

<b>Name of Policy</b>	Policy on Research Study Programs (RSP) for Academic Staff
<b>Description of Policy</b>	This policy sets out the requirements relating to RSP for academic staff at ACU.
<b>Policy applies to</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> University-wide <input type="checkbox"/> Specific ( <i>outline location, campus, organisational unit etc.</i> )
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All Staff <input type="checkbox"/> All Students <input type="checkbox"/> Staff and Students
<b>Policy Status</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revision of Existing Policy
<b>Description of Revision</b>	Minor Revisions: Supplementary detail regarding content requirements of the application. Updated staff positions in line with current ACU governance structure.

<b>Approval Authority</b>	Vice-Chancellor
<b>Governing Authority</b>	Vice-Chancellor
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)

<b>Approval Date</b>	2 June 2014
<b>Effective Date</b>	2 June 2014
<b>Date of Last Revision</b>	10 April 2013
<b>Date of Next Policy Review*</b>	10 April 2018

\* Unless otherwise indicated, this policy will still apply beyond the review date.

<b>Related Legislation, Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Local Protocols</b>	Application Form for Research Study Programs (RSP) for Academic Staff
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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Research Study Program (RSP) provides academic staff with financial support to enable release from teaching and other duties for a defined period in order to concentrate on research.
- 1.2 The RSP aims to contribute to the University's strategic research objectives and will concentrate on supporting research proposals that can demonstrate that they:
  - a) will achieve high quality research publications and/or competitive grant income, and
  - b) will clearly advance the University's strategic objectives in research.

## 2. Eligibility

### 2.1 Employment Status and RSP Interval

- 2.1.1 Staff appointed on a continuing or fixed-term basis, and whose employment fraction is 0.5 FTE or greater, are eligible to apply for up to six months RSP normally on completion of at least three years paid service with Australian Catholic University (ACU).
- 2.1.2 The minimal interval between the completion of one RSP and the commencement of a subsequent RSP shall not be less than the equivalent of three years of paid service with the University.

### 2.2 Recognition of Prior Service

- 2.2.1 In determining qualifying service for RSP purposes, the University will recognise prior continuous paid full-time or fractional service with other Australian higher education institutions provided that:
    - 2.2.1.1 the staff member was eligible to apply for participation in an RSP or similar program in their former institution(s); and
    - 2.2.1.2 if the staff member was granted RSP or its equivalent, the period(s) of RSP and the necessary qualifying service shall not count as qualifying service for RSP purposes within this University.
  - 2.2.2 Recognition may also be granted for comparable service with overseas universities or institutions of comparable standing as deemed by the RSP Committee.
  - 2.2.3 Recognition of prior service is normally dependent upon there not being more than three months between cessation of employment with the releasing institution and commencement with ACU. The period between cessation and commencement shall not count as qualifying service for RSP purposes.
  - 2.2.4 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, normally lodged within six calendar months from the date of commencement at ACU.
- 2.3 A departure from the service requirements of *clause 2.1* or the requirements of *clause 2.2* will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances and will be subject to the approval of the Deputy Vice-

Chancellor, Research (DVCR) after consultation with the relevant Faculty Executive Dean. Where such a departure is approved, the DVCR may require that should the staff member cease employment with the University prior to her/his completion of three years of service (exclusive of the period of RSP), any University RSP travel grant funds or special allowances shall become immediately repayable as a debt due to the University by the staff member.

- 2.4 Where a staff member voluntarily separates from the University prior to completing the period of approved RSP (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, under special circumstances, the RSP Committee may waive such requirement.
- 2.5 The requirements under *clauses* 2.3 and 2.4 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.
- 2.6 Absences on long service leave and on RSP will not count as service for the purpose of determining eligibility to apply for future RSP. Absences on leave without pay (excluding parental leave) will not count as service for this purpose unless specifically noted at the time of the leave approval.

### 3. Principles

- 3.1 The total amount of time approved for RSP by eligible members of the academic staff shall not be greater than five per cent of available person-years of staff of the grade of Associate Lecturer (Academic Level A) and above in each Faculty, averaged over the triennium.
- 3.2 Any reduction in workload in order to allow a staff member to undertake activity appropriate to the RSP shall be considered to be within the scope of this policy. The relationship between RSP and workload reduction will be determined by the DVCR in consultation with the relevant Executive Dean, who will consult with the National Head of School or Research Institute Director and the staff member concerned at the time when the reduction of workload is approved.
- 3.3 A staff member previously granted RSP will not be eligible to apply for RSP until she/he has satisfied the reporting requirements under *clause* 8. Normally candidates will not be eligible for a further period of RSP until 2½ years after the report has been submitted.
- 3.4 Financial assistance will not be granted if the period of RSP is less than one month.
- 3.5 A single period of RSP will not exceed six months. Normally, an approved RSP will be required to be taken during one semester. It is assumed that two weeks of annual leave will be taken during the RSP.
- 3.6 The DVCR will determine the amount of funding available for each round of RSP, and applications will be assessed on merit and available budget.

## 4. Applications

### 4.1 Application form content requirements

**4.1.1** Applications must be submitted on the *Application for RSP* form to [res.development@acu.edu.au](mailto:res.development@acu.edu.au) by 30 June of the year preceding RSP. Applications submitted after the dates specified above will not be considered.

**4.1.2** Applications are to be in sufficient depth to permit a rigorous assessment by the RSP Committee of the quality of the proposed program, and must include:

**4.1.2.1** a short statement setting out the staff member's claim for eligibility for the period of RSP sought, including a record of previous RSP (or similar programs such as OSP/IRS) and its outcomes. Time granted under the earlier scheme may be deducted from the period of RSP available to a staff member;

**4.1.2.2** a comprehensive account of the work to be undertaken with clear goals and outcomes;

**4.1.2.3** a list of the academic journals or comparable outlets to which work undertaken during RSP will be submitted;

**4.1.2.4** evidence of a contract with a publisher (where available);

**4.1.2.5** evidence of the staff member's capacity to undertake and complete successfully the proposed RSP. An applicant must include full details of his or her publication and grant record for the past 6 years, as well as a statement about the quality of the research outputs;

**4.1.2.6** details of the itinerary (including dates of departure and return) 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 the proposed program;

**4.1.2.7** a detailed estimate of travel costs involved;

**4.1.2.8** any outside work expected to be undertaken during RSP (see clause 7); and any research grants, scholarships or similar funding associated with the period during which RSP is sought.

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

### 4.2 Primary Application Assessment

**4.2.1** The RSP form will require that the National Head of School or Research Institute Director provide a written:

**4.2.1.1** Assessment of the quality of the proposal;

**4.2.1.2** 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.

**4.2.2** In all cases, the National Head of School or Research Institute Director shall provide comment on the strength of each application against the criteria in the Policy and Procedures, particularly under *clauses 1.2* and *4.1*. The Executive Dean will then do likewise. The applicant must see, and sign that he/she has seen, the supervisor's comments and those of the Executive Dean. The National Head of School or Research Institute Director and the Executive Dean should include an

assessment of the extent to which the proposed program aligns with approved individual research plans as well as with Faculty and University research strategy (the individual's research plan should be attached). The application pro-forma includes space for an applicant, who believes it is necessary to do so, to respond to the comments made by the supervisor and/or Executive Dean.

- 4.2.3 To assist in identifying specific staffing requirements associated with multiple applications from one School or Research Institute, the National Head of School or Research Institute Director should process all applications from the School / Research Institute together. The Faculty Executive Dean will be required to rank applications if the time requested for RSP is greater than that indicated under *clause 3.1*.
- 4.2.4 The completed application form is to be sent by the Executive Dean to the RSP Committee, North Sydney Campus at [res.development@acu.edu.au](mailto:res.development@acu.edu.au) for submission to the RSP Committee.
- 4.2.5 A National Head of School, Research Institute Director or Executive Dean may not assess or make comment upon a staff member's application for RSP if that person intends to make or has made an application for RSP in that round. In such circumstances the National Head of School or Research Institute Director should, as early as possible, inform the Executive Dean who will then be responsible for providing assessments and comments on any applications from that School/Research Institute. Where the Executive Dean is an applicant, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) will provide the assessment.

#### 4.3 Approvals and Amendments

- 4.3.1 Approvals for an RSP will be given as early as possible, normally at least six months prior to commencement of the proposed program.
- 4.3.2 Three months prior to commencement the staff member and her/his National Head of School or Research Institute Director are to confirm to the Executive Dean with a copy to [res.development@acu.edu.au](mailto:res.development@acu.edu.au) that the proposed RSP plan and associated arrangements will proceed as approved.
- 4.3.3 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 RSP Committee through the appropriate National Head of School or Research Institute Director and Executive Dean. The submission must have their comments and recommendations included before it is forwarded to the RSP Committee. No change is to be made to an approved program until approval is obtained from the RSP Committee. Advice of any approved program change will be provided by the RSP Committee to the staff member, National Head of School or Research Institute Director, Executive Dean and the HR Advisory Service at the North Sydney Campus.

### 5. RSP Committee

- 5.1 The RSP Committee is to advise the DVCR on applications for RSP, including the amounts for allowances and travel grants which might be made or any other matters which are referred to the Committee.
- 5.2 The RSP Committee's membership shall be:
  - the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) as Chair;
  - Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research);
  - three senior members of Academic staff from different disciplines appointed by the Vice-Chancellor.

A member of the *Workforce Strategy Team* (Human Resources Directorate) may attend meetings as an observer.

## 6. Allowances

RSP allowances are directly and personally reimbursed to RSP recipients and may not be paid into other University accounts. Where a change of residence is involved for a substantial part of RSP, one of the following allowances may be paid, subject to the availability of funds:

### 6.1 Travel Allowances for RSP

- 6.1.1 Where the program is undertaken within Australia, the RSP Committee may recommend an allowance for travel by the staff member, up to a maximum of \$1,000; or
- 6.1.2 Where the program entails overseas travel, the RSP Committee may recommend an allowance for travel by the staff member, up to a maximum of \$2,750.
- 6.1.3 At the discretion of the DVCR, 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 \$1000 (as per *clause 6.1.1*) in addition to the overseas travel allowance warranted under *clause 6.1.2*.

### 6.2 Special Allowances for RSP

- 6.2.1 A special allowance in respect of costs, other than travel costs (but which may include payment for accommodation costs), incurred in respect of RSP may be paid to a staff member whose RSP is approved. A maximum allowance payable in respect of a staff member will be 5 per cent of the salary rate for Step 5, Lecturer Level B at the date of commencement of RSP. 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.
- 6.2.2 A staff member undertaking an RSP overseas may be paid a special allowance to a maximum of \$1,250 in respect of her/his accompanying dependent spouse and an allowance of up to \$750 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.

- 6.2.3 When considering the above special allowances, the RSP Committee may take into account any research grants, scholarships, related or similar funding associated with the period during which the staff member will undertake an RSP.
- 6.2.4 Where the period of RSP is less than six months, the maximum special allowances may be determined by the Committee on a pro-rata basis.

## 7. Outside Earnings during RSP

On occasions staff may receive some income whilst on RSP, the University will normally permit staff members to retain such monies earned during the period of RSP in accordance with the University's policy on outside work by academic staff.

## 8. Reports

### 8.1 Progress Report

- 8.1.1** A member of staff granted RSP is required to submit a report to the RSP Committee within three months of completion of RSP.
- 8.1.2** The report will provide a comprehensive report of the RSP program and will deal directly with the extent to which the original aims (as set out in the RSP application) have been met. A documented statement of RSP travel costs and any outside work (paid or unpaid) is also to be submitted to the RSP Committee.
- 8.1.3** The RSP Committee may require that additional information be provided if this is thought necessary.

### 8.2 Financial Report

The Faculty will provide to the DVCR and within three months of RSP completion, a financial report of costs expended under an approved RSP. Any remaining funds will be reimbursed to the Office of the DVCR.

## 9. Additional Information for Staff

- 9.1** When an application for RSP has been approved, the RSP Committee advises the applicant in writing, of the following:
- duration of RSP; and,
  - approved allowances (e.g. travel allowances)
- 9.2** On receipt of the advice from the RSP Committee of RSP approval, the staff member requesting RSP should contact the HR Advisory Service concerning the following matters:

### 9.2.1 RSP 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 HR Advisory Service 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 established through the HR Advisory Service at the North Sydney Campus.

### 9.2.2 Salary Payments during RSP

- 9.2.2.1** Staff proceeding on RSP may request the payment in advance for salary to be paid for the duration of the RSP through HR Advisory Service at the North Sydney Campus. Such a request must be lodged at least 4 weeks prior to the requested date of payment.
- 9.2.2.2** If RSP 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 RSP - one half of salary due for the period of RSP; and
  - (b) half-way through the period of RSP - the balance of the salary due for the period of RSP.

### 9.3 Other Leave Arrangements

- 9.3.1** 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 RSP, 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 RSP.
- 9.3.2** The University may be liable for fringe benefits tax on that portion of an RSP travel allowance, which is proportionate to any period of personal leave<sup>1</sup> taken during RSP. In order to comply with the Taxation Commissioner's requirements any academic staff members absent on RSP, 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 should be retained by the staff member and submitted to the University if required.
- 9.3.3** 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.

### 9.4 RSP Undertakings

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

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<sup>1</sup> Personal Leave for this purpose includes annual leave and long service leave.