SUNKIRSTEN TOWN
A VIRTUAL CAMPUS EXPERIENCE FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE STUDENTS

Introduction

Sunkirsten Town is a virtual campus created for TAFE Queensland Community Services students. This virtual campus provides students with a place to attend formal learning activities such as class sessions, skills practice, and complex simulations using role-play avatars. Sunkirsten Town also offers students a place to meet informally to socialise and support each other (such as via study groups).

Avatar Abilities

To engage in Sunkirsten Town, students along with the teacher create an avatar (a digital representation of themselves, which can be changed as needed). As avatars, students and teachers are able to:

- Participate in a fully established community centre.
- Communicate using voice or typed chat.
- Use maps and mini-maps to navigate.
- Take photos and save these in-world or externally on their computers.
- Read notecards for instructions and information.
- Save items to their inventory for later use.
- Adapt and change clothing.
- Adapt and change their avatars.
- Interact with objects for a range of in-world activities.
- Interact with objects to integrate external resources with their in-world learning, such as links to:
  - Videos
  - Blogs
  - Web pages
  - Documents
  - Survey Monkey
  - TAFE Queensland Connect

Photo (above): Three students discuss their experiences in Sunkirsten Town.

These students were part of a pilot experience. If you would like to view a short video and hear some of their thoughts, click here.

The interview was conducted in Sunkirsten Town and you will see student avatars interacting as well as get a feel for the Sunkirsten atmosphere.

Photo (right): A teacher-avatar wearing the summer corporate wear of Sunkirsten’s community centre, the New Horizon’s Community Centre. Here she is standing on one of Sunkirsten Town’s beaches.
About Sunkirsten Town and Campus

Virtual worlds are not limited to the real world. To maximise this, the Sunkirsten virtual campus is divided into two key zones:

1. **The Sky Zone (The Campus)**, where students engage in learning activities, similar to real life educational settings. Here they function as students engaging in developing their knowledge and skills experiencing class lectures, discussions, group activities, roleplays and a range of other activities; and

2. **The Ground Zone (The Town)**, where students take on various worker, client and observer roles to engage in complex simulations; thinking through the eyes of community services workers and clients and applied in Sunkirsten Town.

When classes are not in session, students are welcome to explore all parts of this virtual campus and town.

Sample Learning Areas and Activities

These photos provide you with samples of activities and learning areas you can experience in Sunkirsten Town.

**Orientation Island in the Sky**

This is the place where you will first arrive at Sunkirsten Town. It has a number of areas where you can learn a range of virtual skills. You can explore this area individually or attend formal orientation sessions led by your teacher. This area is open 24/7 so you can explore, practice and learn the skills when you wish.

**Photo (1st right)** The arrival area at Orientation Island in the Sky.

**Photo (2nd right)** Relaxing around the fire at Orientation Island in the Sky, for a chat.

**Classroom Building**

This is a key learning area where you will meet for class sessions. This area has a classroom and areas for notices, collecting information, a lesson input area, discussion area and an interview room.

**Photo Classroom Foyer (3rd right):** Students meet before class to check the session topic (on the wall), sign-in, and collect notecards (session overviews). In the photo are four students and their teacher meeting briefly in the foyer before going into the class area.

**Photo The Lesson Area (4th right):** The lecture area is in the top left quadrant of the photo. The whiteboard is functional, the Power-Point board (light blue) works like a data projector and there are inter-active items for students to click to access real handouts to use during the session.

In the top right quadrant of this photo is an interview room, where the teacher and student-volunteers can roleplay with the class observing, followed by class discussion. Then the group breakouts for roleplay/simulation practice. The bottom front area of the photo is the discussion zone. When students click the yellow books on the table, they receive a notecard with instructions and the focus topic. They reflect quietly on these, then participate in the discussion using voice or typed chat.
The Community Centre
The New Horizons Community Centre is Sunkirsten Town’s community centre. It has a foyer and waiting area, interview rooms, meeting rooms, training room, staff room, lunch area, shower/toilet facilities and a laundry. Under the building is a large area for displays and exhibitions (e.g. youth week and domestic violence awareness).

Photo (top right) shows the entrance to the centre. The reception area has a number of information packs and forms. This centre hosts a range of activities held by community centres.

Photo Roleplay Debrief (middle right): Here, two students debrief with teacher-avatar, after role-playing/simulating a client encounter at the community centre. There are over 50 roleplay avatars students can use when playing the role of the client. These have allocated role-cards and preparation processes.

Photo (bottom right) Case Note Write-up: After roleplaying, the student in the worker role then moves to the community centre’s staff room to write up their case notes. To do this, they click on their computer screen, a Google Document then opens up for them to record their notes in real time, whilst still maintaining the simulation context.

Study Program
If you decide that you wish to study via this mode, you will be identified as a Virtual Study Mode Student. Study will involve:

1. Orientation This involves participating in an Orientation Day in Sunkirsten Town on Thursdays, 9am to 4.30pm. Focus will be on the virtual skills and a range of study skills to use during your study. You are welcome to be a part of a range of activities during this week, known as “Orientation Week”, noting Thursday is the formal class orientation session.

2. Formal Class Attendance (Compulsory) You are required to attend class sessions every term Thursday 9am to 4.30pm. Generally class days will be divided as follows:

   • Times:
     › 09.00am—10.30am
     › 11.00am—12.30pm
     › 01.30pm—02.45pm
     › 03.15pm—04.30pm

   • Each Thursday class will involve:
     › Overview and current affairs discussion
     › Teacher input, based on shared qualification topics
     › Class activities
     › Group work/simulations, based on qualifications
     › Individual consultation, as needed

You will also need to address study in your own time, individually and/or in groups.
3. **Course Resources:** These use a range of formats:
   - Sunkirsen class sessions and handouts
   - TAFE Queensland Connect web resources
   - Workbooks (if not available on TAFE Queensland Connect)
   - Research using the internet and other resources
   - You! Think about creating informal study groups and make the most of this virtual world experience.

4. **Required Hardware and Study Area:** Give some thought as to where you are going to study, especially on Thursdays for the formal class sessions. Comfort is important, but you also need an area which will allow you space to interact with your computer as well as take notes as you would in a real class. The key resources required are:
   - Computer/laptop
   - Internet connection
   - Headset with audio and microphone
   - Notebook and pens
   - Ideally a printer connection, but not required during class sessions

**Steps to Getting Started**

If you would like to explore the virtual experience before enrolling you are welcome to:

1. Create an avatar with the Kitely Virtual World Grid which hosts Sunkirsten Town
2. Download the Viewer software (which allows you to interact with the virtual world); and
3. Log-in to explore the Kitely Welcome area.

You won’t be able to visit Sunkirsten Town as this is locked to the public and only registered students can enter. But your initial logon to Kitely will give you an idea as to whether this study mode would be appropriate for you.

For more information, click on the following links for detailed steps and the participation agreement: