

Outside Studies Program for Academic Staff Policy

Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) This Policy informs prospective applicants and College and University Committees on Outside Studies Programs, of the policy and principles associated with the Outside Studies Program.

Section 2 - Scope

(2) This Policy applies to:

- a. all Campuses;
- b. all academic staff members on teaching and research continuing contracts;
- c. full time and part time (0.5 EFT and above) academic staff.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(3) The central purpose of an Outside Studies Program (OSP) is to promote research and scholarship. This period free from the full range of university duties provides an opportunity for uninterrupted effort on research activities and/or deep engagement with the scholarship of teaching and learning which normally cannot be undertaken during the course of regular duties.

(4) Applicants normally will pursue their programs at major centres of learning overseas. However, it is recognised that some programs will be more appropriately carried out in Australia. Where a program is to be taken in Australia a special case must be made. OSP is an important step in the development of academics. Heads of School will take appropriate note of this when determining the capacity of the School to cover workloads. Heads of School will have long term plans for staff members to be able to take OSP as part of their development and OSP plans should be included as part of the annual performance development plan discussions between staff and supervisors and/or the professor(s) of discipline.

Section 4 - Procedures

Preamble

(5) To inform academic teaching and research staff of the rules, responsibilities and timelines associated with the University's procedure for Outside Studies Programs (OSP).

Application Process

(6) Prior to preparing an application, intending applicants should consult with their Head of School to determine the feasibility of submitting an application at this time. The Head of School will give consideration to operational needs of

the School/College and the individual's development goals and career stage.

(7) Applications will be called once each year, normally in March, for programs to commence in the following year. Applications will be on a competitive basis.

(8) In exceptional circumstances consideration may be given to an application received out of session.

(9) To lodge an application:

- a. Applications must be made using the centralised OSP application form;
- b. Applications must be endorsed with comments and a recommendation by the Head of School (who will consult with the supervisor and/or the professor(s) of discipline regarding the merit of the proposed program).

(10) The Head of School will attest that:

- a. the applicant's workload can be covered;
- b. HDR supervision can be covered by an appropriate alternative supervisor who has agreed to provide supervision; and
- c. outcomes of previous OSPs have been considered in assessing the current application.

(11) Applicants must sight the comments of the Head of School and be given the opportunity to make further comment. The applicant will then submit the completed application to the College OSP Committee via the relevant OSP contact.

(12) Approval for a program will be conditional on resourcing at the time the program is taken.

OSP Committees

Central Committee

(13) There will be a central Committee on Outside Studies Programs appointed by, and reporting to the Vice-Chancellor. Membership of the central committee will comprise the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement) as Chair, and two members of each College committee, normally the Chair and one other member (ideally one male and one female).

(14) The role of the central committee will be:

- a. to set and review the policy covering OSP and to approve any variations between colleges;
- b. to receive and consider reports from the Colleges, which will provide details of programs approved or not approved, and these details may be discussed with the College OSP Chair;
- c. to consider appeals from unsuccessful applicants. Any such appeals must be based on the grounds that the procedures outlined in this document were not followed;
- d. to receive summaries of completed OSPs from the colleges;
- e. to report annually to the Academic Board.

College Committees

(15) Each College will appoint a committee. Membership of the College OSP Committee will comprise:

- a. College Pro Vice-Chancellor (Chair) or nominee;
- b. Heads of School in the College;
- c. Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research);

- d. Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Coursework);
- e. Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) or Head of School, from another College.

(16) Gender balance must be maintained wherever possible.

(17) Other members, such as immediate past Chairs of OSP Committees, may be co-opted onto committees for their expertise.

(18) In attendance, but not voting:

- a. Administrative officer (Secretariat);
- b. College General Manager (administrative adviser).

(19) The role of College OSP Committees will be to:

- a. consider applications from the Schools;
- b. scrutinise reports on completed OSPs;
- c. provide a report to the Central Committee on Outside Studies Programs at the conclusion of each year's application round, including the information listed in the section below, Report of College OSP Committees;
- d. oversee and consider matters relating to OSP including the development of College rules and standards relating to OSP.

Report of College OSP Committees

(20) In reporting to the Central Committee on Outside Studies Programs, the College OSP Chair will advise on:

- a. the number of applications approved or not approved in the current round;
- b. the number of applications previously planned for that year's round;
- c. the number of applications planned for the following year;
- d. the following information on unsuccessful applications:
 - i. the reason/s why the application was not supported (whether because of the quality of the proposed program or for resource reasons); and
 - ii. whether the applicant had been unsuccessful in a previous round(s);
- e. matters referred by the College OSP Committee to the central committee for consideration or clarification;
- f. summaries of completed Outside Studies Programs.

Criteria

(21) A research focused OSP application must outline a fully developed program with clear objectives that align with Future Ready priorities for research and contribute to the University's research profile including evidence of:

- a. publications or non-traditional research outputs in high quality outlets as measured by the relevant disciplines and external measures of quality;
- b. new/external research grant applications with collaborators from host institution/s;
- c. strong international research collaborations or research student and staffing exchanges.

(22) A teaching-focussed OSP application must outline a fully developed program with clear objectives that align with University priorities in teaching and learning and contribute to the University's research profile including evidence of the following, indicating how these tangible outcomes will be disseminated:

- a. engaging explicitly with the scholarship of teaching and learning, in a disciplinary context or more widely;
- b. leading to tangible outcomes for the applicant in respect of their career development and which will enrich scholarship in the field, for example, via:
 - i. refereed articles in reputable journals which engage with the scholarship of teaching and learning;
 - ii. conference presentations engaging with the development, application, and/or analysis of innovative methods, curriculum and/or pedagogy;
 - iii. other tangible scholarly outcomes of significance and impact, such as the development of national and international competitive grants in teaching and learning.

(23) OSP will not normally be used to undertake PhD work as this could be accommodated under alternative workload arrangements.

(24) Before final approval can be given to any program, the approving authorities must be satisfied that the:

- a. objectives and academic content of the proposed program will benefit the staff member in terms of research and scholarly activity and provide significant benefit including improvements in research and/or teaching for the University;
- b. applicant has a workload plan that has scheduled OSP for this period and has met the required measurable goals to be achieved before applying for OSP, with such goals to be relative to opportunity;
- c. proposed program, full details of which are to be provided, justifies the period requested;
- d. applicant's teaching and other duties can be covered without unreasonable additional duties for other academic staff from the School – such details are to be confirmed by the Head of School;
- e. timing of leave causes minimum disruption to the School; and
- f. appropriate recreation leave is included in the period designated as OSP.

(25) An applicant for OSP is expected to submit his or her best and most complete application. College OSP Committees will have the discretion to request additional information from applicants in cases where there are minor aspects requiring clarification, but not for major revisions.

(26) Note: Applications which are submitted in an incomplete state, or lacking sufficient details, will not be open to re-submission.

(27) In cases where a College OSP Committee cannot recommend for approval all applications that have met the criteria, priority is to go to early career researchers who are submitting their first OSP applications and to staff who have a very strong record of scholarly activity.

Eligibility

(28) OSP is not an automatic entitlement. Approval to undertake a program should not be considered to be automatic even when the applicant satisfies the basic eligibility requirements.

(29) Members of the teaching and research staff, both full time and part time (continuing), and staff members employed on a research continuing contract, Level A and above are eligible to apply for OSP. For the purposes of determining eligibility to apply for an OSP, part time is defined as employment which is less than full time but not less than 50 percent of full time with salary being paid as a percentage of a full time salary.

(30) Fixed term contract staff and staff in research-only positions are not entitled to apply for OSP, unless provided for under the University [Collective Agreement](#) as amended from time to time.

(31) Staff must normally have worked at La Trobe in a teaching and research role or a research continuing role for at least three years to be eligible to apply for OSP, save in exceptional circumstances, or where prior agreement has

been given in the contract of employment for the staff member to apply for OSP before serving three years;

(32) Should an application be made by a staff member who has not served three years at La Trobe it must be accompanied by a justification from the Head of School indicating the special circumstances or a copy of the contract of employment confirming prior approval to submit an early application.

Requirement to Return to the Service of the University

(33) Normally eligible staff may apply for OSP provided that they undertake and are eligible to return to the service of the University for a period at least equal to the length of the program, except that a staff member applying for an OSP prior to retirement must return to the service of the University for a period of at least twelve months.

(34) Staff who do not comply with the requirement to return to the service of the University as defined above may be expected to reimburse the University the financial grant provided. The amount repayable will be determined on the basis of the period of service to the University after completion of the OSP.

(35) It is expected that staff will signify acceptance of this condition prior to undertaking the OSP.

Qualifying Service

(36) Academic staff members holding full time and part time (0.5 EFT and above) continuing employment may apply for OSP after three years of continuous service. The difference between conditions for part time, as opposed to full time positions occurs for the level of salary. The rate of pay during the period of OSP will be maintained at the level which applies at the time of commencement of OSP.

(37) Qualifying service accumulates at the rate of one month for each six months of service, with a maximum accumulation of twelve months.

(38) Qualifying service will be assessed from the date of appointment or date of return from the previous OSP.

(39) A staff member may apply for an OSP of shorter duration than the qualifying time accrued. The balance of the qualifying service will be carried over and may be used towards a future program.

(40) A period of long service leave shall count in assessing qualifying service. For details of qualifying service during a period of secondment refer to the Secondment Policy. Under the [La Trobe University Collective Agreement 2018](#), any period of paid parental leave shall count as service.

Length of Program

(41) Programs normally will be for a period of at least three months and not normally longer than six months but applications for programs of duration of less than three months or more than six months will be considered and may be approved provided a sound justification is provided.

(42) Only in exceptional circumstances will an OSP be approved for a period in excess of the qualifying service accumulated.

Timing of Program

(43) The timing of a program shall be such that, in the opinion of the Head of School and the College OSP Committee, it will cause the least disruption to the academic needs of the School. Heads of School are required to provide a clear indication on this matter on the application form.

(44) It is normally expected that:

- a. a program may extend for up to six months and as a general rule an OSP of not more than two semesters of teaching will be approved in a six year period;
- b. the qualifying time between OSPs will be three years;
- c. a staff member applying for a program would be absent for not more than one teaching semester;
- d. the Committee will not approve programs which impinge on two teaching semesters.

Absences Not Classified as Part of an OSP

(45) Absences from the University which will not be classified as part of an OSP may include:

- a. conferences of less than two weeks duration;
- b. secondment to other institutions;
- c. representing the University elsewhere;
- d. obligations arising from membership of government bodies or international organisations;
- e. exchange of staff between institutions;
- f. other specific purposes such as field work, recommended for approval by the Head of School and approved by the College OSP Chair. However, in cases where leave to undertake field work was sought in the same year as an OSP the field work would not automatically be considered to be separate from the OSP;
- g. a period of specific training to fit a staff member for a change in task or an upgrading of that task, or to learn the application of a new technique;
- h. long service leave;
- i. recreation leave, except as detailed below.

Recreation and Long Service Leave

(46) An applicant will be required to incorporate in the application at least the amount of annual leave which will accrue during the OSP. Applicants whose programs include a period(s) of recreation or long service leave will not conduct their studies during such leave. Leave is to be defined prior to commencement of the program and amended only with approval from the College OSP Committee.

Report on a Completed OSP

(47) Within two months of return from an OSP, staff are required to present a report through the Head of School and College OSP Chair to the College OSP Committee. After consultation with the staff member, the Head of School shall provide an assessment and evaluation of the success of the program in meeting the original objectives.

(48) A full list of names of staff members who have submitted reports on completed programs is to be provided to the College Academic Committee. The College OSP Committee may refer to the College Academic Committee any issues of relevance that were raised in the reports.

(49) Reports will be scrutinised closely by the College OSP Committee to ensure that the objectives of the program have been achieved. Following consideration by the College OSP Committee summaries of the reports will be forwarded to the Central Committee on Outside Studies Programs.

(50) Unless exceptional circumstances intervene, failure to submit a satisfactory report may result in the College OSP Chair deciding that a future application for an OSP not be considered for a specific period of time and/or a refund of all or part of the financial grant be made by the staff member.

(51) Following return from an OSP the staff member will normally present a seminar in the school.

(52) For guidelines on the preparation of a report, refer to the section below, Guidelines on Preparation of Report.

Recognition of Prior Service

(53) The University recognises prior service as an academic staff member of other Australian universities and higher education providers for full-time and part-time (50% fraction or more) academic staff.

(54) Academic staff shall be able to apply for recognition of a maximum of three (3) years of prior continuous service in a full time or part time (.5 EFT and above) position. Recognition of prior service will be dependent upon such service being recognised by the other university.

(55) Provided there is not more than two months between the cessation of employment with another university and commencement at La Trobe, continuity shall be deemed not to have been broken. The period between cessation and commencement shall not be taken into account in determining qualifying service.

(56) Whilst staff on fixed-term contracts are not eligible to apply for OSP, a staff member who is appointed to a continuing position following a fixed term appointment may apply for recognition of prior service for the purpose of OSP for the period of the fixed term appointment.

(57) For staff seeking recognition of prior service for a fixed-term appointment at La Trobe, approval to undertake OSP normally will not be granted until a minimum of two years has been served in a continuing position.

Financial Assistance

(58) Travel allowances and financial grants apply only to the period of OSP and not to any long service leave, excess recreation leave or leave without pay taken in conjunction with an OSP.

Living Away From Home Allowance

(59) The Living Away From Home transitional rule concessions ended on 30 June 2014 and no longer apply.

Salary Advance

(60) A staff member may claim half the normal salary for the period of overseas study in the form of a salary advance for travel purposes, subject to the maintenance of superannuation at the full rate and approval from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) of a PAYG Withholding Variation Application – approval must be obtained prior to travel or salary will not be paid in advance. This amount will be disclosed in the allowance section of your PAYG payment summary.

(61) The component provided as a salary advance for travel purposes may be paid in a lump sum up to six weeks before departure date. The remaining portion of the staff member's salary for the period will be paid fortnightly, subject to the deduction of tax. A staff member must make judgments in relation to the taxation implications and observe the requirements of the University and the ATO for the documentation and recording of activities and expenses. Refer to the ATO website for details and application form.

(62) Staff members are advised to seek their own taxation advice on this matter as this information is not intended to replace advice from taxation advisers.

(63) An alternative mechanism for a salary advance is provided in the [La Trobe University Collective Agreement 2018](#); with 4 weeks' notice, a staff member will be entitled to payment in advance for periods of paid Outside Studies Program in excess of ten days up to a maximum of 12 weeks. Enquiries may be directed to Human Resources.

Financial Grant

(64) For staff members travelling overseas, interstate, or intrastate, a grant may be payable to assist with expenses. The amount of the grant will be the same for full time and part time staff members, and will be based on the length of time to be spent overseas or interstate, with a minimum component of one month. Staff members who receive an

overseas grant will not be eligible for an interstate or intrastate grant.

(65) It is recommended that staff on OSP maintain a travel diary and collect receipts for expenditure during the period of travel for the purposes of personal tax records.

(66) Allowances for dependants are paid only when the dependants accompany the staff member. Dependants in this case are persons who are economically dependent on the staff member for the duration of the period of the OSP.

(67) The amounts payable (Australian dollars) are set out in the following table. The amounts stipulated are the minimum amounts payable. Colleges may set higher levels of financial grants if budgets allow.

Period of travel component (months)	Location of program		
	Overseas#	Interstate*	Intrastate+
1 (minimum)	\$3500	\$1000	\$40 per trip to a maximum of \$400
2	\$4000	\$1200	
3	\$4500	\$1400	
4	\$5000	\$1600	
5	\$5500	\$1800	
6(or more)	\$6000	\$2000	

excludes New Zealand

* includes New Zealand

+ allowance only paid on production of proof that travel occurred (e.g. receipts, travel diary, tickets)

(68) In addition to the above listed amounts payable to staff travelling overseas, an amount of \$100 per dependant will be paid subject to evidence that the dependant will accompany the staff member overseas. The amount of the grant will be estimated at the time the program is approved, based upon information provided in the application. The actual amount will be calculated closer to the date of departure, when firm travel bookings have been made.

(69) Once their OSP has been approved the staff member must submit a Financial Grant claim via Ask HR > Submit a form > Employee > Claim Outside Studies Program together with (if applicable) a travel approval email for overseas travel (form available on the [OSP Intranet](#)), and a confirmed itinerary giving full details of travel dates and destinations. The amount payable may not exceed the original estimate (refer to the section below, Variations to Programs).

(70) Please note that staff undertaking an OSP are not eligible to claim a per diem allowance.

(71) Where funds are to cover food or accommodation, staff should contact the Taxation Unit to advise on the taxation treatment.

(72) This allowance will be included as assessable income, and it is recommended that employees retain any receipts/invoices from travel if the intention is to claim a tax deduction for expenses incurred on a tax return.

Approval for Overseas Travel

(73) Approval for an OSP which includes a component of overseas travel is contingent upon University approval to travel to the destinations listed in the application. This is to ensure that staff do not travel to dangerous areas while on OSP and also so that the University can contact and assist staff who are travelling in areas which become unsafe.

(74) Thus, all staff members travelling overseas as part of an OSP must receive prior approval from the Pro Vice-Chancellor. Staff are required to record their trip in Locomote as an “International Non LTU Funded Trip” (which will only record the trip once approved), or alternatively if the staff member wants to use Campus Travel to purchase their trip they should log their trip in Locomote as an “international” which will then workflow to Campus Travel for quoting before approval. This should be done not less than one month prior to departure and before finalising any bookings through Campus Travel or another travel agency.

(75) Staff are to indicate on the Locomote request that they are undertaking overseas travel as part of an OSP. Requests for travel overseas will follow an employee’s reporting line to the College Pro Vice-Chancellor for approval.

(76) Travel to places where a DFAT warning against travel is in place will not be approved unless a convincing reason is provided to indicate that the travel is essential. Details of DFAT warnings are available from the University Insurance Office <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/insurance/>

(77) The Security Rating of your OSP destination must be checked and a travel approval email must accompany your OSP Financial Grant request submitted via Ask HR.

Variations to Programs

(78) Variations to approved programs are submitted to the College OSP administrator.

(79) The online travel request must not be used to alter a previously approved OSP and associated recreation or long service leave.

(80) Where a staff member requests a postponement of the commencement date for a period not exceeding three months and this is approved by the Head of School, no further approval will be required.

(81) Where a postponement is for a period greater than three months, the staff member must resubmit the application.

(82) Where a staff member requests a substantial change to a program, full details of the changes must be submitted for the approval of the College OSP Chair, through the Head of School. Any change which involves the elimination of an overseas component will be regarded automatically as a substantial change.

(83) Where the Head of School or College OSP Chair considers that a changed program is of insufficient merit, approval for all or part of the program may be withdrawn by the College OSP Committee on the recommendation of the College OSP Chair.

(84) Variations to approved programs involving an extension to, or addition of, an overseas or interstate component may be approved, but normally no further grant will be provided.

Guidelines on Preparation of Report

(85) Refer also to the section above, Report on a Completed OSP.

(86) The report on a completed OSP will include the following:

- a. a brief statement of the purpose of the approved program. Where objectives were not achieved or a marked variation occurred to the approved program, reasons are to be included in the report;
- b. a description of the actual research and other academic activities undertaken is to be detailed under the following headings:
 - i. Nature of research or teaching-focussed activities undertaken;
 - ii. Nature and extent of discussions held with learned colleagues, who are to be named;

- iii. Universities or institutions at which research or other work was undertaken, including the names of specific departments;
- iv. Attendance at seminars or conferences, and presentation of papers;
- v. Any teaching assignments undertaken;
- vi. Any courses undertaken;
- vii. Periods spent in each city or country visited;
- viii. The status of any written work arising from the program, even if that work was part of a larger project. Written work will be designated “in preparation”, “submitted”, “forthcoming” or “published”.

(87) The staff member is to assess, where practicable, the degree to which the program has assisted research, teaching or other academic interests and the extent to which it was of benefit to the individual and to the University.

(88) They are also free to comment on other matters of interest not necessarily related to their field of work, where such comment would be of value across the University in the administration of academic, School or College affairs, or in reference to staff and student progress and welfare or in reference to any aspect of University life.

(89) In addition to a full report, a brief summary (approximately 100 words) of the completed program will be provided. These summaries will be included in the annual report of the Central Committee on Outside Studies Programs to the Academic Board.

Unsuccessful Applications

(90) The decision not to approve an application will be based on the quality/merit of the proposed program and/or on the resources available within the College.

(91) The College OSP Chair will provide unsuccessful applicants with brief written advice outlining the reasons why their applications were not approved.

(92) Where the decision was based on the quality/merit of the proposed program the letter will include advice on areas that would need to be strengthened before a future application was submitted. The College OSP Chair is encouraged to meet with the applicants individually to discuss this further.

(93) It is suggested that applicants use this advice, in consultation with their supervisor, when revising their workload and performance development plans.

Appeals

(94) Applicants will have the right to appeal against the decision in relation to their applications; appeals can only be made on the grounds that the procedures outlined in this document were not followed by the committee in reaching its decision.

(95) An appeal is to be lodged with the Central Committee on Outside Studies Programs within one month of the applicant's receipt of advice on the outcome of the application.

(96) Any appeal against the Central Committee on Outside Studies Programs in relation to an appeal should be made to the University Ombudsman and only on the grounds of failure to follow the procedures pertaining to the submission and consideration of an appeal.

Authorities/Delegations

Applications for OSP

(97) The College OSP Chair will have responsibility to:

- a. oversee the number of programs a school could offer in any one year;
- b. approve programs, with the advice of College committees and Heads of School in consultation with the professor(s) of discipline.

(98) Reports on completed OSPs:

- a. College OSP committees will scrutinise and approve reports through the Head of School and College OSP Chair;
- b. the Central Committee on Outside Studies Programs will receive and note the summaries of completed programs and include these in its annual report to the Academic Board.

Section 5 - Definitions

(99) For the purpose of this Policy and Procedure:

- a. Relative to opportunity: relates to acknowledgement of what a staff member can and has achieved given the workload allocation and opportunities available. Personal circumstances that could affect opportunity may include family responsibilities, a temporary or permanent disability, and periods of part-time work and/or absences due to ill-health or injury.

Section 6 - Stakeholders

Responsibility for implementation – Vice-Chancellor; and Outside Studies Programs Committee.

Responsibility for monitoring implementation and compliance – Outside Studies Programs Committee.

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	11th November 2016
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