



## **SPECIAL STUDIES PROGRAM (SSP) PROCEDURE**

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### SPECIAL STUDIES PROGRAM (SSP) PROCEDURE

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## **1. OVERVIEW**

This procedure prescribes the responsibilities and actions required for eligible staff members to make an application and undertake a period of Special Studies in lieu of normal duties to further their scholarship, research, teaching, professional practice and development consistent with clause 5.7 of the [University of Adelaide Enterprise Agreement \(as amended\)](#) and the [Workforce Management Policy](#).

## **2. SCOPE AND APPLICATION**

### **2.1 Inclusions**

- 2.1.1 This procedure applies to all continuing and fixed-term academic staff who have a minimum of 3 years of recognised service, provided that:
- 2.1.1.1 Their contract of employment extends beyond the period of special studies for at least a period equal to the duration of the special studies, and
  - 2.1.1.2 They are not subject to a misconduct or serious misconduct process.

### **2.2 Exclusions**

This procedure does not apply to professional or casual academic staff.

### **2.3 Application**

Calculation and accrual of Special Studies Days is applied in accordance with Clause 5.7.2 of the [University of Adelaide Enterprise Agreement \(as amended\)](#).

Some forms of external funding gained while on SSP activity may be subject to the University's [Practice of a Discipline Outside the University by Academic Staff Procedure](#)

## **3. PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1 The accrual of SSP days is not an entitlement to take SSP, which will be subject to consideration and approval process as outlined in this procedure.
- 3.2 SSP is accrued in calendar days, not hours.

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- 3.3 Approval to proceed on special studies during the first three years of employment will usually be given only where the staff member has been credited with SSP days in recognition of prior service and then only for a maximum period of 61 days.
- 3.4 The Airfare allowance and SSP Living Allowance are initially given as provisional amounts based on the proposed activity described in the application and within the maximum amounts permitted in the program. The entitlements will be confirmed and any necessary adjustments made on the staff members return.

## 4. PROCEDURE

### 4.1 Funding and SSP Committee

- 4.1.1 The Executive Dean will allocate funds for the SSP, based on the Faculty's budget and commitment for the relevant year and within the University's expectations.
- 4.1.2 The Executive Dean will appoint a Faculty SSP Committee (which may be the Faculty Research Committee) with responsibility for:
  - 4.1.2.1 Managing SSP in the Faculty within the limits of the funds available;
  - 4.1.2.2 Assessing the SSP applications from within the Faculty against the criteria set out in section 4.2.7;
  - 4.1.2.3 Making recommendations regarding which applications should be approved and receive financial support; and
  - 4.1.2.4 Allocating funds based on the priorities of the Faculty.

### 4.2 SSP Application

- 4.2.1 The Director, HR Shared Services (or delegate) will advertise for applications in [Staff News](#) (in March each year), with a closing date of 31 May, for any Special studies periods between 1 January to 31 December in the following year.
- 4.2.2 The Applicant is to obtain accrued balance of SSP days from Staff Services Online (the SSP balance is accrued as calendar days, not hours).
- 4.2.3 The Applicant is to complete an [SSP Application form](#) attaching:
  - 4.2.3.1 A copy of the report lodged following their most recent period of special studies, where SSP has been undertaken in the past. SSP applications without a report attached will not be considered.
  - 4.2.3.2 An approximation of the all-inclusive travel costings for themselves only, obtainable from Faculty/School Travel Arranger, if seeking financial support.
  - 4.2.3.3 [Head of School Supporting Statement](#) and Recommendation.
- 4.2.4 For recognition of prior service, if applicable, the applicant is to seek approval from the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice President (Academic). For any request for recognition of prior service at this University, or another institution of higher education (or equivalent) operating an equivalent program, for purposes of entitlements under the SSP, a maximum period of 183 days could be granted.
- 4.2.5 The Provost will approve or decline a request for recognition of prior service at this University, or another institution of higher education (or equivalent) operating an equivalent program, for purposes of entitlements under the SSP. A maximum period of up to 183 days could be granted.
- 4.2.6 The Head of School is to complete the [supporting statement](#) and provide to the application for submission to the Faculty SSP Committee.
- 4.2.7 The Convener of the Faculty SSP Committee, with regard to the following criteria, will ensure that:

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- 4.2.7.1 The application is for a period of up to six months and consistent with the University's and Faculty's Strategic Plan;
- 4.2.7.2 The proposed special studies are academically sound and will enhance the contribution of the staff member to research, scholarship, teaching or to the relevant profession, with significant benefit to the University and the professional development of the applicant in their chosen academic field;
- 4.2.7.3 Education Specialists are encouraged to seek out learning and teaching initiatives, including:
  - (a) Developing massive open online course (MOOC) or other major curriculums; or
  - (b) Visiting one of the [priority partner institutions](#) major curriculums;
- 4.2.7.4 The proposed location/environment and period are appropriate to the activities to be undertaken (there being no requirement or expectation that staff members should utilise the entire period for which they may be eligible);
- 4.2.7.5 Where appropriate, particularly in instances where the applicant does not have an established affiliation with another institution, the staff are expected to liaise with and undertake a period of special studies at a [priority partner institutions](#) of the University of Adelaide. SSP proposals that promote appropriate industry collaboration are also encouraged;
- 4.2.7.6 The applicant has the capacity to make effective use of the opportunity, having either a proven and sustained record of productivity in research, scholarship, teaching or in the relevant profession, or having considerable potential for such achievement;
- 4.2.7.7 The applicant has successfully completed any previously approved SSP;
- 4.2.7.8 The applicant had not formally notified an intention to vacate the position held and is not subject to a misconduct or serious misconduct process;
- 4.2.7.9 If applicable, assess applications against further Faculty criteria (including Academic role statements) which reflect the priorities of the Faculty, provided those criteria are documented and have been communicated to the Provost and remaining Faculties.
- 4.2.8 The Convener of the Faculty SSP Committee will recommend to the Executive Dean by 31 July which applications should be approved, whether financial support should be granted and the amount. If recommending financial support, the Convener will consider:
  - 4.2.8.1 Any significant external financial support available to the staff member;
  - 4.2.8.2 Approximation of all-inclusive travel costings for the applicant only, obtainable from the Faculty/School Travel Arranger;
  - 4.2.8.3 Whether the private portion of travel (annual and/or long service leave) is 30% or more of the overall time, in which case 50% of the airfare is to be paid by the staff member;
  - 4.2.8.4 The maximum amount for taxable SSP Living Allowance of 14.4% of daily salary for a Senior Lecturer, Step 6 (Level C, step 6 annual rate / 365 x 14.4%) per day spend outside of South Australia.
- 4.2.9 The Executive Dean is to consider and approve or decline the application, taking into consideration financial support recommended. Refusal of a request is at the discretion of the Executive Dean, who may also decline and/or revoke approval for any staff member subject to misconduct or serious misconduct process.
- 4.2.10 The Executive Dean is to advise the Convener of the Faculty SSP Committee of the outcome.
- 4.2.11 The Executive Dean is to provide financial support as approved on the application.
- 4.2.12 The Executive Dean, if applicable, can refer to the Provost to approve or decline any applications inconsistent with the provisions of the SSP procedure.
- 4.2.13 The Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice President (Academic) will consider exceptional circumstances referred by the Executive Dean for authorising or declining and application.

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- 4.2.14 The Convener of the Faculty SSP Committee is to advise the applicant of the outcome of their application by 31 August, including any variations to the conditions requested on their application and financial support pre-approved, if applicable.
- 4.2.15 The Convener of the Faculty SSP Committee will retain the approved application forms.
- 4.2.16 The Convener of the Faculty SSP Committee will capture statistical data regarding the applications and outcomes and submit to the Executive Dean for review and submission to the Provost.

### 4.3 Right of Appeal

- 4.3.1 The Applicant may appeal to the Provost in writing, no later than 10 days after the advised outcome, on the grounds that the decision of the Faculty SSP Committee was based on an improper assessment process.
- 4.3.2 The Provost may convene an ad-hoc Appeal Committee to advise on such an appeal. The decision of the Provost will be final.

### 4.4 Variations (if applicable)

- 4.4.1 The Applicant will seek approval for any significant variation to an approved studies activity by completing the [SSP Amendment Form](#) and submitting the form to the Head of School.
- 4.4.2 The Head of School will make recommendations to approve or decline a request for variation of approved activity on the [SSP Amendment form](#), prior to submitting to the SSP Committee.
- 4.4.3 The Convener of the Faculty SSP Committee will consider the proposed changes and make recommendations to the Executive Dean.
- 4.4.4 The Executive Dean will consider requests for variations and the recommendations and approve or decline the variation.
- 4.4.5 The Convener of the Faculty SSP Committee will advise the applicant of the outcome of their request for variation, including any resulting changes to the pre-approved financial support.
- 4.4.6 The Convenor will retain the approved amendment form, which is to be attached to the Commencement form 6 weeks before the start of SSP, if the variation is approved. If declined, the Convenor is to send to the SSP coordinator to store locally.

### 4.5 Commencement, Payment and Travel Arrangements

- 4.5.1 The Applicant will complete an [SSP Commencement Form](#) 6 weeks prior to commencement.
- 4.5.2 The Applicant will advise the Faculty/School of travel dates and times using the University's [Travel site](#). (If financial support to airfare was pre-approved, only the 'best fare of the day' Economy Class ticket will be accepted).
- 4.5.3 The University's Corporate Travel Policy automatically covers staff travelling, studying and working overseas on University approved travel for up to 180 days. Travel approval must be obtained from the Head of School/Branch. For travel beyond 180 days, staff need to apply for "top up" travel insurance which applies for up to 365 days. Top up travel insurance must be purchased by staff at additional cost and prior to departure from Australia. Staff travelling or working overseas for periods greater than 12 months will need to arrange expatriate cover. For more information refer to the staff travel guide on the [Legal and Risk Branch website](#).
- 4.5.4 The Convener of the Faculty SSP Committee, on receipt of the [SSP Commencement Form](#), will:
  - 4.5.4.1 Complete the relevant section;
  - 4.5.4.2 Attach the approved Commencement Form and the latest approved Amendment Form and forward to the SSP Faculty Coordinator
  - 4.5.4.3 SSP Faculty Coordinator on receipt of the SSP Commencement Form and the latest approved Amendment form will attach the [SSP recommendation template](#) and forward

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a scanned copy to HR for processing the fortnight prior to the SSP commencement date.

4.5.4.4 Faculty/School Travel Arranger will purchase airfares as per the [Corporate Travel Website](#).

#### 4.6 Finalising SSP and SSP Report

- 4.6.1 The Applicant within one month of return from a period of SSP, will submit an [SSP Report](#) to the Head of School. Delay in providing or a failure to provide the report will exclude the staff member from undertaking any future periods of special studies. The SSP report is intended to enable Faculty SSP Committees to verify that the approved activity was pursued and objectives achieved.
- 4.6.2 The Applicant, if applicable will report any deviations from the approved activity and travel to the Head of School using the [SSP Amendment Form](#).
- 4.6.3 The Head of School will review the applicant's report and add any required comments, before submitting to the Faculty SSP Committee for approval.
- 4.6.4 The Head of School, if applicable, will consider any deviations from the approved activity reported via the Amendment Form and recommend any adjustments to be made to the SSP Living Allowance.
- 4.6.5 The Head of School, if applicable, will claim reimbursement of sums paid for airfares from the relevant Faculty SSP account, where airfare allowance was pre-approved, and any excess amount from the staff member.
- 4.6.6 The Convener of the Faculty SSP Committee will consider the applicant's report against the original application and approved variation.
- 4.6.7 The Convener of the Faculty SSP Committee will recommend approval or request further details if necessary to have the report resubmitted by the staff member. If the SSP Committee considers the revised report unsatisfactory, believes that the SSP activity has not been carried out to a satisfactory standard, or considers that there are other exceptional circumstances, it consults with the Executive Dean on action to be taken.
- 4.6.8 The Convener of the Faculty SSP Committee, if applicable, will consider any report of variation to the approved activities and recommend any adjustment to be made to the pre-paid SSP Living Allowance. In the case where an SSP Living Allowance was paid to the staff member in advance, the amount is reconciled against the actual number of approved days away. Any excess of the allowance will be recovered from the staff member in accordance with the clause 3.12 of the [University of Adelaide Enterprise Agreement \(as amended\)](#).
- 4.6.9 The Executive Dean will consider the applicant's report and approve or conduct an enquiry into the SSP undertaken if the report has been deemed unsatisfactory.
- 4.6.10 The Executive Dean, if applicable, will consider any report of variations to the approved activity and recommendations for adjustment of pre-paid SSP Living Allowance and approve or decline.
- 4.6.11 The Executive Dean, if applicable, will consider any recommendation for reimbursement of airfares paid in excess of the pre-approved amount and approve or decline.
- 4.6.12 The Convener of the Faculty SSP Committee will notify the staff member of acceptance of the report.
- 4.6.13 The Convener of the Faculty SSP Committee will send the report to the SSP Faculty Coordinator for filing locally with the original application.
- 4.6.14 The Convener of the Faculty SSP, if applicable, will advise the applicant of the outcome of their request for variation, including any resulting changes to the pre-approved financial support.

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4.6.15 The Convener of the Faculty SSP, if applicable will forward the approved amendment form to HR for processing any adjusted SSP leave and/or SSP Living Allowance. If no changes required to the SSP leave and/or SSP Living Allowance, send the amendment form to the SSP Faculty Coordinator for filing locally with the original application.

#### **4.7 Reporting to the Provost**

4.7.1 The Executive Dean will submit a report to the Provost in September (in consultation with the Faculty SSP Committee) on the:

4.7.1.1 Number of applications received and approved;

4.7.1.2 Of the successful applications:

- (a) Number of applications whose focus was Research, Teaching, Professional Practice or General Scholarship;
- (b) Number of female and male applicants;
- (c) The financial support provided (min, max and average) and source of funding;
- (d) SSP days approved (min, max and average)

4.7.1.3 Of the unsuccessful applications:

- (a) Number of applications whose focus was Research, Teaching, Professional Practice or General Scholarship;
- (b) Number of female and male applicants

4.7.1.4 Learning goals set and met;

4.7.1.5 Any other general observations relevant to the effectiveness of the program.

## **5. RELATED DOCUMENTS AND POLICIES**

[Workforce Management Policy](#)

[Travel Policy](#)

[Enterprise Agreement](#)

[Health, Safety and Wellbeing Travel Information Sheet](#)

[Special Studies Program](#)

[Legal and Risk – Travel Insurance](#)

[Corporate Travel website](#)

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