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## SPECIAL STUDIES PROGRAM (SSP) Policy

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### INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

UNSW's aspiration is to be "a leading research intensive university in the Asia-Pacific region, focusing on contemporary and social issues through defined strengths in professional and scientific fields - a peer in good standing with the best globally." (UNSW B2B Blueprint to Beyond 2010)

Special Studies Program (SSP) is recognised by UNSW as being a valuable mechanism to attract, retain and develop research-active staff. SSP thereby directly supports achievement of UNSW's stated strategic intent in relation to the pursuit of research and scholarly goals.

Key benefits of SSP include active collaboration between UNSW staff and the best in their fields globally; development and expansion of industry, research and community linkages both in Australia and internationally; to build and maintain knowledge and expertise in pursuit of research, scholarly work, or the development of teaching and learning skills.

SSP proposals are expected to evidence the following:

- The project should highlight both the benefits to the individual and the University and should align with the Faculty's strategic goals in research and/or learning and teaching in a way that would not have been possible had the SSP not been granted
- The location of the proposed SSP should be relevant and beneficial to the activity (not just brief visits to a number of places)
- Demonstrate the pursuit of research, scholarly work, or the development of teaching and learning skills
- Activities which are likely to result in publications, to attract grants from outside sources for research, or to involve outside professional bodies
- Sufficient detail to enable an academic assessment of it to be made, including the choice of place or places where it is intended to pursue the SSP
- Alignment with UNSW values

The Dean is the approving authority for all SSP applications submitted in their Faculty.

### DEFINITIONS

**Special Studies Program (SSP)** - a period of release for academic staff from normal duties to engage in research or other scholarly work.

**Participation** - SSP is **not an entitlement** but is based on the needs of the Faculty, the nature of the proposed project and the capacity of the staff member to make effective use of the opportunity.

**Exclusions** - SSP is not normally extended to academic staff appointed to research-only positions or staff on fixed-term contracts of less than four years, nor normally given to a member of staff who is within two years of the date of intended retirement.

**Internal Release** - SSP based on the staff member's home campus, which is normally for a minimum period of six (6) weeks. This may include completion of a PhD.

## GUIDELINES

### Period of SSP

An SSP is normally of six months, but applications for shorter periods or for periods of up to twelve months will be considered where an appropriate case is made.

### Location of SSP

An SSP may not be located at UNSW, nor may it, except in special circumstances and with strong justification, consist merely of a series of brief visits to a number of institutions or sites.

If a staff member wishes to remain at UNSW it may be appropriate to request a period of Internal Release (see Definitions above).

### Eligibility

Eligibility is granted at the discretion of the Dean of the Faculty, however the following principles will generally apply:

1. The staff member will ordinarily be regarded as Research Active before being considered for SSP
2. SSP shall commence no sooner than three years after commencing employment at the University. Prior service at another University may count towards this minimum period.
3. SSP eligibility accrues at the rate of one month for each full session of academic service up to a maximum of 12 months.
4. SSP leave eligibility does not accrue during absence on SSP or leave without pay.
5. For second and subsequent SSPs there is no minimum eligibility requirement except that implied by the eligibility accrual rate.

### Internal Release

There is no eligibility for **Internal Release** if the staff member does not hold equivalent SSP eligibility.

### Conditions of Approval

Approval to undertake SSP or Internal Release will normally be granted only where the teaching program can be carried on without serious disruption and without additional cost. In each case, satisfactory arrangements must be made for the continuity of supervision of higher degree students.

An SSP or Internal Release approval carries with it the condition that the member of staff undertakes to resume full normal duties in the Faculty on completion of the period allowed for the SSP or Internal Release and to continue in those duties for a time not less than the period of absence; in default, repayment of salary and allowances received during the period is to be made to the Faculty on a proportional basis.

A staff member who has completed a period of SSP must submit a report on the SSP no later than three (3) months after completion of the SSP. The Head of School will be invited to provide feedback on the report and especially on the extent to which the aims of the approved program have been achieved as part of the normal academic performance management process. A copy of the report should be sent to the Faculty HR Consultant for placement on the SSP file.