Special Studies Program Policy

Section 1 - Summary

(1) The purpose of the Special Studies Program (SSP) is to strengthen the University by fostering intellectual and professional development of academic, research and senior professional staff.

(2) This program supports specific, planned projects and activities that benefit the University's national and international scholarly reputation, promote community service and engagement, and advance individual career development.

(3) All SSP initiatives are designed to align with the University's Strategic Plan and aligned portfolio plans.

Section 2 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(4) Higher Education Standards Framework: Standard 3.2 Staffing.

Section 3 - Scope

(5) This Policy applies to all academic staff and professional staff HEP 9 and above as described in Part B (8) Eligibility of the Special Studies Program Procedure.

(6) It does not apply to Vocational Education staff.

Section 4 - Definitions

(7) Academic staff: refers to all academic and research academic staff Levels A-E other than academic sessional as per the Enterprise Agreement.

Section 5 - Policy Statement

Part A - Principles

(8) 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 based on merit and allocated through a competitive process;
b. Applications must be aligned with the current University Strategic Plan and where required aligned plans (such as the Research with Impact 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 Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity Policy, the Aboriginal Education and Cultural Equity Policy and related or subsequent policies. Decisions and processes will not be influenced by irrelevant attributes or those

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upon which discrimination is unlawful, as prescribed by Equal Opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation;

d. All staff involved in Special Studies Program processes must uphold principles of confidentiality and privacy. Refer to the University's Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy and Privacy Policy for further information.
e. VU recognises that staff may be impacted by a wide range of circumstances and may request that their SSP application be considered on the basis of Career Interruption.

Part B - SSP and Professional Development

(9) 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.

(10) Successful undertaking of an SSP may assist academic and research staff seeking promotion or professional staff seeking promotional opportunities, and may assist in acceleration of HDR. For academic and research staff, the outcomes of all SSP undertaken will normally be taken into account when considering an application for promotion.

Part C - Eligibility

(11) To apply for SSP staff must meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the Special Studies Program Procedure, Part B (11) Eligibility.

Part D - Program Function

(12) As indicated in clause (1-3) above, the primary purpose of SSP is to contribute to the growth and reputation of the University as described in Part B of the SSP Procedure.

(13) 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 impactful research outputs, and/ or community service or engagement, and the individual's career development and work performance.

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

Part E - Projects/Activities

(15) Applications for SSP should be submitted under one or more of the categories as listed in Part B of the Special Studies Program Procedure.

(16) 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 that supports impactful research outputs.
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.

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h. To undertake programs/activities relevant to VU's strategic directions.

(17) Short-term projects could include fieldwork, preparation for an exhibition or performance, undertaking skill acquisition activities, renewing or establishing contact with academic, research, 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

(18) SSP applications are subject to the conditions outlined in the Special Studies Program Procedure.

Section 6 - Procedures

(19) Special Studies Program Procedure.

Status and Details

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