

# Special Studies Program Procedure - Academic Staff

## Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This Procedure describes the application and approval process for the Special Studies Program (SSP).

### Scope

(2) This Procedure applies to academic staff who are applying for SSP, and staff involved in selecting or approving applications for SSP.

## Section 2 - Glossary

(3) Nil.

## Section 3 - Policy

(4) Refer to the Special Studies Program Policy - Academic Staff.

## Section 4 - Procedures

### Part A - Application and Advertising Procedure

(5) In April each year the Division of Human Resources will call for applications for SSP for the following calendar year. Applications will close at the end of May.

(6) An employee seeking a period of SSP will complete the Application Form and submit it through the Head of School (HOS) to the Executive Dean of Faculty by the advertised closing date.

### Part B - Administrative Procedure

(7) Applications for SSP will be considered by a Faculty SSP Committee against the objectives and priorities of the Faculty.

#### Membership of the Faculty SSP Committee

(8) The Faculty SSP Committees will consist of the following members:

- a. Executive Dean (Presiding Officer);
- b. two academic staff members of the Faculty, nominated by the Executive Dean, at least one of whom will be a member of the professoriate; and
- c. a member of the professoriate external to the Faculty, nominated by the Executive Dean.

(9) NOTE: The Executive Dean will ensure that the Committee includes appropriate gender representation.

## Terms of reference

(10) The Faculty SSP Committees will make recommendations to the Executive Dean regarding applications to participate in SSP and:

- a. ensure applicants meet the eligibility criteria as specified in the Special Studies Program Policy;
- b. evaluate applications for SSP and rank them in order of merit;
- c. recommend any approval conditions to govern participation in the SSP;
- d. recommend the period of SSP and ensure that the HOS/supervisor has endorsed that it can be accommodated in the School/Centre operations;
- e. recommend travel grant funding; and
- f. review SSP reports and make recommendations to the Executive Dean on their adequacy and promulgation within the the University.

## Annual budget

(11) The funds available for SSP places will be determined in advance as part of the annual operating budget of the the University. This funding will be provided through an SSP levy on each Faculty. The Division of Human Resources will monitor the usage of the SSP funds assigned to each Faculty.

(12) NOTE: The travel grant amounts and Faculty supplementation are adjusted with salary indexation.

(13) The number of applications approved in a calendar year will be determined by the Executive Dean taking into account the nature of the applications received and the capacity of the Faculty to maintain the normal teaching/administration of the School.

## Part C - Assessment Criteria

(14) The SSP proposals will be considered by the Faculty committees in relation to the following:

- a. the potential professional development benefit expected to accrue from the SSP;
- b. the needs of the the University. Applicants will be expected to show how their particular SSP proposal will assist the the University and the Faculty to achieve the strategic objectives of the the University and Faculty;
- c. an assessment provided by the applicant's supervisor on the applicant's contribution to the the University and the Faculty, the extent to which the applicant's SSP proposal supports the the University's and Faculty's priorities as detailed in strategic plans, and the capacity to cover the applicant's workload. In making this assessment, the supervisor will consider:
  - i. the applicant's teaching, research, publication record, artistic productions, consultancies, professional activities, scholarly activities and academic leadership roles; the length of time since the applicant's last SSP and evidence of productive outcomes from that SSP, including a final report; and
  - ii. the applicant's professional development needs and the alignment of the SSP to his/her performance management objectives.

### NOTES:

It would normally be expected that the intention to apply for SSP and the outcomes to be achieved would have been a topic of conversation between the applicant and his/her supervisor during a previous performance management meeting.

It would normally be expected that only one person per discipline will be granted SSP in a teaching

session. However, this may vary with the size of the discipline.

- d. the location(s) of the proposed SSP, which may be undertaken either in Australia or overseas. An SSP application must clearly identify information relating to the person(s) and/or institution(s) to be visited, and indicate why the location chosen is the most appropriate for the proposed program and how such a program would be of demonstrable benefit to the the University.

(15) NOTES:

The main function of SSP is to provide a period uninterrupted by teaching and other duties to undertake an activity which can NOT normally be undertaken within the employee's duties at the the University. No particular merit will therefore be attributed to an SSP where the sole or main purpose is to enable the applicant to: visit a number of tertiary institutions for briefings about the applicant's specialisation; or attend a conference or congress, including as an office-bearer or invited speaker.

## Part D - Periods of SSP

(16) An SSP proposal may be for any period up to a maximum of 26 weeks. This may be taken as one period or broken periods to allow staff to pursue activities at the time it is most relevant to their research or developmental needs.

(17) Normally in a calendar year in which a person has approved SSP, a staff member would be expected to:

- a. undertake teaching and other academic duties in one of their nominated teaching intensive sessions, and research and other academic duties in their research intensive session;
- b. use the other nominated teaching intensive session as their SSP session in which they are relieved from teaching and other academic duties; and
- c. may build in time up to a total of 26 weeks by drawing on their research intensive session. Relief from other academic duties during research intensive sessions is not automatic - it will need to be negotiated with the Head of School.

(18) SSP normally involves relief from teaching and associated duties in one of the nominated teaching intensive sessions, and additional time in the nominated research intensive session. A member of staff undertaking SSP would not normally be expected to undertake teaching duties in more than one session in the calendar year in which SSP is taken.

(19) SSP may be taken consecutively with an approved period of leave, namely annual leave, long service leave or special leave with or without pay.

(20) SSP is normally not undertaken immediately before or after a Research Centre Fellowship. Exceptions will need to take account of the needs of the Faculty and School as well as the Research Centre and staff member.

## Part E - Travel Grant Funding

(21) A Faculty may augment, from non-operating grant sources, the approved travel grant up to a further 25% of the approved amount.

(22) In determining the amount of the travel grant, the following will apply:

- a. normally, no costs other than those substantiated at the time of application will qualify for the travel grant;
- b. the amount of the travel grant will be proportionately adjusted for lesser periods than the maximum 26 weeks;
- c. to be eligible for a travel grant for a spouse and/or each dependent child, any such persons must accompany the employee for a continuous period of at least 21 days during the SSP;
- d. the term "spouse" will include a partner where the employee certifies to the the University that the partnership

meets each of the following conditions for a bona fide de facto relationship, namely:

- i. the relationship is publicly known and deemed to be permanent; and
  - ii. the partners maintain a common household;
- e. the term "dependent child" will normally mean a child under 18 years of age who is wholly dependent on the employee; and
- f. if an employee receives remuneration by way of salary and/or allowances from sources outside the the University in excess of 25% of his/her substantive salary, then the travel grant payable in connection with the SSP to the employee and family may be reduced, in advance or retrospectively, at the discretion of the Executive Dean.

(23) The approved grant(s) will appear on the employee's payment summary at the end of the financial year for taxation purposes.

## **Part F - Approval Procedure**

(24) When the Faculty SSP Committee has made its recommendations for SSP approval, the Executive Dean will by the end of July:

- a. determine any conditions of approval;
- b. forward advice to the Division of Human Resources, which will record the information and then forward advice of the approved travel grants to the Travel Office (See Special Studies Program Applications Summary for the approval advice form);
- c. advise successful and unsuccessful applicants in writing (See Special Studies Program Covering Memo Templates for the advice memos); and
- d. provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants, on request, and/or seek further clarification or resubmission of an application. If required, the Executive Dean will arrange for unsuccessful applicants to be counselled by their supervisor.

## **Part G - After Approval Actions by Applicants**

(25) At any time after receiving approval, and normally no later than two months prior to the proposed start of the SSP, the employee will submit to the Executive Dean, via his/her supervisor, a Declaration Form that includes the following documentation:

- a. evidence of meeting any conditions of approval (if applicable);
- b. evidence that all necessary arrangements have been made with the host institutions, corporations or individuals necessary to achieve the objectives of the SSP (if applicable);
- c. evidence of ethics approval for research that involves humans or animals (if applicable);
- d. a leave form for any other leave to be taken preceding or following the period of SSP;
- e. a completed Travel form (online) in respect of the travel grant (if applicable);
- f. certification in respect of his/her spouse or dependents' travel grants (if applicable); and
- g. an application for other financial support as listed in Part H below (if applicable).

(26) If an employee wants to change the approved arrangements for an SSP, then he/she must first gain approval from the Head of School in consultation with the Executive Dean.

(27) If, for any reason, an employee decides to cancel his/her approved SSP, then he/she will notify the Head of School, Executive Dean and Division of Human Resources as soon as possible.

## Part H - Other Support

(28) The travel grant will be paid on presentation of a copy of a completed Travel Authority to the the University Travel Office up to two months prior to the commencement of the SSP.

(29) During the period of the SSP, an employee will, subject to normal deductions, receive their amount of full salary. In exceptional circumstances and at the written request of the employee to the Division of Human Resources, half of this amount will be payable in advance up to two months prior to the commencement of the SSP.

(30) An employee, on submission of a detailed statement of earnings and expenditure on return from an SSP, may apply to the Executive Dean for an adjustment of any grant monies withheld.

(31) An employee may be eligible for a Living Away from Home Allowance if he/she meets the following criteria:

- a. the period away must exceed 21 days;
- b. the employee intends to return to his/her original job location after the time away;
- c. the employee would have remained at his/her usual place of residence if there hadn't been a temporary change in job location; and
- d. the employee has not included accommodation and meal costs within the SSP travel budget submitted.

(32) Under FBT legislation, the Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA) is a fringe benefit; it is not an additional payment. Employees who qualify may be able to salary sacrifice amounts related to additional food and accommodation costs while away from their usual place of residence for work-related reasons such as professional development.

(33) NOTE: Accommodation costs must not be claimed through the Living Away from Home Allowance if they have been included in the travel grant application.

(34) To request the Living Away from Home Allowance, the applicant needs to complete and submit the "Salary Packaging Agreement and Authority" available from the Payroll Office with the Declaration Form for Approved SSP .

(35) The fortnightly amount to be salary packaged will be calculated by the Payroll Office in the Division of Finance, based on the Australian Taxation Office's guidelines for reasonable food amounts for the number of adults and children living away from home and the amount stated on the rental agreement or invoice for accommodation.

## Part I - Actions Following SSP - SSP Report, Abstract and Financial Statement

(36) An employee will, within two months of resuming duty, submit a satisfactory report and statements of external grants, earnings and expenditure to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) through his/her supervising officer and the Executive Dean of Faculty.

(37) An electronic copy of the abstract and the statements of earnings and expenditure should be forwarded to the Division of Human Resources for monitoring, reporting and archiving purposes.

(38) If an employee does not submit an SSP report within three months after resuming duty following SSP, then the employee will be notified by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) that, unless a report is received within a further one month (i.e. four months after the employee resumed duty) and, in the absence of any substantial unforeseen circumstances, the employee may be considered to be in breach of the Special Studies Program Policy and may be subject to disciplinary action as set out in the Unsatisfactory Performance Management Guidelines .

(39) NOTE: The Executive Dean of Faculty is responsible to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) for monitoring and

reporting on SSP by members of academic staff of the Faculty.

## **Section 5 - Guidelines**

(40) Nil.

## Status and Details

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