

<b>Name of Policy</b>	<b>Interim Policy on Outside Studies Program and Internal Research Secondments for Academic Staff</b>	
<b>Description of Policy</b>	This policy sets out the requirements relating to OSP and internal research secondment for academic staff at ACU National.	
<input type="checkbox"/> New Policy		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revision
<b>Description of Revision</b>	The revisions primarily relate to clarification of the requirements for OSP applications (section 6.0) and reports (section 10.0). Inclusion of guidelines for internal research secondment.	

### Human Resources Directorate

<b>Policy and Revision Number</b>	
<b>Original Effective Date</b>	
<b>Review Due Date</b>	
<b>Revision Effective Date</b>	
<b>Senate Approval Date</b>	
<b>Vice-Chancellor's Approval Date</b>	3 September 2008

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## **1.0 Foreword**

- 1.1** Australian Catholic University seeks to maintain the highest standards of education quality by fostering the intellectual and professional development of its academic staff. It therefore subscribes to the principle that during the term of their appointment, members of the academic staff should be encouraged to continue their professional development.
- 1.2** The Outside Studies Program (OSP) is a means by which academic staff can engage in an external period of continuous research/scholarship and/or professional practice appropriate to the staff member's employment responsibilities in order to enhance his/her research/scholarship productivity, teaching, community engagement, creative works, professional qualifications and/or professional status.
- 1.3** Internal Research Secondment (IRS) provides established research-active and early career researchers with a period of teaching-release in which to concentrate on their research efforts. Academic staff on such secondments continue to supervise higher degree research students.
- 1.4** OSP and IRS are essentially a co-operative venture and some rearrangement of dates and responsibilities within the School may need to be made by the Head of School. Such rearrangements include not offering elective units, offering units in a different semester or by an alternative mode, utilising staff from another campus or School within the Faculty, etc. For those duties where the Head of School cannot make alternative arrangements, the OSP and IRS Committee allocates funding to cover replacement costs.
- 1.5** Participation in OSP and IRS shall not be granted as a right. Authority to grant OSP and IRS rests with the University, which will consider each application on its merits and, in particular, its proposed outcomes, bearing in mind the scholarly development needs of the individual, the best interests of the University, available resources and the level of appointment and nature of the applicant's appointment. Grants of OSP and IRS, including dates of commencement and conclusion, will remain subject to the needs of the University. An OSP/IRS may be postponed at the request of the University.
- 1.6** OSP and IRS are separate from arrangements related to conference attendance and travel. Staff may make arrangements to attend conferences during periods when they are on OSP and IRS but these will not be funded as part of their OSP or IRS application.

## **2.0 Purpose of Undertaking Outside Studies Programs**

- 2.1** OSP makes provision for members of the academic staff, chosen on the basis of proposals submitted, to have the opportunity periodically to work outside the University in order to:
  - 2.1.1** undertake research or other appropriate scholarly activities relevant to the goals of the University, including with a community engagement focus; or
  - 2.1.2** maintain and improve their professional qualifications or knowledge; or
  - 2.1.3** obtain practical experience in the workplace for which they are preparing students; or

- 2.1.4** Collaborate with and contribute to an institution of higher education in an emerging and/or developing nation consistent with the University's Mission and focus on community engagement.

The University recognises that there may also be a need to provide for periods of full-time study to undertake research leading to a doctoral or master's thesis.

Programs outside the above, which are considered to benefit both the staff member and the University, may also be considered.

- 2.2** Staff participating in OSP may make use of appropriate overseas facilities, but the reasons for the need to undertake OSP overseas must be clearly articulated in the application.
- 2.3** The initiative for developing OSP proposals need not rest always with the staff member. Where needs or opportunities are identified in high priority areas, supervisors or University management may propose a particular program to the relevant staff member, for example through the policy, *Performance Review and Planning Program for Academic Staff*.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.4** Priority shall be placed on OSP applications, which clearly meet the needs of the University as well as the staff member. There should be a tangible outcome(s) in terms of immediate application to the advancement of University activities either during OSP or subsequent to OSP. OSP proposals involving more diffuse goals shall be given lower priority.
- 2.5** For those who have had OSP, the outcomes of previous OSP(s) will be a factor in considering subsequent applications.

### **3.0 Purpose of Internal Research Secondments**

- 3.1** IRS, which is open to academic staff designated as research-active or early career researchers, supports the research goals of the University to:
- 3.1.1** conduct quality research (and thereby to increase research outputs in approved publication categories);
- 3.1.2** support and encourage academic staff, especially early career researchers, in their research efforts and goals;
- 3.1.3** provide academic staff with a period of teaching release to enable them to work on developing collaborative research links with colleagues at other universities and with industry partners, consistent with the University's research-community engagement nexus;
- 3.1.4** attract research funding (e.g. ARC Linkage and Discovery Grants), which will contribute to an increase in funding in the Institutional Grants Scheme and Research Training Scheme allocation to the University;
- 3.1.5** attract postdoctoral fellows (e.g. ARC Postdoctoral Fellowships) to the University;

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Performance Review and Planning Program for Academic Staff documentation is not to be submitted to the OSP and IRS Committee.

- 3.1.6 attract high quality higher degree research candidates;
  - 3.1.7 participate, wherever possible, in higher degree research supervision; and
  - 3.1.8 promote the research achievements of the University.
- 3.2 The initiative for developing IRS proposals need not rest always with the staff member. Where needs or opportunities are identified in high priority areas, supervisors or University management may propose a particular program to the relevant staff member, for example through the policy, *Performance Review and Planning Program for Academic Staff*.
- 3.3 Priority shall be placed on IRS applications, which clearly meet the needs of the University as well as the staff member. There should be a tangible outcome(s) in terms of the University's research agenda and any related community engagement from IRS. IRS proposals involving more diffuse goals shall be given lower priority.
- 3.4 For those who have had IRS, the outcomes of previous IRS(s) will be a factor in considering subsequent applications.

#### 4.0 Eligibility

- 4.1 4.1.1 Staff appointed on a continuing or fixed-term basis, and whose employment fraction is 0.5 or greater, are eligible to apply for up to six months OSP/IRS on completion of at least three years paid service with Australian Catholic University.
- 4.1.2 At the conclusion of OSP/IRS, a staff member may make another application for OSP/IRS to commence no earlier than the completion of at least 3 years further service with the University.
- 4.2 4.2.1 In determining qualifying service for OSP purposes, the University will recognise prior continuous paid full-time or fractional service with other Australian higher education institutions provided that:
- the staff member was eligible to apply for participation in an OSP or similar program in their former institution(s); and
  - if the staff member was granted OSP or its equivalent, the period(s) of OSP and the necessary qualifying service shall not count as qualifying service for OSP purposes within this University.
- 4.2.2 Recognition may also be granted for comparable service with overseas universities or institutions of comparable standing.
- 4.2.3 Recognition of prior service is normally dependent upon there being not more than three months between cessation of employment with the releasing institution and commencement with Australian Catholic University. The period between cessation and commencement shall not count as qualifying service for OSP purposes.

The extent of any previous relevant service will be established by the Human Resources Directorate (HR), in line with the normal processes including a claim for recognition of service by the staff member, within six calendar months from the date of commencement.

- 4.3** A departure from the service requirements of 4.1.1 or the requirements of 4.2 will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances and will be subject to the approval of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) after consultation with the Dean. Where such a departure is approved, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) may require that should the staff member cease employment with the University prior to her/his completion of three years' service (exclusive of the period of OSP) any University OSP travel grant shall become immediately repayable as a debt due to the University by the staff member.
- 4.4** In the circumstances where a staff member voluntarily separates from the University prior to completing the same length of service as the period of approved OSP/IRS (exclusive of any period of long service leave or leave without pay) such staff member shall be required to repay on a pro-rata basis any financial assistance provided by the University provided that, in special circumstances, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) may waive such requirement.
- 4.5** The requirements under 4.3 and 4.4 shall be secured by the staff member giving an irrevocable authority to deduct the required amount from salary during the period of notice of termination or, where the staff member's employment ceases prior to completing repayment, from any monies due to the staff member from the University. Any balance will remain a debt to the University recoverable by other means.
- 4.6** Absences on long service leave, OSP or IRS will not count as service for the purpose of determining eligibility to apply for future OSP/IRS. Absences on leave without pay (excluding maternity leave) will not count as service for this purpose unless specifically noted at the time of the leave approval.

## **5.0 Principles**

- 5.1** The total amount of time spent on OSP/IRS by eligible members of the academic staff shall not be greater than five percent of available person-years of staff of the grade of Associate Lecturer (Academic Level A) and above, averaged over the triennium.
- 5.2** Each year when determining the budget for academic staff professional learning, the University will allocate funding for allowances (under clause 8) for the approval period. Allowances will be deducted from available academic staff professional learning funds in the year in which they are paid.
- 5.3** Where possible, OSP/IRS shall be timed so as to minimise disruption to the efficient functioning of the University.
- 5.4** Any reduction in workload in order to allow a staff member to undertake activity appropriate to the OSP/IRS shall be considered to be within the scope of this policy. The relationship between OSP/IRS and workload reduction will be determined by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) in consultation with the Dean who will consult with the Head of School and the staff member concerned at the time when the reduction of workload is approved.
- 5.5** A staff member previously granted OSP/IRS will not be eligible to apply for a further period of OSP/IRS until she/he has satisfied the reporting requirements under clause 10. Normally candidates will not be eligible for a further period of OSP/IRS until 2½ years after the report has been submitted.
- 5.6** Financial assistance will not be granted if the period of OSP is less than one month.

- 5.7** A single period of OSP/IRS will not exceed six months. Normally, approved OSP/IRS programs will be required to be taken during one semester. For both OSP and IRS it is assumed that two weeks of annual leave will be taken during the secondment.

## **6.0 Applications**

- 6.1** Applications must be submitted on the 'Application for Outside Studies Program and Internal Research Secondment' form by 31 May or 17 October normally not less than 12 calendar months before the beginning of the proposed program. Applications submitted to the office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) after the dates specified above will not be considered.

- 6.1.1** Applications are to be in sufficient depth to permit a proper assessment by the OSP and IRS Committee of the worth of the proposed program, and must include:

- a precise statement of the work to be undertaken with clear goals and outcomes. For OSP, where the program involves collaboration with an institute of higher education in an emerging/developing nation, evidence should be provided, including by reference to the University's focus on community engagement, as to how the project will benefit both the institution and the wider community;
- evidence of the staff member's capacity to successfully undertake and complete the proposed OSP/IRS. Where relevant to the nature of the proposal, applicants should include their publication record for the past 5 years as evidence of such capacity;
- for OSP, an outline of the approximate itinerary and the main centres, if any, to be visited, plus any supporting documentation from the institutions or centres concerned likely to assist the University in assessing a proposal made by the staff member (curriculum vitae or extensive documentation is not to be provided);
- a summary of the program completed in detail in section 2.3 of the application;
- for OSP only, the proposed dates of departure and return;
- a list of the intended academic/professional journals to which work undertaken during OSP/IRS is intended to be submitted or comparable outputs proposed for the Visual and Performing Arts and related fields;<sup>2</sup>
- an indication from a publisher or editor that the work would, in principle, be considered for publication (where the intention is to write a monograph, a book or a substantial portion of a book during the proposed OSP/IRS);
- for OSP only, a detailed estimate of travel costs involved;

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<sup>2</sup> In exceptional circumstances (e.g. completion of doctorate or other professional qualification) journal publications may not be an anticipated OSP outcome. This case would need to be demonstrated by the applicant.

- any outside work expected to be undertaken during OSP/IRS (see clause 9.0);
- a short statement setting out the staff member's claim for eligibility for the period of OSP/IRS sought, including a record of previous OSP/IRS or secondment to the Institute for the Advancement of Research (IAR) and its outcomes. Time granted under 5.4 shall be deducted from the period of OSP/IRS available to a staff member;
- any research grants, scholarships or similar funding associated with the period during which OSP/IRS is sought.

Failure to complete the above requirements and to provide the relevant evidence would normally result in the application being rejected by the OSP and IRS Committee.

**6.1.2** The 'Application for Outside Studies Program and Internal Research Secondment' form will require that the Head of School provide a written:

- assessment of the proposal's value to the development of the staff member in the staff member's field of study;
- assessment of the proposal's value to the University; and
- statement of the effect, if any, of the staff member's absence on the teaching commitments and/or other duties to be performed in her/his absence (having regard to 1.3).

In all cases, the Head of School shall provide comment on the strength of each application against the criteria in the Policy and Procedures, particularly under sections 2.0 and 6.0. For staff based primarily in a Flagship or Research Centre, it may be more appropriate for the Flagship or Research Centre Director to provide these comments rather than the Head of School. The applicant must see, and sign that he/she has seen, the supervisor's comments before the application is forwarded to the Dean. The application pro-forma includes space for an applicant, who believes it is necessary to do so, to comment upon the remarks made by the supervisor. To assist in identifying specific staffing requirements associated with multiple applications from one School, the Head of School should process all applications from the School together.

The completed application form is to be sent by the Dean to the HR office, Mount Saint Mary Campus for submission to the OSP and IRS Committee.

A Head of School, Flagship/Research Centre Director or Dean may not assess or make comment upon a staff member's application for OSP/IRS if the Head of School or Dean intends to make or has made an application for OSP/IRS in that round. In such circumstances the Head of School or Flagship/Research Centre Director should, as early as possible, inform the Dean who will then be responsible for providing assessments and comments on any applications from that School/Flagship/Research Centre. Where the Dean is an applicant, one of the Associate Deans should provide the relevant endorsement for academic staff from the Faculty and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) the endorsement for the Dean's application.

- 6.1.3** Approvals for an OSP/IRS will be given as early as possible normally at least six months prior to commencement of the proposed program.
- 6.1.4** Three months prior to commencement the staff member and her/his Head of School are to confirm to the Dean with a copy to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) that the proposed OSP/IRS plan and associated arrangements will proceed as approved.
- 6.1.5** If an applicant wishes to alter any part of an approved program, before the granted period of absence, a written submission must be forwarded to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) through the appropriate Head of School and Dean. The submission must have their comments and recommendations included before it is forwarded to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic). No change is to be made to an approved program until approval is obtained from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic). Advice of any approved program change will be provided by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to the staff member, Head of School, Dean and the HR office at Mount Saint Mary Campus.

## **7.0 OSP and IRS Committee**

The OSP and IRS Committee is to advise the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) on applications for OSP/IRS, including the amounts for OSP allowances and travel grants which might be made or any other matters which are referred to the Committee.

The OSP and IRS Committee's membership shall be:

- the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or nominee as Chair;
- a nominee of the Dean of each Faculty; and
- a member of the academic staff elected by the academic staff of each Faculty.

The Coordinator, Staff Equity and Diversity may attend meetings as an observer.

The elected members will normally serve for a term of three years.

## **8.0 OSP Allowances**

Where a change of residence is involved for a substantial part of OSP, one of the following allowances may be paid to staff granted OSP, subject to the availability of funds:

### **8.1 Travel Allowances for OSP**

- 8.1.1** Where the program is undertaken within Australia, the OSP and IRS Committee may recommend an allowance for travel by the staff member, up to a maximum of \$850; or
- 8.1.2** Where the program entails overseas travel, the OSP and IRS Committee may recommend an allowance for travel by the staff member, up to a maximum of \$2,500.
- 8.1.3** At the discretion of the OSP and IRS Committee, any applicant whose point of departure for an international flight is not from his/her home city may be awarded a domestic travel allowance, up to a maximum of \$850 (as per *Clause 8.1.1*) in addition to the overseas travel allowance warranted under *Clause 8.1.2*.

### **8.2 Special Allowances for OSP**

**8.2.1** A special allowance in respect of costs, other than travel costs (but which may include payment for accommodation costs), incurred in respect of OSP may be paid to a staff member whose OSP is approved. A maximum allowance payable in respect of a staff member will be 5 percent of the salary rate for Step 5, Lecturer Level B at the date of commencement of OSP. In the case of a staff member on a fractional appointment the maximum allowance shall be determined pro-rata to the staff member's employment fraction.

**8.2.2** A further allowance of up to a maximum of \$1,000 may be paid to a staff member who is accompanied by her/his dependent spouse and or dependent children under the age of 18 years.

**8.2.3** In lieu of assistance under 8.2.2, a staff member undertaking an OSP overseas may be paid a special allowance to a maximum of \$1,000 in respect of her/his accompanying dependent spouse and an allowance of up to \$500 in respect of each accompanying dependent child under the age of 18 years. In order to qualify for such an allowance the dependents must accompany the staff member for a substantive period of the overseas program and in any case for not less than a calendar month.

Financial dependency will be assessed in accordance with Australian Taxation Office guidelines and evidence may be required to substantiate any such application.

**8.2.4** When considering the above special allowances, the OSP and IRS Committee may take into account any research grants, scholarships or similar funding associated with the period during which the staff member will undertake an OSP.

**8.2.5** Where the period of OSP is less than six months, the maximum special allowances will be determined by the Committee on a pro-rata basis.

**8.3** Allowances will not be paid for travel or other related costs for conference attendance.

## **9.0 Outside Earnings during OSP**

As detailed in paragraph 2.1, the main purposes of OSP are for staff to undertake research and scholarship, and professional development. However, on occasions staff may receive some income, for example from a host institution. The University will normally permit staff members to retain such monies earned during the period of OSP in accordance with the University's policy on outside work by academic staff.

## **10.0 Reports**

A member of staff granted OSP/IRS is required to submit a report to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) normally within three months of completion of OSP/IRS.

**10.1** The format of the report is flexible and will depend on the nature and extent of OSP/IRS. However, the report would normally provide a short summary of the OSP/IRS program dealing directly with the extent to which the original aims (as set out in the OSP/IRS application) have been met.

**10.2** The Report should incorporate observations and any recommendations, which have relevance to the work of the University in general and the staff member's own work in particular. If applicable, the Report should also detail the community engagement aspects of the OSP/IRS.

**10.3A** documented statement of OSP travel costs and any outside work (paid or unpaid) is also to be submitted to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

## **11.0 Additional Information for Staff**

**11.1** When an application for OSP/IRS has been approved, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) advises the applicant in writing, of the following:

- duration of OSP/IRS; and
- for OSP only, approved allowances (e.g. travel allowances, etc.) to be paid in respect of OSP.

**11.2** On receipt of the advice from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) of OSP approval, the staff member requesting OSP should contact the local HR office concerning the following matters:

### **11.2.1 OSP Allowances - Taxation Requirements**

The staff member should apply to the Australian Taxation Office for a PAYG income tax withholding variation under the provision of the Income Tax Assessment Act. This action should be taken prior to requesting and receiving payment of any allowance.

When the staff member receives a reply from the Taxation Office he/she should furnish the local HR office with the response. Without the necessary notification from the Australian Taxation Office, allowances are taxed in line with PAYG withholding tax tables. Timing of payments should be negotiated through the HR office at Mount Saint Mary Campus.

### **11.2.2 Salary Payments during OSP**

Staff proceeding on OSP may request the HR office at Mount Saint Mary Campus to arrange payment in advance for salary to be paid for the duration of the program. Such a request must be lodged at least 4 weeks prior to the requested date of payment.

If OSP involves a change of residence elsewhere and absence from the University in excess of one month, salaries are usually paid:

- (a) at the beginning of OSP - one half of salary due for the period of OSP;  
and
- (b) half-way through the period of OSP - the balance of the salary due for the period of OSP.

### **11.3 Other Leave Arrangements**

When a staff member wishes to apply for annual leave, long service leave or leave without pay to be taken immediately prior to or following OSP/IRS, a separate leave request must be submitted through the normal channels. If sufficient notice is given, pay in advance can be arranged for the paid leave during OSP.

The University may be liable for fringe benefits tax on that portion of an OSP travel allowance, which is proportionate to any period of personal leave<sup>3</sup> taken during OSP. In order to comply with the Taxation Commissioner's requirements any academic staff members absent on OSP, and in receipt of a University travel allowance, must keep a record of his/her activities which clearly demonstrates, consistent with Australian Taxation Office ruling MT 2038, when he/she was engaged in University work and when on personal leave. The completed record is to be submitted along with the financial report required under 10.1.

Any additional liability arising from the staff member's failing to keep adequate records will be seen as the personal responsibility of the staff member concerned and shall become immediately repayable as a debt due to the University and the equivalent monies may be withheld from salary and/or from any termination payments due to the staff member.

### **11.4 OSP and IRS Undertaking**

At the time of accepting an offer of an OSP/IRS a successful applicant will be required to make a written undertaking to declare outside work during the OSP and to remain at the University at the end of the program for a period at least equal to the duration of the OSP/IRS.

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<sup>3</sup> Personal Leave for this purpose includes annual leave and long service leave.