HRP16: Aviation and Drone Operations

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) This Procedure aims to ensure Southern Cross University (SCU) management, employees, students, and others know the risks associated with aviation and drone operation in the workplace and relevant management strategies for the risk mitigation process.

(2) All employees, students, and others must follow this Procedure.

(3) This Procedure applies to all SCU Work Units and sites.

Section 2 - Definitions

Remotely Piloted Air Operator's Certificate (ReOC)	Commercial drone operators must hold a Remotely Piloted Air Operator's Certificate issued by CASA.
Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)	A government body that regulates Australian aviation safety, licensing of pilots and registration of aircraft.
Chief Remote Pilot	The person is responsible for operational management, regulatory compliance, risk assessment, and training for drone operations.
Competent Person	Organisations and service providers assessed by the SCU maintenance controller (MC) as competent to provide Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) maintenance services.
Defect	Any confirmed abnormal condition of an item, irrespective of whether the condition could eventually fail. In addition to imperfections that may impair the structure, composition or function of the RPAS, the scope of this definition encompasses any intermittent failure, spurious warning or fault in the operation of an RPAS that may cause it to deviate from the manufacturer's specifications.
Hazard	A situation or thing that has the potential to harm a person. Hazards at work may include noisy machinery, a moving forklift, chemicals, electricity, working at heights, a repetitive job, bullying and violence at the workplace.
MC	Maintenance Controller.
Official authorisation	An authorisation, termed from CASA, Air Services Australia, or any other authority responsible for providing an aviation authorisation, including the controlling authority of a prohibited or restricted area.
RP	Remote Pilot.
RPA	A remotely piloted aircraft, previously referred to as an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), is also known as a drone.
RPAS	Remotely Piloted Aircraft System.
RiskWare	Electronic database for reporting incidents, near misses, and hazards. RiskWare includes the investigation of incidents against systemic causes, the assignment of corrective actions, and regulatory and performance reporting.
Significant change	Please refer to CASA for definition, depending on the relevant legislation.

Visual meteorological conditions	For SCU RPA operations, this refers to horizontal visibility greater than 5000 metres and clear of cloud. For manned aircraft, see CASA definitions, depending on airspace, altitude, and height above ground level.

Section 3 - General Principles

SCU Aircraft

(4) Eastern Air Services is the registered operator of the SCU aircraft VH-AEV. SCU minimises the risks arising from SCU-owned aircraft flown commercially or privately by:

a. Ensuring all employees, contractors, students, and others have access to this procedure. They will be inducted into the SCU WHS Safety Management System and the Eastern Air Services Safety Management System.
b. Ensuring that all employees, contractors, students and others are competent in executing their duties.
c. All employees, contractors, students and others must comply with relevant instructions and procedures directed by the Eastern Air Services Pilot.
d. Ensure all SCU records relating to commercial flights and plane maintenance performed by contracted services meet regulatory requirements.

Remotely Piloted Aircraft (Drones)

(5) SCU minimises the risks arising from Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPAs) through the latest version of the RPA Operations Manual and RPAS Operational Library.

Consultation

(6) Effective communication and coordination between the university, maintenance providers, and pilots are essential to ensure a cohesive approach to aviation safety.

(7) SCU ensures consultation and communication with employees, managers, contractors and others who participate in aircraft operation, maintenance, service and supervision activities, including all contractors, such as Eastern Air Services. Documentation such as the SCU Science flight briefing and authorisation form supports this coordination.

Information, Instruction and Training

(8) Southern Cross University (SCU) owns aircraft, contracts out aircraft operations and maintenance management and hires commercial pilots for operations through Eastern Air Services. The following rules and guidelines apply to ensure the highest standards of aviation safety are maintained:

Pilot Licensing and Responsibilities.

(9) Licensing

a. Pilots must be appropriately licensed for the type of operations they conduct, whether private or commercial, as required by the Australian civil aviation regulations.

(10) Medical Certification

a. Pilots must hold a valid medical certificate and meet specific medical standards commensurate with the type of operation, as required by Australian civil aviation regulations.

(11) Training and Competency

a. Pilots must undergo continuous training and periodic reviews to maintain their skills and competencies, as required by the Australian civil aviation regulations.

(12) Aircraft Maintenance and Airworthiness

a. Maintenance Providers: Only approved and CASA-certified maintenance providers are permitted to conduct maintenance on the SCU aircraft.

(13) Record Keeping

a. Meticulous records of all maintenance activities must be maintained and regularly reviewed.

(14) Airworthiness Standards

a. The aircraft must comply with all airworthiness standards, ensuring it is safe to operate.

(15) Operator and Commercial Operations

a. Air Operator's Certificate (AOC): Commercial operators must hold an AOC issued by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), demonstrating compliance with safety standards and operational requirements.

(16) Operational Oversight

a. CASA conducts routine and unscheduled surveillance, including audits and ramp checks, to ensure ongoing compliance.

(17) Private vs. Commercial Operations

a. Private Flights: When flying privately, the pilot is responsible for the flight's safety and must ensure the aircraft is airworthy.
b. Commercial Flights: Commercial operators face more stringent requirements, including higher standards for pilot licensing, maintenance, and operational oversight.

(18) Reporting and Compliance

a. Safety Obligations: Both private and commercial pilots must adhere to aviation safety rules and regulations.
b. Incident Reporting: CASA encourages reporting any suspected unsafe behaviour or non-compliance to maintain aviation safety.

Equipment use and planning

(19) SCU employees must have a flight plan approved by the SCU Aircraft Safety Officer. Eastern Air Services submits its flight plan to the Eastern Air Services Chief Pilot for sign-off.

(20) All incidents, near misses and hazards related to the operation of SCU aircraft must be reported in Riskware.

(21) All incidents and accidents related to SCU aircraft operations must also be reported to the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) by Eastern Air Services.

(22) The Regulations define occurrences that must be reported to the ATSB as “immediately reportable”, which must be reported by telephone as soon as reasonably practical, and “routine reportable” matters, which can be notified to the ATSB by a written report within 72 hours.

(23) All notifiable incidents must also be notified to the WHS regulator immediately after becoming aware that a notifiable incident arising out of the conduct of the operations of SCU aircraft has occurred by Eastern Air Services.

Occurrence	ATSB Reporting requirement.
Death or serious injury to a person	Report as soon as is reasonably practicable by phoning the ATSB on 1800 011 034. Follow up with a written report to ATSB within 72 hours. Report to State Regulator on: NSW - 13 10 50 QLD – 1300 362 128 immediately, you become aware of this and follow up with written notice within 48 hours.
RPA missing RPA suffering severe damage (or reasonable grounds to believe it may be seriously damaged) RPA inaccessible with reasonable grounds to believe it may be seriously damaged Serious property damage Loss of separation	(17) Submit a written report within 72 hours to Occurrence Notification - Aviation | ATSB.

Section 4 - Roles and Responsibilities

(24) The SCU Vice-Chancellor has the following responsibilities relating to SCU's Aviation and RPA Operations:

a. Ensure appropriate competent resources have been appointed in WHS roles commensurate to the risk profile of SCU, including appointing a competent person to advise SCU Management on their WHS duties relating to SCU aircraft operations and RPAs and ensure that they are being appropriately discharged.
b. Ensure those under their direct management receive adequate information, instruction and training to discharge their duties relating to SCU aircraft operations and RPA's.
c. Ensure SCU has sufficient suitably experienced, qualified, competent employees and a suitable management structure.
d. Co-operate with the requirements or advice given by regulatory/enforcing authorities and the WHS Manager regarding WHS legislative requirements.
e. Review the findings from significant accidents/incidents, ensuring lessons learnt are shared across the business.
f. Take such disciplinary measures as necessary when breaches of WHS, ATSB, CASA or the RPA Operations Manual requirements occur in line with disciplinary procedures.
g. A change of key employees is considered significant and requires prior approval from CASA. Wherever possible, the SCU VC will ensure the change of employees is approved by CASA before the holder of a key position vacates that position.

(25) Vice Presidents/Pro/Deputy Vice-Chancellors have the following responsibilities relating to SCU's aviation and RPA operations:

a. Ensure procedures are followed to ensure the airworthiness of both planes and pilots.
b. Ensure appropriate competent resources have been appointed to manage the risk of private flights, commercial flights, and RPA operations commensurate to the risk profiles of SCU.
c. Ensure material and financial resources are available to meet the SCU aviation and RPA operations requirements.
d. Ensure those under their direct management receive adequate information, instruction, and training relating to SCU aviation and RPA operations.

e. Co-operate with the requirements or advice given by the Regulators/Enforcing Authorities.
f. Review the findings from significant accidents/incidents, ensuring lessons learnt are shared across SCU.
g. Establish and regularly review SCU private flight and RPA's safety performance indicators and targets.
h. Ensure that SCU aviation and RPA's approved documented practices and procedures are monitored and managed for continuous improvement.
i. Ensure that key employees satisfactorily carry out the responsibilities of their positions in accordance with this procedure, operations manual and the relevant civil aviation legislation.
j. Ensure that CASA is notified of any change:
    i. SCU CRP's name, address or contact details.
    ii. The registered operator of the SCU Aircraft (currently EAS).
    iii. Changes to RPA's.
    iv. Nominated employees.
    v. Financial status where the change may impact the safety of SCU aviation and RPA operations.
    vi. Review the findings from significant accidents/incidents, ensuring lessons learnt are shared across SCU.

(26) Heads of Work Units have the following responsibilities relating to SCU aviation and RPA operations:

a. Comply with the RPA Operations Manual.
b. Ensure regular inspections and monitoring have been conducted for identified tests/equipment within their responsibility.
c. Ensure any SCU aviation and RPA-related hazards or incidents are reported in RiskWare.
d. Ensure appropriate disciplinary measures occur where intentional breaches of this procedure are identified.
e. Ensure that before approving a project that involves commercial flight for employees under their control, there has been a comprehensive plan submitted outlining the following:
    i. Lead or supervise employee/lecturer.
    ii. Duration of the project.
    iii. Number of employees/students participating.
    iv. Equipment required to undertake the task.
    v. Additional safety requirements, e.g., personal protective equipment, qualifications/certifications, and in-house training.
    vi. Risk assessment will be done with approval from the Head of the Work Unit.

Chief Remote Pilot (CRP)

(27) The CRP is responsible for safely managing the RPA operations of {SCU RPA}. Without limiting the duties and accountabilities of the CRP, the CRP must:

a. Ensure that RPA operations are conducted in accordance with relevant civil aviation legislation.
b. Ensure that pilots and crew are suitably qualified and have appropriate experience and skills to enable them to fulfil the duties of their position satisfactorily.
c. Maintain a record of qualifications held by the RP and OC.
d. Monitor the operational standards and proficiency of the RP and OC.
e. Review compliance and facilities by:
    i. Conducting internal audits.
    ii. Reviewing audit findings; and
    iii. Taking any necessary corrective action to rectify deficiencies as soon as possible.
    iv. Review scheduling and rostering of crew to ensure that fatigue does not adversely affect the safety of

operations.

v. Provide the RP and OC with ready access to all documents and manuals necessary to ensure the safety of all flights.
vi. Advise the SCU VC of any matter concerning RPA operations relevant to the SCU VC's duties.
vii. Maintenance Controller (MC)

f. The MC ensures that SCU RPA's operating RPAS are properly maintained. Without limiting the duties and accountabilities of the MC, the MC must:
    i. Control all RPAS maintenance, either scheduled or unscheduled.
    ii. Keep records of all employees permitted to perform maintenance on RPA, including details of their training and qualifications in the RPAOM.
    iii. Develop, enforce and monitor RPAS maintenance standards.
    iv. Maintain a record of RPAS defects and unserviceability issues.
    v. Ensure that each item of equipment essential to the operation of SCU RPA's RPA is serviceable before being released to service.
    vi. Maintain a thorough technical knowledge of RPAS operating under the authority of the ReOC of SCU RPA.
    vii. Ensure that all maintenance activities are conducted in accordance with the procedures detailed in the RPAOM.
    viii. Investigate all significant defects in the RPAS.
    ix. Monitor the failure rates of RPAS components and impose additional maintenance requirements as necessary to ensure the safety of operations.

(28) Employees:

a. Must not place themselves or other employees at risk of injury.
b. Must follow all related procedures and instructions.
c. Must complete any training and adhere to PPE requirements.
d. Are to report any RPA-related hazards and incidents in RiskWare.
e. Section 5 - Records of Documentation.
f. Copies of this procedure not accessed directly from the system are designated as uncontrolled. Uncontrolled copies of the manual are not to be used unless the copy is verified to be identical to the current manual edition stored in the system.
g. All employees must provide a written acknowledgement (an electronic acknowledgement such as an email is permitted) to the CRP stating that they have accessed, read and understood this manual before carrying out any duty essential to the control or navigation of an RPA.

Section 5 - Record Management

(29) Records fall into four categories:

a. Employees records.
b. Flight-related records.
c. RPA-related records.
d. Administrative records.

(30) The CRP manages employees, flight-related and administrative records. The MC is responsible for managing RPA-related records.

Type of record	Minimum retention period.
Training event	7 years after the date on which the record was made.
Checking event	7 years after the date on which the record was made.
Attainment of RP qualification (including relevant qualifications held before commencement of employment)	7 years after the date of the RP's last operation of an RPA for SCU RPA.
Attainment of qualification of competency in relation to the safety of RPA operations (other than RP duties)	7 years after the date on which the person ceases to be employed by SCU RPA.
RP logbook	7 years after the date of the RP's last operation of an RPA for SCU RPA .
Flight Record	7 years after the date on which the record was made.
Written consent to operate at a distance of less than 30 metres from a person	7 years after the date on which the consent was provided.
RPAS Technical Log	7 years after the last time the RPA is operated by the operator.
Register of RPA operated by SCU RPA, including manufacturer, model, maximum gross weight and serial number	7 years after the date on which the record was made.
Acknowledgement of access to and understanding of SCU RPA operations manual version	7 years after the acknowledgement is made.
Register of persons (other than the CRP) permitted to conduct training and checking (if applicable)	7 years after the last time training or checking is provided by the trainer.
Compliance audit record	7 years from the date of the audit.
Risk register	For each version of the register, 12 months after a new version is issued.
Safety occurrence register	For each safety occurrence entry in the register, 7 years from the date of occurrence.

Section 6 - Revision and Approval History

(31) This Procedure will be reviewed as per nominated review dates or because of other events, such as:

a. Internal and external audit outcomes.
b. Legislative changes.
c. Outcomes from management reviews.
d. Incidents.

Section 7 - References

Civil Aviation Act 1988
Airspace Act 2007
Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998
Civil Aviation Regulations 1988
Civil Aviation Orders

Airspace Regulations 2007
Australian Government Civil Aviation Safety Authority - Manuals of Standards
Airworthiness Directives
Work Health and Safety Act (in the applicable jurisdiction that SCU operates)
Work Health and Safety Regulation (in the applicable jurisdiction that SCU operates)

Section 8 - Related Documents

SCU Remotely Piloted Aircraft Operations Manual
Remotely Piloted Aircraft (Drone) Policy
SCU Science flight briefing and authorisation form
SCU scientific flight preparation checklist
SCU Aircraft Instrument Operator / Flight Scientist Induction
SCU Aircraft Safe Operating Procedure (VQ-840-G LiDAR Flight)

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Responsible Executive	Kim Franks Vice President (People and Culture)
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