

16.02B Special Studies Program Procedures – Academic Staff

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The following procedures are provided to facilitate implementation of the Special Studies Program (SSP) policy and should be read in conjunction with that policy.

Definitions

For the purposes of these procedures, the following definitions apply:

Agreement means The University of New England Academic Staff-Union Collective Agreement 2010-2012 or current workplace agreement as applicable.

Dependant means accompanying dependent spouse/partner and/or children.

Staff means a staff member, who is not a casual employee, and is covered by the University of New England Academic Staff-Union Collective Agreement 2010-2012, or the replacement Agreement.

Head of School means Heads of School, Directors or equivalent.

Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean (Dean) means the PVC/Dean most closely aligned to the unit.

School means School, and other organisational units, such as Ooralta, Teaching and Learning Centre, and UNE research centres.

SSP website refers to http://www.une.edu.au/hrs/study_leave.php

Preparation of Application

1. Applications for SSP will normally be called twice a year and must be submitted on the “SSP Application Form” available from the SSP website.
2. The certification by the Head of School referred to below, is essential for an SSP application to be approved. Therefore the applicant should consult with the Head of School in before submitting an application.
3. The applicant must consult an SSP Committee member from their faculty in the preparation of their application. Refer to SSP website for committee membership.

4. The applicant must submit the completed application to the Head of School by the closing date.
5. The Head of School will comment on the academic merit and relevance of the application.
6. The Head of School must be able to certify that:
 - either
 - school teaching and administrative commitments during the period of SSP will be met without the appointment of additional staff; or
 - that there is funding available for relief staff;
 - all necessary preparatory work for the period immediately following the SSP period will be completed prior to departure;
 - adequate provision has been made for the supervision of all postgraduate students for whom the applicant is responsible.
7. The application and Head of School's certification must be submitted to the PVC/Dean for consideration.
8. The PVC/Dean may comment on both the academic merit and relevance of the application and the resource implications. Where a PVC/Dean opposes an application he/she shall indicate the reasons why SSP is not supported.
9. The comments of the Head of School and PVC/Dean are to be shown to the applicant who may have the right of rebuttal.
10. If the applicant is the Head of School, the relevant section of the application will be completed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean/Director.

Assessment of Application

11. The Committee will assess the application on the academic merit and relevance of the proposed program. The applicant must provide:
 - evidence that they are capable of carrying out the program in the form of:
 - a record of prior achievement, including outcomes from any previous SSP or study leave;
 - a complete list of publications over the last three years, with full bibliographic details, including page numbers, in the prescribed format;
 - evidence of forthcoming publications;
 - a complete itinerary for the entire proposed period of SSP, including periods of annual leave¹, name and email of host institution and justification for each location;
 - a list of all postgraduate students, indicating the arrangements made to ensure continuation of supervisory duties. This requirement must be met even where the

¹No APF funds will be provided for periods of annual leave.

student is expected to complete before the commencement of the SSP;

- a list of all service and administration (School, Faculty, University level) of which they are responsible, indicating how arrangements will be made for replacement. Staff members should not attend any Committee meetings while on SSP;
- contact details in the event they need to be consulted on matters that affect them, such as future teaching allocations;
- the report submitted on the applicant's last SSP or study leave, if applicable. Refer to clause 38 of the SSP Policy re outstanding reports.

Approval

12. On assessing applications the SSP Committee will determine whether the application will receive:
 - unconditional approval;
 - approval with specified conditions;
 - an opportunity to revise and resubmit; or
 - rejection of application.
13. The reasons for rejection or for requiring an amendment or resubmission of an application will be reported to the applicant.
14. Approval to undertake SSP is conditional upon submission of all relevant documentation as outlined in the SSP Procedures, prior to commencement of SSP.
15. Applicants must acknowledge affiliation with UNE in all publications resulting from SSP.

Variations to Approved Programs

16. Minor variations:

The following minor variations are to be approved by the Head of School prior to submission to HRS:

- change of start and end dates of less than two months;
- inclusion of visits to additional institutions;
- attendance at extra conferences - under two weeks in total.

17. Major variations:

The following major variations must be supported by the Head of School and submitted to HRS for approval by the Chair of the SSP Committee:

- change of dates of SSP by two months or more;
- substitution of a different project for an approved project;
- substitution of location to another country or institution;
- cancellation of portion of program;

- additional location in another country;
- attendance at extra conferences – over two weeks in total;
- substitution of different type of location (e.g. industrial rather than tertiary institution).

Financial Assistance

18. If a staff member and partner are both employed by the University and both apply to undertake a SSP, they shall be treated as separate applicants for financial assistance.
19. Where a staff member received a travel grant in advance² of study leave undertaken, the amount of the financial assistance available for a subsequent SSP will be reduced accordingly.

SSP Travel Grant

20. The SSP central fund will contribute towards actual transport costs for the staff member to a maximum figure as set out in the Appendix.
21. All travel must comply with the University's [Travel Policy and Guidelines](#).

SSP Location Allowance

22. The SSP central fund will also provide an SSP location allowance for the staff member and accompanying dependants³ up to a maximum figure as set out in the Appendix. This allowance is paid to contribute towards the costs of accommodation incurred by staff on SSP who are required to live away from their usual place of residence, while maintaining a home residence.
23. The allowance may be paid direct to an accommodation provider, on the presentation of an invoice.
24. Where the University has not paid the allowance directly to an accommodation provider, the allowance may be paid through the payroll and forms part of the staff member's assessable income.⁴

Additional Financial Support

25. Staff may utilise other University funds to which they have access, such as their Academic Pursuits Fund (APF) and/or research grants, in order to contribute towards travel and accommodation expenses not met by the Travel Grant or SSP Location Allowance, provided they fulfill the terms of University policy and the requirements for the use of such funds.

² Applicable to Study Leave undertaken prior to 2008.

³ Location allowance for accompanying dependant/s is a flat rate and not calculated per dependant.

⁴ Appropriate deductions may be allowable by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) provided the expenses are not private or domestic.

26. Prior to departure, additional assistance for conference fees and associated expenses may be sought against a staff member's APF, where funds exist.

Application for Financial Assistance

27. To apply for financial assistance, the following must be provided:
- the staff member's travel itinerary as provided by UNE's travel provider;
 - budget for total amount claimed against each funding source, including itemised list and associated cost;
 - justification of the scale of budgeted expenditure, such as the Australian Taxation Office's (ATO) City/Country Cost Groupings or evidence of the locale's cost of living.

Taxation

28. The following information is not intended to replace advice from taxation advisers nor does it represent interpretation of Australian Taxation Office rulings. If a staff member has queries in regard to the above matters they should contact the ATO or their taxation adviser.
29. Where any part of financial assistance is paid as an allowance through payroll, this will form part of the staff member's assessable income and will be recorded on the staff member's Payment Summary for the financial year in which they were paid.
30. It is a matter for the staff member to claim appropriate expenses incurred during their SSP as deductions against all financial assistance received in their tax returns and to comply with any substantiation provisions for travel or other work related expenses in the *Income Tax Assessment Act*. This involves obtaining receipts or documents from the supplier of goods or services showing the name of the supplier, nature of goods or services, amount in the currency in which expense incurred and date of the expense.
31. As the SSP location allowance does not include amounts for meals, and staff living away from their usual residence are not generally considered to be on 'travel status', independent advice should be sought as to whether the ATO will accept any claim for meals or other costs of a personal nature for the duration of the SSP.
32. In accordance with ATO requirements, a staff member in receipt of a University travel grant must keep a Travel Diary of activities that clearly demonstrate, consistent with ATO ruling MT 2038, when the staff member was engaged in University work and when on personal leave.
33. Any liability for Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) is the responsibility of the staff member who must agree to immediately repay the University any FBT charged against the University in respect to the SSP.

Insurance

34. The University will provide insurance cover for staff members engaged on official University business travelling within Australia or overseas for up to six months (180 days). Cover may be extended beyond six months on application to the University's

Insurance provider and will attract an additional premium to be advised on application. Cover for this additional period would attract FBT therefore the cost must be met by the staff member.

35. Staff must pay a premium for periods of annual leave and leave without pay taken during travel associated with SSP.
36. Cover for accompanying family members may be obtained at the staff member's expense.
37. Staff members borrowing University equipment must obtain approval from the Head of School and report this approval to the University officer responsible for insurance matters to ensure that cover is arranged.
38. Staff must contact the Insurance Officer (email insurance@une.edu.au) at least four weeks prior to departure to ensure they are clear on insurance matters and requirements.
39. Summary of the Travel Insurance Policy and claims procedure can be found at <http://www.une.edu.au/finance/insurance.htm>.

Prior to Commencement

40. Where the staff member supervises postgraduate students, the Postgraduate Supervision Arrangements form advising of the arrangements made must be submitted, through the Head of School, to Research Services, at least four weeks before the commencement of SSP.
41. Applications for annual leave, foreshadowed in the application, must be submitted for approval via web kiosk prior to commencement of the SSP.
42. Staff members proceeding on SSP must contact the Academic Services Officer in HRS at least four weeks prior to commencement of SSP to obtain confirmation that all requirements have been met.
43. The following documentation must be submitted to the Head of School and HRS:
 - Insurance form – for all overseas travel
 - Up-to-date traveller's itinerary, with contact details
44. Staff undertaking a period of SSP overseas should regularly check the "Travel Advice" at <http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/index.html>

Appendix: Financial Assistance – SSP undertaken Round I, 2013

Type of financial support	Amounts per SSP
SSP Travel Grant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Up to \$2,000 for travel (any form) in Australasia or 2. Up to \$4,000 for travel (any form) overseas
SSP Location Allowance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SSP recipient only: \$800 per month pro rata, plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A flat rate of an additional \$400 per month pro rata will be paid if accompanied by dependant/s

Note: Table above provides approximate amounts only. As the SSP financial budget is a fixed amount, the available funds are dependent on the number of approved applications. Applicants will be advised of the final available funding on approval of their application.

Appendix: Financial Assistance – SSP undertaken Round I, 2012

Type of financial support	Amounts per SSP
SSP Travel Grant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Up to \$2,000 for travel (any form) in Australasia. 4. Up to \$4,000 for travel (any form) overseas
SSP Location Allowance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. SSP recipient only: \$800 per month pro rata 3. A flat rate of \$400 per month pro rata will be paid if accompanied by dependant/s

Appendix: Financial Assistance – SSP undertaken Round II, 2012

Type of financial support	Amounts per SSP
SSP Travel Grant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Up to \$1,200 for travel (any form) in Australasia. 6. Up to \$3,000 for travel (any form) overseas
SSP Location Allowance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. SSP recipient only: \$600 per month pro rata 5. A flat rate of \$400 per month pro rata will be paid if accompanied by dependant/s

Further Information

Academic Services Unit, HRS, ext 3612 and 3417.