

Special Studies Program (SSP) Procedure

Intent

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidelines for the implementation of JCU's Special Studies Program Policy.

Scope

This procedure applies to academic staff covered by the JCU Enterprise Agreement 2013 – 2016 (the Agreement). It does not apply to casual academic staff and short-term academic visitors.

Definitions

Special Studies Program (SSP) – an approved program of study or research normally outside of the University.

Travel Costs – the cost of passports*, visas, tickets, travel insurance, airport taxes, airport transfers (including meals and overnight accommodation where necessary). Travel costs do not include excess baggage, vehicle hire (except in special circumstances where air, rail or bus transportation is not available), commuting costs (taxi fares, train fares, etc.), conference fees, freight, photocopying, hire or purchase of equipment, stationary, subsistence rates, accommodation costs other than in transit, and any other items not deemed to be official travel.

*Passports will only be reimbursed where the individual requires one specifically for the needs of the SSP.

Continuous Service – means a period during which the staff member is employed by the University, but does not include any period (an *excluded period*) that does not count as service. Unpaid periods of absence that do count as service include a period of stand-down, and a period of absence under community service leave. Continuous service will cease where a *break in service* of greater than 90 days occurs between the end of one employment period and the commencement of another.

An excluded period does not break the staff member's continuity of service but does not count towards the length of the staff member's continuous service.

Break in Service – means any period of time where a JCU staff member does not hold a current employment contract (i.e. fixed term or continuing) or is not participating in a casual engagement with JCU.

Applicable Continuous Service – means the period of *continuous service* calculated from the end date of the staff members previous SSP, or in circumstances where the staff member has not previously participated in SSP is calculated from the date the staff member meets Eligibility.

Procedure

1. Program benefits, including financial assistance

1.1. Duration of Program

Up to two months for each year of applicable continuous service may be granted towards SSP, to a maximum SSP period of 12 months (pro rata for part time). The proportion of service at part time hours during the applicable continuous service period will affect the maximum SSP period allowed.

1.2. Travel Grant (i.e. Travel Costs and Living Expenses)

- a. The travel grant will be composed of two elements: travel costs and living expenses.
 - Travel costs shall accrue at \$1,000 per year of applicable continuous service, to a maximum of \$6,000.
 - The travel cost should be paid by JCU directly to the service provider (e.g. the airline). Although not the preferred option, if it is necessary for

the travel arrangements to be made by the staff member, reimbursement of actual expenses will be paid to the staff member on provision of evidence (e.g. receipts).

- The travel cost will not be paid directly to the staff member.
 - Living expenses of \$40 per day (i.e. each day the staff member is required to be absent from the normal area of residence), which shall accrue at 60 days per year of applicable continuous service. Living expenses may have tax implications and the staff member should seek their own tax advice.
- b. For staff holding a fractional appointment these components shall be applied in proportion to that fraction.
 - c. The living expenses should be made to the staff member two months prior to the commencement of the SSP.
 - d. A travel requisition must be raised through the University's travel system to claim either or both elements of the travel grant.

1.3. Travel needs and costs

- a. Any travel must be in accordance with JCU travel policies.
- b. Travel must be planned and agreed as a component of the SSP proposal.
- c. Corporate travel insurance is provided automatically for salaried staff members and includes insurance during the period of SSP, while undertaking SSP duties or activities.
- d. Once SSP is approved, the travel arrangements must be made through the University's corporate arrangements, including the University's contracted travel arrangement and travel requisition system.

1.4. Remuneration during the SSP

- a. Whilst participating in the SSP, the staff member will receive their normal salary.

1.5. Annual Leave and/or Long Service Leave in conjunction with the SSP

- a. Any period of annual leave or long service leave to be taken in conjunction with the SSP should be included on the prescribed application form.
- b. Any period of annual leave or long service leave sought after the approval of the SSP will be considered in light of the SSP approval.
- c. The period of leave must be recorded in My HR Online.

2. Application Procedure

- a. Applications are called for once each year, aligned to divisional expectations, timeframes and processes.
- b. Applications for SSP must be made on the prescribed application form as amended from time to time.
 - The *Travel Grant* should be requested as a component of the application.
 - Should the *Travel Grant* be considered insufficient for the proposed SSP, the application should include a detailed request for the use of other funds, including the purpose of the funds and the funding source.
- c. The application must be forwarded to the Head of Academic Group (or Manager reporting to the Dean of Directorates) by the prescribed date.
- d. The application must be submitted at least six months prior to the proposed start date of the SSP.

3. Assessment and Criteria

- a. Role of the Head of Academic Group (or Manager reporting to the Dean of Directorates) and Dean.
 - The Head of Academic Group (or Manager reporting to the Dean of Directorates) will assess the staff member's application and make a recommendation to the Dean.

- The Dean will approve or reject the application for SSP, aligned to divisional processes. If rejected a rationale will be provided.
- b. Prior to assessing a staff member's application for SSP, eligibility will be confirmed in accordance with the eligibility requirements outlined in the Special Studies Program Policy.
 - c. After confirming a staff member is eligible, the assessment of an application will be based on the following Criteria:
 - Evidence that the proposal will deliver significant value to the University and be aligned to the University's Strategic Intent.
 - Staff member's performance.
 - Outcome of previous SSP and progress on observed areas of development.
 - Evidence that the teaching and other responsibilities can be met satisfactorily in the staff members absence.
 - Preference may be given where SSP has not been undertaken previously - either at JCU or another Australian University.

4. Assessment Outcome and Notification

- a. The Dean will ensure the staff member is informed of the decision in writing.
 - The staff member will be advised of the decision by the Dean within one month of the due date of submission of EOI for SSP for the following year.
- b. Where the application is successful, communication of the decision, including the period of SSP, will be provided to the staff member and to Human Resources.
- c. Where the application has not been successful, the staff member will be provided reasons in writing as to why the application does not meet the criteria, or other grounds for refusing the application.
- d. Where the application would otherwise have been successful, but is not approved due to lack of resources, the Dean will specify a time within the next three years when a new or rescheduled application that meets the criteria will be approved subject to the below:
 - Should an unforeseen lack of resources further delay the SSP, the program can only be deferred a further 12 months and only on the authority of the Dean. The program costs and other details may require updating at this point.

5. Changes to the SSP

- a. Any request to amend the program once it has been approved must be made to the Dean, by submitting the prescribed amendment form, as amended from time to time. This may include changes to the SSP content, the commencement of the SSP, a change to funding or temporarily pausing the SSP.
- b. The commencement of SSP should not be delayed for greater than 30 days, and will not extend the duration of the SSP, unless exceptional circumstances are approved by the Dean.
 - Should the commencement of the SSP be delayed greater than 30 days, the Dean may retract the SSP approval.
- c. Where the SSP diverts from the original approval and without sufficient cause and without approval of the Dean, the University reserves the right to seek repayment of a portion of the travel grant and salary received in respect of the SSP from the staff member.

6. Outcomes on completion of the SSP

Within three months of returning from SSP, a staff member shall provide to the Dean, a detailed report showing the outcome of the SSP, including the program of study or research pursued, the significance of the work completed and its value to the University.

7. Performance and Termination of Employment

- a. It is a normal expectation of the University that a person will remain employed by the University after the SSP, and should the staff member end his/her employment with the University within the period commensurate with the duration of the SSP, without contributing significant publications to the University, the University reserves the right to seek reimbursement of monies related to the SSP, on a pro rata basis.
- b. James Cook University's policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct, continue to apply to staff while participating in SSP.

8. Appeal Procedure

- a. The staff member may appeal the decision of the Dean.
- b. The appeal must be lodged in writing with the relevant Deputy Vice Chancellor within four weeks of the date of the application outcome notification sent by the Dean.
- c. The relevant Deputy Vice Chancellor will refer the appeal to an Appeal Panel comprising:
 - Deputy Vice Chancellor; and
 - Director, Human Resources or other senior HR representative; and
 - Chair of the Academic Board.
- d. The Deputy Vice Chancellor will Chair the Appeal Panel.
- e. The Deputy Vice Chancellor will notify the appellant of the outcome and there will be no further right of appeal.

Related policy instruments

Related policy instruments include but are not limited to the following documents.

[Staff Studies Program \(SSP\) Policy](#)

JCU Enterprise Agreement 2013 – 2016, particularly clause 40.3.

Code of Conduct

Further related instruments can be found at the JCU Human Resources website.

Schedules/Appendices

[Special Studies Program \(SSP\) Application Form](#)

[Special Studies Program \(SSP\) Amendment Form](#)

Administration

Approval Details

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| Policy Sponsor and approver of procedure | Deputy Vice Chancellor, Services and Resources |
| Version no | V1.0 |
| Date for next review | 2018 |

Revision History

| Version no. | Approval date | Implementation date | Details |
|-------------|---------------|---------------------|--|
| 1.0 | 30/10/2015 | 18/11/2015 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update to align with JCU's policy framework and the JCU Enterprise |

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| | | | <p>Agreement 2013 – 2016.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refinement of Definitions. • Alignment of titles to the University structure. • Update to SPP funding and values. • Criteria updated to include alignment to the University’s strategic intent. • Inclusion of an appeals process • Inclusion of new clauses to give clarity to matters already in existence but not necessarily explicit in past documentation, about outcomes of the SSP program, and confirmation that the staff member remains bound by the University’s policies whilst on SSP and inclusion of a clause to show that JCU may recoup costs of SSP where the staff member resigns and/or where deviation to the SSP occurs without approval. |
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