Subject Specialists,
Academic Services, and
Integrity

Service FAQ

Studiosity has partnered with Australian educational leaders since 2003 to deliver complete student academic care alongside measurement and insight for holistic cohort uplift.
“I love working for Studiosity because every time I sit down to work, I leave having made a real difference to actual people. Helping people out on their educational journey is something that really means something to me. It's a tough job, but it's definitely rewarding!”

- Ethan Levy, Subject Specialist, double degree in Management & Law, SA

Contact

National Head Office:
104/11 Chandos Street
St Leonards NSW 2065
Australia
(+61) 9906 2700

Further reading

About Studiosity: http://www.studiosity.com/about

Education Policies: http://www.studiosity.com/edupolicy

Academic Integrity Policy: http://www.studiosity.com/integrity

Meet our Subject Specialists: http://www.studiosity.com/meet

Academic Advisory Board: http://www.studiosity.com/aab
FAQ: Subject Specialists, Academic Services, and Integrity

Even the brightest minds in the world can’t deliver a million quality study experiences, without well-designed technology and stringent accreditation, review, and mentoring policies.

Who are the Subject Specialists?
Recruitment, screening, and training

What are the minimum requirements to become a Studiosity Subject Specialist?

We employ strict recruitment and screening processes. Minimum criteria include an undergraduate degree, a high level of written English, a demonstrated passion for education and a current Working With Children or police check.

Every eligible applicant then undergoes extensive knowledge and subject matter testing. For certain subject areas, breaking down the question to demonstrate step-by-step solution methodology is essential.

The Writing Feedback screening test involves review of a ‘mock’ submission that the applicant is required to annotate with comments in problematic areas and provide a
feedback summary detailing areas for improvement. These are screened by the Head of Recruitment and Development.

Approximately 75% of applicants do not pass our rigorous screening and testing process.

**How are the Subject Specialists trained, what is the onboarding process?**

We have established a best practice competency framework for the training and ongoing professional development of our online staff. All Subject Specialists go through initial mandatory training of 2-6 hours of eLearning modules to up-skill them to the baseline of these competencies, thus becoming ‘student-ready’.

The learning modules within this training program include a number of training videos and quizzes that are used to ensure Subject Specialists are knowledgeable about Studiosity core policy and procedures, services and bespoke tools. This includes direct training and testing on our Academic Integrity Policy, which outlines the standards expected of all employees.

There are also two ‘sandbox’ environments related to the Writing Feedback and live online classroom platforms, to allow Subject Specialists to become familiar with the live classroom interface and the Writing Feedback annotator. This way, they can raise any questions or queries about the tools prior to entering their first live session with a student, or providing feedback on a submission.

Once they complete the training and reach ‘student-ready’ status, Subject Specialists are assigned a Mentor and all their activity is monitored closely for a probationary period of six weeks while they are still considered ‘novice’. After this, Subject Specialists are given ongoing professional development including annual trainings, to ensure their skills and underpinning knowledge are evolving with the latest information about best practice for their discipline.

Subject Specialists who show outstanding aptitude and dedication are given the opportunity to develop their skills further, and become Senior Subject Specialists, Mentors or work in other functions within the Academic Services team.
What qualifications do they have?

Our exceptional Subject Specialists are passionate lifelong learners. Over 35%¹ graduated with Honours, 58%¹ are currently studying towards a further qualification and 30%¹ already hold postgraduate qualifications such as a Grad Dip, Masters or PhD.

Over half¹ of our Subject Specialists have received higher education externally recognised merits or academic excellence awards, including Dean’s Awards, Honour Roll, academic scholarships and bursaries, membership of the Golden Key Society, First in Subject Awards, and APAs.

Our Subject Specialists contribute to further academic endeavours with 28%¹ having published works, whether in a book, peer-reviewed academic publication or conference paper.

What experience do they have?

Over a third¹ of our Subject Specialists are full-time educators. In addition to working with us, they’re employed as teachers, lecturers, teaching assistants, or professional Subject Specialists. A further 23%¹ work in academia or research, including lab assistants, researchers, and educational material developers.

Some have completed mentoring, leadership, counselling or training courses outside their degree studies and a third hold specific qualifications or experience in teaching ESL, NESB, and CALD students.

Why do people become online Subject Specialists?

The rare flexibility of working from home, at a time that is personally convenient, is a huge benefit for our online staff.

All our Subject Specialists have a deep and compelling belief in the power of education to transform not only individual lives, but also impact on our society. They enjoy the process of helping a student achieve their ‘aha’ moment, build confidence, and strive to achieve their best in every academic endeavour.
Do they have other jobs ‘on the side’ or are they full time?

Approximately half of the Subject Specialists work for Studiosity as their main job and source of income.

The rest mostly maintain jobs in their field of specialism.

Education - 30%
Teachers, lecturers, teaching assistants, Subject Specialists

Academia/research - 22%
Researchers, research assistants, lab assistants, demonstrators

Engineering - 4%

Support/social work - 11%
Counsellors, special needs carers, coaches

Freelancing/consulting - 11%
Small business owners, writers, copy editors, contractors, artists

Other - 22%

Are they robots?

Computer-assisted/robotic response systems or AI are not part of the educational technology suite provided by Studiosity. Our approach uses cutting-edge technology as an enabler, to remove the barriers of time and distance between the learner and live, academic support.

For example, our interactive whiteboard technology in the Connect Live classroom enables students to get immediate support from a qualified Subject Specialist who uses the whiteboard to collaborate with the student and help work through discipline-related misconceptions.

Likewise, our Writing Feedback application has been designed to integrate annotated feedback that is embedded within the document, to ensure feedback to the learner is clear and directional.

There has been significant research confirming that this kind of real-time support, received at the point of confusion can significantly contribute to a student’s ability to retain understanding in the long term.
How do you know the Subject Specialists are real?

We take the credibility and quality of Subject Specialist pool very seriously. All Subject Specialists are subjected to our rigorous screening and training process prior to interacting with any of our students.

We require academic transcripts and valid Working With Children and police checks as applicable to where they are based. We also constantly engage with our Subject Specialists through a vibrant live chat community that fosters peer-support for those that are geographically dispersed.

Where are they located?¹

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¹ Survey data collected March - April 2017 n=206
What is the quality assurance?

Academic integrity, policies and safety

Is this a cheating service?

Every interaction a student has with our service is governed by our Academic Integrity Policy (available online at studiosity.com/AcademicIntegrityPolicy).

Subject Specialists are expected to adhere to all our core policies, and are monitored and managed by Senior Mentors to ensure this is the case. One of our core educational policies is the ‘Help, Not Answers’ Policy. Providing answers or assisting students to ‘cheat’ is considered unacceptable, and requires detailed policy corrections and/or escalation to HR processing.

How is quality measured?

Post-session/submission quantitative ratings consistently maintain an average satisfaction score of over 4/5. Students also have the opportunity to provide a qualitative comment about their interaction. Approximately 23% of interactions (an average of 106 per night) receive this free-text feedback, which is monitored by our Customer Service and Student Experience teams, with every single comment being read and qualified.

As well as individual session feedback, students can also provide their overall impressions of the Studiosity service and its long-term effect on their confidence and grades. This data is collected via an optional in-app survey, collated and analysed at regular 3-6 month intervals.

How is quality assurance maintained?

Our dedicated Quality Assurance (QA) team have a number of detailed processes and procedures in place to ensure we maintain high quality student outcomes. Every unique session and written submission must adhere to our Education Policies and our Academic Integrity Policy, both of which are available to view and download online at studiosity.com/academic-services.
The service is fully transparent. All sessions and submissions are recorded and archived, and transcripts are viewable. Subject Specialists leave a short comment upon completion of each session about the outcome achieved, any issues faced, and general learning area covered.

Our approach to quality is proactive and includes a daily report of ‘low-rated’ sessions (1 or 2) for review by the QA team, enabling timely and remedial action. The team will identify risks to quality, provide feedback to Subject Specialists, and apply training or retraining options where necessary. Daily review also includes sessions identified ad hoc through student feedback.

All Subject Specialists also undergo periodic reviews to ensure they are maintaining quality. A review report is provided to the Subject Specialist by their Mentor, which includes session links that outline what they have done well, and what - if anything - can be improved.

Correction or prevention reviews are focused on providing Subject Specialists with the feedback needed to maintain ‘excellent’ outcomes. Subject Specialists receiving these reviews typically have a strong grasp of our pedagogy and approaches, and are receiving minimal to moderate intervention.

An intervention review typically requires an in-depth investigation of an issue or issues presented by a Subject Specialist, and results in detailed policy corrections and/or escalation to HR processing.

**What academic processes do you apply?**

For a thorough explanation of our policies and educational framework, in which all Subject Specialists must undergo training prior to engaging with any student, please refer to our Educational Policies document, available at studiosity.com/edupolicy.

**Is it safe?**

Our Connect Live classroom environment is effectively anonymous. Students are only identified as ‘student’, and Subject Specialists by their first name and surname initial, e.g. ‘Ethan L’. Subject Specialists can see only the information the student has selected on their way into the classroom: year level and subject, as well as the name of the institution they are connecting through, if applicable.
Our Subject Specialists are trained to end sessions and report instances where a student provides personally identifying information (such as a phone number or photo). Any student communication that suggests the student is at risk (e.g. bullying, severe anxiety, self-harm) triggers our ‘At Risk’ Policy, where the Subject Specialist will send an appropriate message, end the session and immediately report the incident.

All Subject Specialists must hold valid Working With Children Checks and police checks. They complete training on our ‘At Risk’ Policy as part of their induction. The service is continuously monitored, and breaches of any policies are dealt with swiftly and comprehensively.

“Studiosity is committed to maintaining the highest levels of academic integrity and considers this commitment to be the responsibility of all staff within the organisation.”

- Policy Statement, Studiosity’s Academic Integrity Policy
How do you work with your partners?

Complementarity and holistic support

Will your service reduce the need for on-campus support or teaching staff?

Not at all. In fact, research within our partner institutions has found that most students use our service as supplementary to what they receive face-to-face or on campus. Increased engagement with Studiosity did not decrease engagement with other services (download the full study at studiosity.com/case-study-jcu-and-studiosity). Additionally, the accessibility of Studiosity removes barriers to support for an extra cohort of students who otherwise might not engage with traditional support services.

With increasing numbers of students studying either online or through blended course delivery, we have seen that study patterns have also changed. Many tertiary students now work full time, have young families or other commitments, and fit study around their everyday lives. This often means that they do not visit campus, and evenings and weekends are put aside to engage with their coursework.

Traditional, on-campus, face-to-face support is not always accessible to online or distance students, or available at times when they may get ‘stuck’ or need help to get over the threshold they have reached. This is where our services fill the gap. On-demand study help in a range of subjects, or through our Writing Feedback service enables a contemporary hybrid model of support that co-exists with existing support offerings.

How does this complement existing support services?

We step in when academics and teachers are not available, because student outcomes are improved when they can get help right when they need it. Not only that, students expect timely assistance as part of a modern student experience. We fill the gap after hours, or on weekends, when your students expect to find help. We provide support when you are not around; in the evening, weekends and semester breaks, with on-demand support.

How will the Subject Specialists know my curriculum or course content?

They don’t need to. The Studiosity service provides in-the-moment, point-of-need help for students.
When students are stuck on a concept or a question in their homework or study, or need foundation support with basic study skills, essay writing best practice or research skills, our Subject Specialists will break down their question, point them in the right direction, or provide gentle prompts and guidance to show the student how to get back on track with their task.

Subject Specialists will never give the student an answer, nor comment or provide feedback on the content of an essay or assignment. Please refer to our Academic Integrity Policy, containing the ‘Help, Not Answers’ Policy.

**What if a student receives conflicting feedback from Studiosity and their teacher/lecturer?**

As part of the comprehensive training and on-boarding process, Subject Specialists are trained on how to give useful, relevant and detailed feedback on the core academic strengths and weaknesses of a student’s work. Subject Specialists are trained to explicitly exclude commentary on content, likely marks or overt praise regarding an entire assignment.

To ensure adherence to these policies, our bespoke Writing Feedback platform has a number of inbuilt tools that filter what we call ‘banned’ words and phrases from Subject Specialists. A banned word or phrase is one that can mislead the student or confuse them. For example, ‘good work’ or ‘excellent’ can be perceived by the student as suggesting their work is of a high standard, when in fact, the comments relate to a specific sentence or paragraph.

The platform has a number of filters that scan feedback to ensure that Subject Specialists have not used banned words or phrases in either their in-text annotations or in the feedback summary. The platform also contains a clear disclaimer that students are required to actively accept, stating that any feedback they receive relates to academic writing only, and does not provide an indication of a final grade. They must understand that their grade can only be determined by their course convenor.

**How much do you pay your Subject Specialists?**

Our Subject Specialists are paid based on qualifications, experience and level of tenure in the service.