Special Studies Program Policy

Section 1 - Purpose / Objectives

(1) The Special Studies Program (SSP) releases Higher Education academic or senior professional staff from normal duties in order to pursue planned activity on specific projects under one or more of the categories outlined in Part D. An SSP activity must clearly benefit both the University's national/international scholarly reputation and/or community service and engagement, and the individual's career development and work performance. This Policy, together with the Special Studies Program Procedures sets out the application process and conditions of SSP.

Section 2 - Scope / Application

(2) This Policy applies to all academic staff and professional staff HEW 9 and above as described in part A (7) Eligibility of the Special Studies Program Procedure.

(3) It does not apply to:

    a. Vocational Education staff

Section 3 - Policy Statement

Part A - Principles

(4) Victoria University's SSP is part of the University's commitment to the continuing professional development of staff and is guided by the following principles:

    a. Applications will be assessed on merit;

    b. Applications must be aligned with the current University Strategic Plan;

    c. Equality of opportunity and its underpinning principles, equity, diversity and social justice form the basis of conferring all forms of employment benefits at the University, including SSP. The Procedures are informed by the University's commitment to equity and diversity as expressed by the University's Equity and Diversity Policy, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Acknowledgment Policy and related or subsequent policies. Decisions and processes will not be influenced by irrelevant attributes or those upon which discrimination is unlawful, as proscribed by Equal Opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation;

    d. All staff involved in Special Studies processes must uphold principles of confidentiality and privacy. Refer to the University's Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy and Privacy Policy for further information.

Part B - SSP and Professional Development

(5) It is VU's aim to continually develop its staff to enable them to fulfil the University's directions and goals and, where possible, meet staff members' professional and career development needs. SSP is one of the developmental opportunities which staff members can discuss with their managers/supervisors as part of the University performance and development process.

(6) Successful undertaking of an SSP may assist academic staff seeking promotion; or, professional staff applying for an internal position. For academic staff when considering an application for promotion the outcomes of all SSP undertaken will normally be taken into account.

Part C - Eligibility

(7) To apply for SSP staff must meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the [Special Studies Program Procedure](#), Part A (7) Eligibility.

Part D - Program Function

(8) As indicated in clause 1 above, the primary purpose of SSP is to contribute to the growth and reputation of the University in one or more of the following:

   a. Learning and Teaching including scholarship of teaching,
   b. Research including creativity of research,
   c. Academic Citizenship and Engagement including service to the University and engagement with industry or the community
   d. Productivity Enhancements

(9) SSP releases a staff member from normal duties in order to pursue approved activities in one or more of the categories listed above. An SSP activity must clearly benefit both the University's national/ international scholarly reputation and/ or community service or engagement, and the individual's career development and work performance.

(10) Staff members may be encouraged to apply for SSP where the proposed activity is consistent with their career development and work performance.

(11) During semester time, it is the responsibility of College Deans to manage staff absences on SSP but generally not more than 5-7%, calculated over a three-year baseline, of eligible staff members of a college/area/department may be on SSP in any one semester/at any time.

Part E - Projects/Activities

(12) Applications for SSP should be submitted under one or more of the categories as listed in Section D.

(13) Examples of the type of project/activity for which SSP might be granted include, but are not limited to:

   a. A sustained period of research and/or creative activity.
   b. The development of new and innovative teaching tools/ curriculum/ courses/ methodology.
   c. To practice or gain experience in the workplace for which the staff member is preparing students.
   d. Secondment to or exchange with an educational institution, business or professional or community organisation to undertake teaching, research, scholarly activity or other development or skills enhancement relevant to the primary purpose of the SSP.
   e. Maintaining or improving professional, industrial and vocational links, skills and knowledge.
   f. Accelerating the completion of a higher degree.
   g. Gaining academic and/ or management experience.
   h. To undertake programs/activities relevant to Victoria University's strategic directions.

(14) Short-term projects could include fieldwork, preparation for an exhibition or performance, undertaking skill acquisition activities, renewing or establishing contact with academic, industry, professional or community leaders to

keep abreast of discipline developments, preparation of a major grant application, or final writing up of a research project, article(s) for publication, series of review articles, or conference paper(s).

Part F - Conditions

(15) SSP applications are subject to the conditions outlined in the [Special Studies Program Procedure](#) .

Section 4 - Procedures

(16) This policy shall be read in conjunction with the [Special Studies Program Procedure](#) .

Section 5 - Guidelines

(17) Nil

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