.

Recommended Requirements

- Modern laptop or desktop computer (Windows or Mac)
- Reliable high-speed internet connection
- Updated web browser, such as Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox
- Webcam, microphone, and speakers/headset for virtual meetings, presentations, and collaboration

Students will regularly use university-supported and industry-standard platforms, including Canvas Learning Management System, Zoom, Slack, Microsoft Office 365, and Google Workspace/Gmail, provided through USD. Additional software tools and cloud-based platforms may be required depending on the course and will be provided by instructors as needed.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How should I keep track of the financial aid documents and additional forms?** It is suggested that students constantly monitor their student portal (mysandiego.edu) to receive the most up-to-date information regarding their financial aid.
2. **How many units do I need to take to be eligible for financial aid?** If a student drops below 4.5 semester units, they are no longer eligible to receive financial aid.
3. **What additional financial aid forms do I need to complete besides the FAFSA?**
Every student's file is unique, so in addition to completing the MPN and Entrance Loan Counseling, they may have to:
 - Submit documents required for the federal Financial Aid Verification compliance process
 - Provide notarized proof of their identity
 - Resolve any outstanding C-Codes (Comment Codes) in their file, such as those relating to previously defaulted student loans
4. **What are the interest rates for student loans available for graduate students?** Students are eligible for unsubsidized loans.
5. **What other forms do you suggest I complete?** It is advised that the student fill out the FERPA release form if they plan to allow someone else to access their personal information.
6. **How do I receive my FA award letter?** The award letter is sent via email. You will need to accept or deny the award electronically.
7. **Can financial aid be used to pay for books, course materials, and on-campus experiences? If so, what is the process?** Yes, financial aid can be used for any school-related purpose. If students receive excess funding after their tuition and fees have been deducted, they can use those funds to assist with these expenses. However, you are advised to take out only what you need for the program.
8. **Is financial aid awarded year-round?** There are specific deadlines in order to be awarded financial aid for all three (3) semesters. There is one FAFSA application for each academic year, which starts in the Fall and ends after the Summer term. (Ex. Fall 2026 – Summer 2027 aligns with the 2026-2027 FAFSA application). For the summer semester, there is an additional summer supplemental form to be completed in addition to FAFSA. [Refer to the Torero Hub website for details.](#)
9. **Is there additional financial aid available for military personnel?** Yellow Ribbon is automatically awarded to inactive military, and they can be 100% eligible depending on their service time. Tuition assistance is also accepted, but military students must be on active duty to receive it. G.I. Bill requires students to provide a Certificate of Eligibility.
10. **What services does the Student Accounts Office provide?** The Student Accounts Office provides services to our students with billing and payment of tuition, fees, financial aid updates,

and registration access. You are encouraged to check your student portal regularly for updates.

- 11. Is there a payment plan option?** Yes. Students have the option to pay in 3-5 equal installments, dependent upon the start date; Student Accounts provides this option for a processing fee of \$50 per semester.
- 12. What is your drop policy?** **Both** courses must be dropped *prior* to the first day of the semester to receive a 100% tuition refund and within the first three days of the start date of the semester to receive a 95% tuition refund. **No refund** will be provided for either course after the third day of the semester. Students located in Oregon should contact their Program Coordinator for information on tuition refund schedules. *During the first semester of enrollment, any tuition refund amounts will not include the non-refundable enrollment deposit amount (5% of tuition).
- 13. How do I know when to register for classes?** Students will be registered for courses by their student success team on a semester-by-semester basis. Once registered, students will receive an email confirming their registration. It is the student's responsibility to notify the Program Coordinator if they do not wish to be enrolled in a given semester.
- 14. What happens if I relocate during the MS-AAI program? (Online Programs Only)** Students must notify the university if they relocate to another state at any time during their program. If a student relocates, either temporarily or permanently, to a state not currently authorized [as listed on the website](#), they will become ineligible to continue in their program due to state authorization regulations. Please review the unauthorized states before making any relocation plans.

Program Contacts and Important Websites and Emails

Academic Director Ebrahim Tarshizi, PhD, MBA etarshizi@san Diego.edu	Your Student Success Team Studentsuccess@san Diego.edu Online Part-Time: https://onlinedegrees.san Diego.edu/studentsuccess/msaai/ On-Campus Full-Time: https://onlinedegrees.san Diego.edu/studentsuccess/msaai-ft/
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USD Student Portal My.SanDiego.edu	Canvas canvas.san Diego.edu	ITS (Technical Support) 619-260-7900 help@san Diego.edu
Copley Library 619-260-4799 libanswers.san Diego.edu/Copley@san Diego.edu	Torero Store usdtoreroStores.com	Campus Card Services 619-260-5999 san Diego.edu/campuscard/campuscard@san Diego.edu
Financial Aid Office 619-260-2700 san Diego.edu/torero-hub/financial-aid Torero Hub Inquiry Form	Office of Graduate Records (Registrar) 619-260-4600 x2888 usdgradrec@san Diego.edu	Student Accounts 619-260-2700 (Option 3) san Diego.edu/finance/student-financial-services/student-accounts.php Student Inquiry Form