

Academic Development and Outside Studies Program Procedure



1 Purpose

To ensure Employees are aware of the opportunities, conditions and processes associated with the Academic Development and Outside Studies Program (the Program).

2 Scope

This procedure applies to all eligible continuing and fixed-term Employees in academic positions within the University.

3 Procedure Overview

This procedure details the conditions and processes associated with the Program.

4 Procedures

4.1 Purpose of the Program

Research, teaching and professional experience aligned with the University's objectives constitute the principal purpose of this Program.

The continuation of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) studies may be accepted as an additional purpose of the Program, but only if at least two of the following conditions are fulfilled:

- the HDR Program is closely related to the Employee's research or scholarly activities expected by the University
- there is a specific benefit accruing to the Division or University through the undertaking of the HDR Program
- the continuation will lead to rapid completion of the HDR Program.

Decisions about participation in HDR Programs will normally emerge from the setting of goals in the performance review process or other staff development discussions.

4.2 Program duration

Funding will be provided to eligible Employees for a Program plan with a duration of two to six months. The Program undertaken in Semester 3 is limited to a maximum of four months (November to February only).

4.3 Program categories

Employees seeking to undertake the Program must apply under the Program categories in 4.3.1.

Note that applicants may undertake the Program across blended categories of Research and Teaching and Learning in an agreed split supported by their Supervisor.

Note that the PhD (or Doctoral completion) category is a restricted category where applicants are considered only against other applicants within that category and not the wider pool across the University. In this instance, criteria for recommendation and approval would differ from the criteria for other categories.

4.3.1 The Program categories

4.3.1.1 Research

Research is a category of the Program which enables an Employee to conduct research and/or scholarship which enhances the University's research performance. The objective is to provide Employees with the time and resources to undertake research activities at a level of quality and productivity that would be otherwise difficult to achieve.

Research only applicants on an externally funded fixed-term appointment should provide evidence that the Program is supported by the external funding agency.

4.3.1.2 Teaching and learning

This category of the Program aims to advance learning and teaching within the University by supporting Employees to undertake high profile projects and activities that are of direct strategic benefit to the University in accordance with the University's strategic teaching and learning directions.

4.3.1.3 PhD (or Doctoral) completion (restricted category)

This category aims to provide Employees who are close to submission of their PhD Thesis or doctorate, with a period of absence from teaching and administrative duties in order to finalise their PhD or doctorate. Employees undertaking this Program category are required to complete and submit their Thesis for examination at the end of the approved Program period. Under special circumstances where family, parental, community, cultural, carer, disability or other similar factors have impeded the progression of their PhD or doctorate, the requirement for submission may be waived. This requirement may also be waived for Employees in under-represented discipline areas (e.g. women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM)) to align with the University's diversity and inclusion priorities.

4.4 Achievement relative to opportunity

Applicants may outline their achievement relative to opportunity, taking into account factors such as career breaks, gender, family or other factors which may have resulted in an alternative profile in one or more of the criteria, or limited their career progression. Applicants should refer to the Application of the Principle of Achievement Relative to Opportunity Guidelines for further information/guidance.

4.5 Conditions and entitlements

4.5.1 Eligibility

All continuing and fixed-term Employees in academic positions within the University (excluding casual appointments), will be eligible to apply for an initial period of the Program which can be taken after a minimum qualifying period of three years continuous academic employment at the start of the proposed period of the Program.

A minimum period of three years will normally intervene between Programs. There may be instances where, for organisational reasons, a prior approved Program application may have been deferred which may lessen the three year rule between Program applications to no less than two years.

During a period of employment, continuity of service is not broken through absence from work (including illness or injury) on paid or unpaid leave approved by the University. Where fixed-term Employees have a break between contracts, continuity of service is not broken when the break is not more than four months.

Continuing and fixed-term Employees serving a probationary period will not be eligible to take the Program until confirmation of employment is determined at the conclusion of the probation period.

Eligibility to apply will be deemed to begin from the date of commencement of continuous academic service to the University (excluding casual appointments), or from the end of the last period of the Employee's Program of two months or more, whichever date is the more recent.

The eligible duration of the Program is calculated at the rate of one month for each six months of service, up to a maximum of six months.

Credit towards future Programs will not accrue during periods of the Program or leave without pay with the exception of periods of approved unpaid parental leave.

The University will recognise continuous full-time and fractional prior service in academic positions with other Australian universities up to a total of 12 months for Program purposes provided that:

- not more than three months has lapsed between cessation of employment with the prior institution and this University; and
- the period between cessation with the prior institution and this University will not be taken into account in determining the service period.

An application by the Employee for recognition of prior service must be supported with a statement from the previous employer detailing the period of prior service, the position/s held and the Program leave credit balance available to the Employee at the time of termination. Where prior service is recognised, the Program will not normally be granted during the first two years following appointment to the University.

Employees will be paid during the period of the Program at the same average fractional rate as served during the qualifying period.

A fractional Employee may apply to proportionally decrease the amount of Program time and simultaneously increase the fraction at which they are paid during the Program period provided that the total salary does not exceed the budgeted amount. For example, a 0.5 fractional Employee may apply to undertake the Program at a full-time rate of pay for three months instead of a 0.5 fractional rate for six months with the approval of the Delegate.

Note that Employees accessing financial, workload or other forms of assistance from the University through other schemes which may be in operation at the time, will not normally be entitled to access the Program simultaneously.

4.5.2 Travel

The Program may be undertaken either within Australia or overseas. Employees seeking to undertake the Program are required to demonstrate the appropriateness of the location/s.

Employees must arrange their own travel and it is a University requirement that all travel must be recorded as 'no cost to the University travel', using the online travel system. Travel will be considered in accordance with the Travel Policy and Travel Procedure to ensure that reporting and compliance obligations, as well as Traveller health, safety and duty of care obligations are met.

4.5.3 Leave accruals

The Program generates its own annual leave at the same rate as other service. However, the annual leave accrued during the program must be taken by the Employee during the period of the Program, except where it would cause substantial hardship and where prior approval to defer the leave has been approved by a Delegate.

Other types of leave may be taken immediately before or following the Program. However, this leave is additional to that indicated above and will be deducted from leave entitlements. This additional leave must be identified in the application for the Program and must receive prior

approval by a Delegate.

Credit for the Program not extinguished by the currently awarded Program will normally accrue as credit to a future Program.

4.5.4 Financial assistance

The University will provide a contribution towards an Employee's Program, but such financial assistance is not expected or intended to cover all the costs incurred.

4.5.5 Insurance

All Employees travelling on 'approved' University travel are automatically covered by the University's Travel Insurance. Coverage is subject to exclusions such as travel for periods greater than 12 months; travel to restricted countries; pre-existing medical conditions; high-risk activities; personal travel; etc.

Employees who have a portion of private travel undertaken in association with their travel are advised to contact the Insurance Team as they may be required to take out a commercial travel Insurance. Further Information can be obtained via the University's [Insurance](#) webpage.

Evidence of Insurance (Certificates of Currency) can be requested through the [Insurance](#) team.

4.5.6 WorkCover

Employees are covered by WorkCover Insurance while on the Program and should notify the University as soon as possible if an injury or illness occur. Employees on annual leave during the Program are not covered by WorkCover and should consider their own Insurance options during these periods. Liability for workers compensation claims is determined by WorkCover QLD.

4.5.7 Salary and outside earnings

Employees participating in an approved Program will receive their substantive salary, excluding any allowances. Normal superannuation contributions will be maintained.

Employees intending to undertake outside employment whilst on the Program must complete an Outside Employment Application Form and receive the prior approval of the Delegate. Where these additional earnings are substantial, such approval may include provisions for revenue-sharing between the Employee and the Division/University. In other cases, there may be a requirement that financial assistance for the Program will be met from the proceeds of the outside employment with the approval of the Delegate.

If at any time following the commencement of the approved period of the Program, an Employee elects to undertake outside employment, the University must be advised and the approval of the Delegate obtained.

4.5.8 Additional duties

The Vice-Chancellor may request an Employee to carry out duties relevant to the University's activities during the period of the Program. When these duties involve an extension of time beyond the period of leave or additional travelling and other expenses, the University will grant special leave additional to the Program and reimburse the additional Expenditure without prejudice to the Employee's other entitlements.

4.5.9 Approval of variations to the Program

Employees are expected to pursue the approved Program. All variations must be reported to the Delegate using the Variation to Program Form.

Minor variations which do not have a direct or indirect (i.e. salary) financial impact must be reported to the Supervisor for approval, with a copy to the People Portfolio.

Major variations with a direct or indirect (i.e. salary) financial impact must be supported by the Supervisor and then reported to the Divisional Head or nominee for approval, with a copy to the People Portfolio.

All variations must receive prior approval of the Delegate, except for illness or emergencies where advice should be provided to the University as soon as possible following the incident.

Where medically certified periods of leave greater than two weeks interrupt the Program, the Employee may apply to the Divisional Head or nominee, with a copy to the People Portfolio, to have the period regarded as leave other than the Program with adjustment to the current Program.

Unauthorised variations to or failure to complete the Program may result in the Vice-Chancellor requiring the Employee to refund a proportion of any financial assistance paid to the Employee.

4.5.10 Service on return

Approvals granted will be subject to a commitment by the Employee not to undertake any of the following actions in the period following the Program (calculated as a period equal to twice the duration of the approved Program, to a maximum of 12 months):

- retirement
- resignation from the University (other than on the grounds of ill health)
- access a continuous period of extended leave in excess of four weeks (with the exception of medically certified personal leave, or parental leave).

Employees on fixed-term appointments must be able to fulfil this requirement prior to the end of their current appointment, or within an approved subsequent fixed-term appointment.

In instances where resignation or retirement occurs within the specified periods outlined above the Employee may be required to repay to the University on a pro-rata basis the Program financial assistance and up to half the salary paid during the period of the Program. The amount repaid will be in proportion to the time served upon return from the period of the Program.

4.5.11 Completion of Program reports

An Employee must submit a Program report to the Supervisor within three months of return from the Program using the Program Report Template. Acceptability of the report is determined by assessing the extent to which the report indicates that the Program conformed to the stated objectives.

The Supervisor will provide their recommendation on acceptability to the Divisional Head or nominee for approval or otherwise.

Employees who fail to submit an acceptable report within three months of return will be ineligible to accrue credit towards future Programs until a report is received. An Employee who fails to submit an acceptable report within six months may, at the discretion of the Vice-Chancellor on the recommendation of the Divisional Head or nominee, be required to refund the amount of financial assistance received.

Reports will be used in considering the eligibility of the Employee for future Programs. Employees will not be considered eligible for future periods of the Program until an acceptable report has been submitted to the Supervisor and Divisional Head.

4.6 Assessment of Program applications

4.6.1 Program Assessment Committee

The Vice-Chancellor will nominate a Delegate to convene the Program Assessment Committee to assess applications against the relevant criteria.

Applications will be considered by the Program Assessment Committee as defined in the appropriate Terms of Reference.

4.6.2 Criteria for assessing applications

The Program Assessment Committee will evaluate applications against the following criteria, where applicable to the category of application:

- Relevance of activities to be performed and the value of the proposed outcomes to the University;

- Capability to deliver and to achieve the outcomes as evidenced by track record and, if applicable, outcomes from previous Programs;
- Reasonableness of Direct and Indirect Costs with respect to Program objectives and outcomes.

The Program Assessment Committee will need to take account of the following in determining whether conference attendance is a legitimate Program activity:

- the professional standing of the Employee
- the national or international standing of the conference
- whether the attendance of the Employee at the conference has been sought by the conference organisers
- evidence that the Employee will take an active part in the conference (e.g. speaker, conference organiser)
- value of the participation to the Employee's activity in the various areas of academic achievement and relevance to the Division's goals and objectives.

4.7 Notification of outcomes

Following approval or otherwise, the applicant and Supervisor will be advised of the Decision in writing. The Panel Chair or nominee is responsible for ensuring applicants receive feedback about the reasons for an unsuccessful or revised application.

Where an application is declined, it may be submitted for consideration with the next round of Program applications inclusive of any revisions based on feedback about the reasons for the unsuccessful application.

4.8 Departure from regulations

Any departure from this Procedure may only be made with the approval of the Vice-Chancellor.

5 Delegated Responsibilities

Approver	Level of Delegation
Chair, Program Assessment Committee/s (Category 2 Delegate)	Approval of the Program

6 References

Nil.

7 Schedules

This procedure must be read in conjunction with its subordinate schedules as provided in the table below.

8 Procedure Information

Accountable Officer	Chief People Officer
Responsible Officer	Chief People Officer
Policy Type	University Procedure
Policy Suite	Performance, Development and Recognition Policy
Subordinate Schedules	Academic Development and Outside Studies Program Processes Schedule
Approved Date	21/7/2021
Effective Date	21/7/2021
Review Date	3/4/2022
Relevant Legislation	Fringe Benefits Tax Assessment Act 1986 USQ Enterprise Agreement
Related Policies	Travel Policy
Related Procedures	Leave of Absence Procedure Outside Employment Undertaken by USQ Employees Procedure Travel Procedure
Related forms, publications and websites	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade People Portfolio Website Outside Employment Application Forms Program Application Form Program Information Guidelines for Applicants and Supervisors

	<p>Program Report Template</p> <p>Terms of Reference Program Assessment Committee</p> <p>Variation to Program Form</p>
Definitions	<p>Terms defined in the Definitions Dictionary</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>A determination made by an Employee, contractor or other authorised delegate in the course of their duties on behalf of the University.</p> <p>Delegate (noun)</p> <p>Delegate (noun) means the officer, Employee or committee of the University to whom, or to which, a delegation of authority has been made under this Policy.</p> <p>Delegation</p> <p>A formal authority or power granted to Council members, Employees and Council committees to make Decisions on behalf of the University.</p> <p>Direct Costs</p> <p>Costs incurred in, and directly attributable to, the production of Goods and/or Services that can be reliably measured.</p> <p>Employee</p> <p>A person employed by the University and whose conditions of employment are covered by the USQ Enterprise Agreement and includes persons employed on a continuing, fixed term or casual basis. Employees also include senior Employees whose conditions of employment are covered by a written agreement or contract with the University.</p> <p>Executive Dean</p> <p>For the purposes of these Policies and unless otherwise defined in a specific Policy, the term 'Executive Dean' means the chief executive officer of a Faculty.</p> <p>Expenditure</p> <p>Decreases in economic benefits during the Reporting Period in the form of outflows or depletions of Assets or incurrences of liabilities</p>

that result in decreases in equity. This encompasses losses as well as expenses that arise in the ordinary course of business.

[Higher Degree by Research \(HDR\)](#)

A Research Doctorate or Research Masters program for which at least two-thirds of the Student load for the program is required as research work.

[Indirect Costs](#)

Costs that are not directly attributable to the production of Goods/Services but are necessarily incurred by the organisation in operational support of the organisational unit producing the product/s.

[Information](#)

Any collection of data that is processed, analysed, interpreted, organised, classified or communicated in order to serve a useful purpose, present facts or represent knowledge in any medium or form. This includes presentation in electronic (digital), print, audio, video, image, graphical, cartographic, physical sample, textual or numerical form.

[Insurance](#)

The equitable transfer of the Risk of a loss from one entity to another in exchange for payment. It is a form of Risk Management primarily used to hedge against the Risk of a contingent, uncertain loss. An Insurer, or Insurance carrier, is a company selling the Insurance. The insured, or policyholder, is the person or entity buying the Insurance policy for a premium. The insured receives a contract (called the Insurance policy), which details the conditions and circumstances under which the insured will be financially compensated.

[Policy](#)

A high level strategic directive that establishes a principle based approach on a subject. Policy is operationalised through Procedures that give instructions and set out processes to implement a Policy.

[Procedure](#)

An operational instruction that sets out the process to operationalise a Policy.

[Semester](#)

The period of time during which instruction is provided, learning is undertaken and Assessment is carried out. There are three periods during an Academic Year known consecutively as Semester 1, Semester 2 and Semester 3.

Student

A person who is admitted to an Award Program or Non-Award Program offered by the University and is: currently enrolled in one or more Courses or study units; or not currently enrolled but is on an approved Leave of Absence or whose admission has not been cancelled.

Thesis

Also known as a Standard Thesis, is the material outcomes of a program of research. It is also referred to as a 'dissertation'.

University

The term 'University' or 'USQ' means the University of Southern Queensland.

Vice-Chancellor

The person bearing the title of Vice-Chancellor and President, or as otherwise defined in the University of Southern Queensland Act 1998, including a person acting in that position.

Definitions that relate to this procedure only

Supervisor

Any person responsible for leading the activities of others. In the context of this Procedure, a Supervisor includes Employees at any classification level or title who have responsibilities for leading, managing or supervising work teams and/or individual Employees.

Traveller

All Employees, Students, Council members and Visitors travelling on approved University Business.

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