

Special Studies Program Policy

Please note: the Special Studies Program has been placed on hold. Please contact AskHR if you have any questions in relation to this – email askhr@uq.edu.au; telephone (07) 3365 2623.

Section 1 - Purpose and Objective

(1) This Policy describes the purpose of the Special Studies Program (SSP) and the general criteria for approving a proposed program.

Section 2 - Definitions, Terms, Acronyms

Term	Definition
Authorised Officer	The officer authorised to exercise the relevant Human Resources (HR) power or function in accordance with the Human Resources Sub-delegations Schedules
Chief Investigator	The investigator with overall responsibility for the research project or grant
SSP Leave	Leave provided to eligible staff to undertake an approved Special Studies Program
Key areas of academic activity	Research/creative work, clinical innovation, scholarship of teaching

Section 3 - Policy Scope/Coverage

(2) This Policy applies to academic staff across the four academic categories - Teaching and Research, Teaching Focused, Research Focused or Clinical Academic - who meet the eligibility criteria.

Section 4 - Policy Statement

(3) The Special Studies Program is highly valued for the benefit it provides to the University and its academic staff. Special Studies Program leave is provided to eligible academic staff to release them from regular duties to pursue key areas of academic activity and thereby enhance their contribution to their organisational unit and the University.

(4) The purposes of SSP are to assist staff to maintain and improve teaching skills and scholarship, to undertake research, creative work or clinical innovation and to make the outcomes public, generally via peer-reviewed outlets. SSP must not be used for the purposes of completing a Higher Degree by Research. SSP is one of the privileges of employment as an academic staff member.

Section 5 - Criteria for Approval

(5) SSP is not a right to which an academic staff member is automatically entitled at the end of each qualifying period.

(6) For approval to be given for a Special Studies Program, the onus is on the applicant to:

- a. show that significant benefits will accrue to the University through the enhancement of the individual's contributions to key areas of academic activity; and
- b. provide well supported arguments to substantiate their application.

(7) The Authorised Officer will approve applications for SSP only when:

- a. the workforce planning of the organisational unit can accommodate the absence of the academic; and
- b. the proposed plan for the SSP demonstrates specific benefits to the unit's key areas of academic activity as well as to the individual.

(8) The provision of SSP is a significant investment by the University in its staff and must therefore be used for purposes which are congruent with the University's financial commitment. The number of SSP applications approved each year may be limited by staffing and budgetary constraints.

(9) Applications will be considered on the merit of the project proposed, the capacity of the staff member to fulfil the aims of the project, their record of achievement (including outcomes from any previous SSP) and its relevance to University needs.

(10) Detailed information about the benefits available, the application process, and the conditions applying to SSP is contained in the [Special Studies Program Procedure](#).

Section 6 - Eligibility for SSP

(11) The following staff are eligible to accrue SSP leave if they have full-time appointments or fractional appointments of at least 50%:

- a. Clinical Academics, Teaching Focused Academics, and Teaching and Research Academics on continuing appointments of Level A or above.
- b. Research Focused Academics at Level B or above where:
 - i. the Chief Investigator (or the Executive Dean or Institute Director if the staff member concerned is the Chief Investigator) is of the view that such a period of SSP will benefit the research program and not prejudice its timely completion; and
 - ii. the necessary resources are available to support the program; and
 - iii. the rules of any relevant granting agency permit such leave to be taken during the duration of the grant.
- c. Those appointed under a contract that provides for a program, in which case the relevant conditions of that contract apply.

(12) Normally, SSP cannot commence until the applicant has completed three years of continuous full-time service at this University, or the pro-rata equivalent, based on the fraction of the appointment.

(13) SSP is not usually granted to a staff member during their probation. However, the Authorised Officer can approve periods of other forms of leave, or semesters with reduced or no teaching duties.

(14) Probationary staff who have been formally notified that they have been confirmed in their continuing appointments are eligible for SSP at that point, subject to meeting the remaining eligibility criteria.

Status and Details

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Policy Owner	Phil Vaughan Chief Human Resources Officer
Enquiries Contact	Human Resources Division