

# Outside Studies Program (Higher Education) Procedure

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|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
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## Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to describe how to apply for the Outside Studies Program OSP and how to select and approve OSP applications based on their merit.

1. The OSP supports the continual professional development of academic staff to assist the University Federation University to attain its objectives.
2. OSP is designed to give the University's academic staff members the opportunity to undertake research, creative and professional activity or the scholarship of teaching in areas of identified strategic importance to the University and to the professional development of the employee, which cannot normally be undertaken within the employee's duties at the University.
3. OSP provides an employee with the opportunity, uninterrupted by teaching or other duties:
  - i. to undertake professional development relevant to research, teaching, and/or professional or creative activity; and
  - ii. to do one or more of the following:
    - engage in research;
    - engage in the scholarship of learning and teaching;
    - complete PhD studies;

- maintain and improve professional and vocational knowledge;
- engage in creative or performing arts practice;
- obtain experience in the work for which the employee is preparing students;
- gain academic leadership and management experience;
- gain real-world experience and knowledge with one of our co-operative partners;
- focus on innovation, e.g. by building a start-up or up-scaling teaching innovation.

## Scope

This procedure applies to academic staff who are applying for OSP, and staff involved in selecting or approving applications for OSP.

## Definitions

| Term                       | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Academic Staff             | Refers to the University staff who are employed at Academic Levels A to E.                                                                                                                                                                       |
| OSP                        | Outside Studies Program.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Supervisor                 | Is the senior academic staff member to whom the member of academic staff reports.                                                                                                                                                                |
| Pro Vice-Chancellor        | Refers to the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, or Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching, or Pro Vice-Chancellor Co-operative Education who each also lead one of the institutes.                                                 |
| Chair of the OSP Committee | The role of chair is rotated between the Pro Vice-Chancellors. In 2026 for 2027 OSP applications, the chair is the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) at <a href="mailto:PVC.IISS@federation.edu.au">PVC.IISS@federation.edu.au</a> . |

## Actions

### Application and advertising

1. The Chair of the OSP Committee shall advise all academic staff in the University in **April** each year of OSP opportunities in the first or second half of the following year for the purposes of:
  - a. re-stating the scheme's objectives;
  - b. advising that applications are to be submitted on the prescribed Application Form and accompanied by all documentation required by the guidelines; and
  - c. specifying the closing date for applications.
2. Applications shall close in **June** for OSP undertaken in the following year.
3. An employee seeking a period of OSP shall complete the prescribed Application Form and submit it to the Chair of the OSP Committee.
4. The form, along with all relevant supporting materials, must reach the Chair by the advertised closing date.

## Selection

### Eligibility

1. The following employees shall be eligible to participate in the OSP:
  - a. Continuing or fixed-term academic staff who have been employees of the University for a continuous period of three (3) or more years prior to the commencement date of the half year for which an application is being made and who have not undertaken OSP before.
  - b. Fixed-term academics must be able to fulfil the requisite period of after-service prior to the expiration of their fixed-term appointment.
  - c. A Pro Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor or Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor shall be eligible to undertake OSP subject to the approval of a proposed program by the Vice-Chancellor.
2. Eligibility to participate in the OSP is subject to satisfactory performance, as determined through the University's annual performance management process, and subject to satisfactory completion of Final Probationary Review.
3. Eligibility to participate in the OSP is also subject to the following conditions: Any eligible employee whose most recent OSP was undertaken
  - a. in a single calendar year, with at least three (3) years' service since the last day of return from this OSP, and who has submitted a satisfactory final report, may apply for OSP in the following year; or
  - b. with a co-operative partner where this OSP spanned more than one calendar year, with at least three (3) years' service since the last day of return from this OSP, and who has submitted a satisfactory final report, may apply for OSP in the following year.

### OSP and OSP with a co-operative partner

The OSP may be undertaken in Australia or overseas for a period from four (4) weeks up to six (6) months, normally no more than one (1) teaching semester, and usually aligned with the first or second half of the year to ensure teaching is not impacted in both semesters 1 and 2.

Where the OSP is undertaken with a co-operative partner (e.g., industry, education, health), consideration may be to spend shorter periods of time over multiple years with the partner, e.g. 1-2 months per year, over no more than three (3) years, and for no more than six (6) months in total. This is a new category of OSP that gives more regular contact with the environment where our graduates will work and the opportunity to bring back and share up-to-date practices and insights. The university benefits from fresh, real-world experience brought into the university, enriching both teaching and the broader academic community. For short collaborative projects or getting a feel for industry trends, a month on a regular basis might suffice. An example would be to focus on learning how AI and new technologies are being integrated in the partner's environments. This knowledge can then be shared with colleagues and students. Ideally, an OSP with a co-operative partner becomes a bi-directional exchange program to share knowledge, and a staff member from the co-operative partner will spend a similar period working at the university. This could be to give guest lectures, collaborate on projects, or share on-the-ground expertise.

When the Co-op OSP is taken over several years, special consideration must be given to how normal duties are least interrupted, and the OSP benefits are maximised. e.g. 3 consecutive years with 2 months in the middle of semester will not be accepted without special consideration of how teaching load will be balanced across the year, and benefits are maximised for the university.

An employee who is granted OSP shall, prior to departure or leave, complete a written undertaking to return to the service of the University, for a period equal to the duration of leave. In the event of that period of after-service not being completed due to the employee's departure from the University during the course of an OSP or during the prescribed period of after-service, Federation University shall be reimbursed on a *pro rata* basis an amount to the value of the grant funding provided and of any salary paid in advance and representing service not completed.

An employee shall not make any significant changes to an approved OSP without first obtaining written approval from the Chair of the OSP Committee.

Unless an employee has leave approved adjacent to an OSP, the employee shall resume duty at the University, immediately following the end of the term of absence allowed under an approved OSP.

An employee shall, within two (2) months of resuming duty; submit a report and statements of external grants, earnings and expenditure to the Chair of the OSP Committee through their supervising officer. This documentation will be recorded on the staff file within People and Culture on the central system.

## Membership of the OSP Committee

The membership of the OSP Committee will be as follows:

1. Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Rotating Chair);
2. Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning and Teaching (Rotating Chair);
3. Pro Vice-Chancellor, Co-operative Education (Rotating Chair);
4. Three (3) academic staff members, one from each Institute, nominated by their Pro Vice-Chancellor, at the level of professor or associate professor; and
5. Where the applicant has identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, at least one member of the OSP committee must identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

The Committees must consider appropriate gender representation for the committee composition.

## Terms of Reference

1. The Terms of Reference of the OSP Committees shall be to:
  - a. evaluate applications for OSP and rank them in order of merit;
  - b. decide on successful applications;
  - c. decide on funds to be allocated (where applicable);
  - d. decide on conditions to be fulfilled.
2. The Chair of the OSP Committee shall provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants, on request, and/or to seek further clarification or resubmission of an application.
3. The Chair of the OSP Committee shall notify successful applicants and discuss the Committee's decision on allocated funds and conditions with the applicant.
4. The Chair of the OSP Committee shall notify People and Culture of the decisions made on each application so staff files can be updated.

## Selection Criteria

An OSP proposal will be considered in relation to the following:

- a. The alignment of activities and outcomes with the University's strategic objectives;
- b. the suitability of outcomes relative to time spent (return on investment), and likelihood that they will be completed during OSP;
- c. the capacity of the University to cover the applicant's workload; and
- d. the potential professional development benefit expected to accrue from the OSP.

In making this assessment, the OSP Committee shall consider as appropriate:

- the applicant's teaching, research, publication record, artistic productions, consultancies, professional activities, scholarly activities and academic leadership roles;
- the applicant's capacity to obtain benefit from the proposed OSP as evidenced, inter alia, by demonstrable academic or administrative developments and productive outcomes resulting from any previous OSP;
- the applicant's professional development needs;
- the location(s) of the proposed OSP, which may be undertaken either in Australia or overseas. An OSP application should 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 University; and
- the likelihood that the OSP period will result in a submitted PhD thesis, should this be the focus of the OSP program.

## Financial Support

### Annual Budget

The funds available for OSP places will be determined in advance by the Pro Vice-Chancellors as part of the annual operating budget of the University. The total amount available and the amount an individual applicant can apply for will be communicated with every call for applications.

The number of applications approved with funding in a calendar year shall be limited by the funds available. There may be circumstances where there are no funds available, in which case granted OSP will be self-funded.

### Grant Funding

1. Staff proceeding on an OSP may apply for a grant towards the substantiated costs of undertaking the Outside Studies Program up to the maximum amount as detailed in the call for applications. Additionally, the employee's area may augment, from non-operating grant sources, the approved grant.
2. In determining the amount of the grant, the following procedure shall apply:
  - a. Normally, no quantum of costs other than those substantiated at the time of application will qualify for the grant; it is recognised that the documentation details may vary between conditional and final approval stages.
  - b. Documentation should clearly identify supporting information relating to the person(s) and/or institution(s) to be visited and should specifically relate to the needs of the OSP.
  - c. On returning to duty, the employee shall submit a substantiated statement of expenses to their Pro Vice-Chancellor.
  - d. To be eligible for a grant for a spouse and/or dependant, any such persons must accompany the employee for a continuous period of at least six (6) weeks during the OSP.
  - e. The term "spouse" shall include a partner where the employee certifies to Federation University that the partnership meets each of the following conditions for a *bona fide de facto* relationship, namely:
    - the relationship is publicly known and deemed to be permanent; and
    - the partners maintain a common household.
  - f. The term "dependant" shall normally mean a person under 18 years of age who is wholly dependent on the employee.
  - g. If an employee receives remuneration by way of salary and/or allowances from sources outside FedUni in addition to their substantive salary, the grant payable in connection with the OSP to the employee and family may be reduced, in advance or retrospectively, at the discretion of their Pro Vice-Chancellor.
3. The grant shall be paid up to two (2) months prior to the commencement of the OSP.

4. An employee, on submission of a detailed statement of earnings and expenditure on return from an OSP, may apply to their Pro Vice-Chancellor for an adjustment of any grant withheld.
5. An employee will take pro rata the annual leave accumulated during the OSP period. This leave needs to be booked and approved before OSP commences.
6. An OSP may be taken consecutively with an approved period of leave, namely annual leave, long service leave or special leave with or without pay. This leave must also be approved before the OSP commences.
7. During the period of the OSP, an employee shall, subject to normal deductions, receive the amount of full salary, including any increments due. At the request of the employee to People and Culture, half of this amount will be payable as salary in fortnightly instalments, and half as an allowance. The allowance will be paid, on request, as a lump sum in advance, up to two (2) months prior to the commencement of the OSP.

## Living Away from Home Allowance

1. Employees may qualify 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. Under FBT legislation, the Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA) is a fringe benefit; it is not an additional payment.
2. To request the Living Away from Home Allowance, the applicant needs to contact Financial Services who will calculate the fortnightly amount to be salary packaged 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.
3. Employees then need to complete and submit the "Salary Packaging Agreement and Authority" documentation.

## Approval

1. In assessing applications, the OSP Committee shall verify that:
  - a. applications have been submitted in the required format;
  - b. applicants meet the eligibility requirements as specified in the eligibility section of this procedure;
  - c. the capacity of the University to cover the applicants' workloads during the proposed absences;
  - d. appropriate finance is available (through OSP annual budgetary allocations or from portfolio sources).

## Conditional Approval and Final Approval

1. When the OSP Committee has made its decision for OSP approval, this approval is issued as conditional approval.
2. At any time after receiving conditional approval, and normally no later than two (2) months prior to the proposed start of the OSP, the employee shall submit to the Chair of the OSP Committee the following documentation:
  - a. evidence that all necessary arrangements have been made with the host institutions, corporations or individuals necessary to achieve the objectives of the OSP;
  - b. details of the person(s) accompanying the applicant (if applicable) during the period of the OSP, as well as substantiated costs and other *bona fide* expenses that need to be considered when finally confirming the grant funding; and
  - c. a signed undertaking by the employee to return to the University after the OSP, in accordance with the conditions specified in the conditions section of this procedure; and
  - d. evidence that any additional conditions requested by the OSP Committee are fulfilled.
3. When the material required, specified under Item 2 above, has been verified, the Chair of the OSP Committee shall determine final approval and notify the employee accordingly.
4. If an employee wants to change the approved arrangements for an OSP, then they must first gain approval from the Chair of the OSP Committee.

5. If, for any reason, an employee decides to cancel their approved OSP, then they shall notify the Chair of the OSP Committee as soon as possible.

## Outside Studies Program Report, Abstract and Financial Statement

1. An employee shall, within two (2) months of resuming duty, submit a satisfactory report and statements of external grants, earnings and expenditures, as well as outcomes and an overview of activities resulting from the OSP, to the Chair of the OSP Committee.  
**NOTE:** This report and its abstract should be sufficiently detailed and informative to form the basis of an assessment of outcomes.
2. If an OSP report is not received three (3) months after the employee has resumed duty following the OSP leave, the employee will be notified by the Chair of the OSP Committee that, unless a report is received within a further one (1) 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 policy and may be subject to disciplinary action.
3. For OSPs with co-operative partners across more than a calendar year, an annual report will be submitted following the above timeline.

## Responsibilities

The Chair of the OSP Committee is responsible for developing, reviewing, and overseeing the procedure and forms for the Outside Studies Program.

## Policy Base

- [People and Culture Policy](#)
- [Academic Governance Policy](#)

## Forms/Record Keeping

| Title                                                            | Location   | Responsible Officer        | Minimum Retention Period |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Outside Studies Program Higher Education Application Form</i> | Staff File | Chair of the OSP Committee | 5 years                  |
| <i>Salary Packaging Agreement and Authority.</i>                 | Staff File | Chair of the OSP Committee | 5 years                  |

### Forms.

- [Outside Studies Program Application Form](#) (DOCX 149.1kb)
- [Outside Studies Program Salary Packaging Agreement](#) (DOCX 158.1kb)

## Implementation

The [Outside Studies Program \(Higher Education\) Procedure](#) will be implemented throughout the University via:

1. an Announcement Notice under 'FedNews' on the 'Federation University' website and through the University Policy - 'Recently Approved Documents' and 'Policy Search' webpages to alert the University-wide community of the approved Procedure;

2. inclusion on the University's online Policy Library; and
3. a memorandum from the Chair of the OSP Committee to all relevant leaders of eligible academic staff in their portfolios.