

# Special Studies Program Policy

## Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

### Purpose

- (1) This Policy sets down the framework and principles relating to the University's special studies program provisions.
- (2) The purpose of the special studies program is to strengthen the University by fostering the intellectual and professional development of its academic employees consistent with the University's strategic objectives and commitment to equal opportunity.

### Scope

- (3) This policy applies to fixed-term and continuing academic employees.
- (4) This policy should be read together with the [Special Studies Program Procedures](#).

## Section 2 - Content and Implementation

- (5) The University regards this program as a means by which academic employees can be released from regular duties and access certain financial assistance in order to enhance their research productivity, teaching practice, professional practice, artistic developments or qualifications by engaging in a period of:
  - a. continuous scholarship, including study towards doctoral qualification; or
  - b. a period of professional practice, including time spent in business or industry relevant to the employee's employment responsibilities.
- (6) The special studies program is a privilege and not a right. This program is regarded by the University as an investment in the future.
- (7) Within the broad parameters set by this policy, special studies proposals will be considered in relation to:
  - a. the development needs of the employee;
  - b. the behaviour, contribution and performance of the employee in line with the University's [Code of Conduct](#) and Values; and
  - c. the requirements of the University's academic programs and how the program will advance the University's and Work Unit's goals, priorities and standing.
- (8) Approval of programs will only occur if the outcomes align directly with the University and Work Unit research and or scholarship of teaching priorities. Approval of programs will also take into account the objectives and priorities of relevant University plans in place at the time including equity and diversity, teaching and learning, research and engagement.
- (9) Detailed information about the benefits available, the application process, the approval process and the conditions

applying to the special studies program is contained in the associated Procedures.

## Section 3 - Approval Authority

(10) The Vice-Chancellor has the authority to approve special studies program applications for academic staff in accordance with the provisions of University Policies and Procedures.

### Special Studies Program Committee

(11) Applications for the special studies program will be considered by a Special Studies Program Committee, comprising:

- a. Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Chair;
- b. Either Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Innovation) or Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality)
- c. A nominee of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor; and
- d. Director, Human Resources, or nominee.

(12) Three committee members, including at least one female and one male, are required for a Committee quorum. If necessary, the Vice-Chancellor or nominee may appoint an additional member to address these requirements.

(13) Where an application is submitted by an employee who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, the Vice-Chancellor may invite an additional member who also identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander to join the committee for consideration of that particular application.

(14) The Committee will make recommendations, including a priority listing, to the Vice-Chancellor.

## Section 4 - Eligibility

(15) Academic employees may apply for the special studies program and associated financial assistance in accordance with this policy, where at the program commencement date they:

- a. are appointed on a continuing or fixed-term basis where the appointment term is four years or more;
- b. where an employee has been employed on consecutive fixed-term appointments aggregated fixed-term service will be calculated to establish the four year requirement, provided no breaks in service of more than two months occur between contracts; and
- c. have completed a minimum of three years continuous fixed-term or continuing service with Southern Cross University.

(16) Where the University has recognised prior service from another Australian higher education institution for the purpose of Special Studies Program, up to one year of this service will be considered when assessing minimum service eligibility requirements. Refer to special studies program procedures for recognition of prior service conditions.

(17) An employee must be able to return to the University's service for at least a period of 12 months, within the terms of their appointment, following completion of the special studies program. Service for this purpose does not include long service leave unless specifically authorised by the Vice-Chancellor.

(18) Where an application is made for a second or subsequent special studies program the employee must serve three years (excluding leave without pay and long service leave) since recommencement of normal duties.



## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Current
<b>Effective Date</b>	8th September 2023
<b>Review Date</b>	8th September 2026
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Director, Governance Services
<b>Approval Date</b>	8th September 2023
<b>Expiry Date</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Executive</b>	Kim Franks Vice President (People and Culture)
<b>Head of Work Unit</b>	Kath Drew Director, Human Resources
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