

# Professional Development Program (PDP) - Guidelines (1)

## 1. Purpose

1.1 These guidelines provide information to applicants to optimise their ability to plan for and prepare successful applications for Professional Development Program (PDP) by ensuring they:

- (a) fulfil procedural requirements;
- (b) plan for and prepare timely and accurate applications; and
- (c) seek appropriate advice and mentoring.

1.2 This policy document must be read in conjunction with the Performance, Planning and Review (PPR) - Procedures.

## 2. Scope and application

2.1 These guidelines apply to all eligible staff of the University.

## 3. Definitions

3.1 Refer to the University's Glossary of Terms for definitions as they specifically relate to policy documents.

## 4. Principles of PDP

4.1 PDP provides opportunities for staff to broaden their experience and further develop their scholarship, teaching and research skills, and professional knowledge by working collaboratively and in a sustained manner with scholars, teachers, researchers and professionals outside the University.

4.2 Through PDP, staff can undertake a significant project that is not normally available through other means within the University.

4.3 The implementation and outcomes of PDP contribute to the achievement of University, School and Cost Centre strategic goals. PDP is a means by which:

- (a) the performance and achievement of staff can be recognised and rewarded;
- (b) a significant investment in staff and career development can be made; and
- (c) strategic and productive partnerships can be developed.

4.4 PDP is not a means by which staff are released from teaching in order to focus on research (see Academic Sabbatical clause from the University Enterprise Agreement) or study. Such release can be negotiated through the Performance and Development Cycle and achieved through annual work allocation and workforce planning processes within the school or work area.

## 5. Eligibility to apply for PDP

5.1 Full-time and fractional (0.5 fractional appointment and above) staff with a minimum of 3 years' continuous service with UniSC at the closing date for applications, are eligible to apply for PDP. The exceptions are:

- (a) executive staff and senior staff (senior staff include Deans, Directors of professional work areas and Directors of Research Centres/Institutes) are not eligible to apply for PDP; and
- (b) fixed-term staff unless there is sufficient time remaining in their current fixed-term appointment to ensure a return to the University from PDP for a period not less than the period of absence. PDP does not extend the term of the fixed-term appointment.

5.2 Staff are eligible to reapply for PDP after 3 years' continuous service from the end of the last PDP.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Chief Operating Officer

RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Chief Operating Officer

DESIGNATED OFFICER

Director, People and Culture

LAST AMENDED

26 September 2024

REVIEW DATE

27 October 2027

STATUS

Active

## 6. Planning to apply for PDP

6.1 The Performance and Development Cycle plays a central and crucial role in planning and preparing to apply for PDP. Prospective applicants are required to discuss the possibility of applying for PDP with their leader during their formal performance and development conversations.

6.2 PDP provides time to focus on and realise significant professional achievements. The proposed PDP project to be undertaken and the expected outcomes need to be relevant to the staff member's level of appointment and stage of career development.

6.3 When the supervisor or Cost Centre Manager (CCM) cannot endorse the staff member's request for PDP, this is to be advised before the staff member begins to prepare an application as it can take considerable time to plan for and prepare a cogent application.

6.4 Team applications are accepted, including teams that are made up of academic and professional staff. All members of the team must meet eligibility requirements and all relevant CCM's must approve the application.

6.5 Reasons why a PDP request might not be endorsed by a supervisor or CCM can include, but is not limited to:

- (a) undertaking PDP is not timely in relation to the staff member's career development;
- (b) the staff member's performance does not warrant a significant investment in development at this time; or
- (c) the operations of the Cost Centre cannot accommodate the absence of the staff member at the proposed time.

6.6 To maintain the integrity and strength of teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and supervision of honours and Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) students, a School has a responsibility to prepare and plan for staff participation in PDP in their annual work allocation and workforce planning processes. Cost Centres also need to prepare and plan for staff participation in PDP in order to ensure continuity of services.

## 7. Call for applications for PDP

7.1 The call for applications specifies the closing date by which applications are to be submitted for that year.

7.2 Applications should be for a PDP program that is to occur the following year.

## 8. Conditions of PDP

### 8.1 Duration

8.1.1 The duration of PDP should be no more than 6 months.

### 8.2 Location of PDP

8.2.1 PDP must be undertaken in collaboration with an organisation other than this University, for example, another Australian or overseas university, or in industry, or in another relevant organisation.

8.2.2 PDP can involve:

- (a) participants based at the host organisation; or
- (b) participants undertake a project locally, either at a UniSC campus or at home, with collaboration undertaken virtually.

### 8.3 Leave

8.3.1 PDP is deemed to include the pro rata amount of recreation leave due and to be inclusive of University holidays occurring during the PDP. Public holidays declared for the location in which PDP is undertaken are deemed to be included in the PDP.

8.3.2 A staff member can take more than the pro rata amount of recreation leave with the approval of their supervisor and CCM. Personal travel time must not exceed 50% of the total PDP time and there should be sufficient time allowed so that reporting requirements can be met.

8.3.3 Applications that include recreation leave that exceeds 50% of total PDP time are not accepted as these may be liable for Fringe Benefits Tax.

### 8.4 Approval of PDP

8.4.1 Recommendations to approve PDP are based on:

- (a) the applicant's performance and achievements;
- (b) the quality and potential benefits of the proposed program; and

(c) the degree to which the proposed program furthers the achievement of the strategic goals of the University.

8.4.2 The PDP Committee evaluates applications and the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, makes recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor and President (VCP).

8.4.3 The VCP can approve or not approve any recommendation made by the PDP Committee.

8.4.4 When the PDP location is overseas, the University will consider the risk environment (e.g. health, political or social risks) in the country proposed for PDP, and any travel restrictions.

#### 8.5 Conditions of approval

8.5.1 As a staff member of, and an ambassador for, the University, the staff member is obligated to adhere to all:

(a) relevant State and Federal legislation,

(b) University policy documents, including the Staff Code of Conduct - Governing Policy, and

(c) policy documents of the host institution, while undertaking PDP.

8.5.2 Failure to abide by these conditions can result in cancellation of approval and the requirement for the staff member to cease PDP and return to their duties at the University.

8.5.3 When an individual does not return to the University as a staff member for at least one year from the date of return from PDP, the staff member can be required to repay the financial assistance received during PDP, or a proportionate value.

8.5.4 Satisfactory reporting is a significant component of PDP. On return from PDP, the staff member is required to provide a comprehensive report on the implementation and outcomes of the PDP.

8.5.5 To optimise and encourage the sharing of learning, PDP participants are required to make a presentation about the implementation and outcomes of their PDP to at least one relevant University community within 3 months of their return from PDP. The presentation must be to a significant audience or conference presentation and PDP Committee members must be invited to the presentation when being held locally. Wherever possible, the presentation should be recorded, and the recording provided as part of the PDP report.

## 9. Preparing an application

9.1 The onus is on the applicant to provide adequate information for the PDP Committee to be able to make a reasonable judgement on whether the application meets the merit criteria for PDP.

9.2 An application must propose a significant project that:

(a) broadens the staff member's experience and exposes them to a different organisation – other university, or in industry, or other relevant organisations;

(b) involves working collaboratively with scholars, teachers, researchers or professionals from whom the participant can learn and gain demonstrable benefits, and who are preferably leaders in their discipline or field;

(c) further develops the applicant's scholarship, teaching, research skills or professional knowledge and skills;

(d) is not normally available through other means within the University; and

(e) has the potential to yield significant outputs during and beyond the PDP, including publications and grants, innovations in curriculum design and development, the acquisition of cutting-edge professional knowledge and sustainable relationships that benefit the staff member and the University.

#### 9.3 Criteria defining merit

9.3.1 PDP is awarded on merit and the criteria that merit is assessed on are:

(a) the applicant's performance and achievements warrant a significant investment in their development;

(b) the quality and potential of the proposed program; and

(c) the degree to which the proposed program furthers the achievement of the strategic goals of the University.

9.3.1.1 The factors that are taken into account when assessing whether the applicant's performance and achievements warrant as significant investment in their development include:

- (a) the quantity and quality of academic or professional outputs in relation to the applicant's level of appointment and as demonstrated by their application and a current curriculum vitae;
- (b) the implementation and outcomes of previous PDPs as demonstrated by PDP reports;
- (i) approval of a second centrally supported PDP is rare and a strong case must be made for a second application. The application should meet a need that is clearly distinct from the original application.

9.3.1.2 The factors that are considered when assessing the quality and potential of the proposed program include:

- (a) the relevance of the project to the applicant's current position, level, discipline or profession, and interests, including location, collaborations, expected outcomes and outputs;
- (i) mid-career and early-career (towards the end of the initial 5 years of appointment) academics are encouraged to apply;
- (b) the significance and feasibility of the project;
- (c) the project having specific, measurable and achievable goals that are relevant to the applicant;
- (d) the potential of the project to further the applicant's career and benefit the University.

## 10. Application form

10.1 An application form (login required) is available to assist applicants to address the merit criteria and plan for PDP. Detailed information about the activities, itinerary and estimated financial assistance to cover costs are required.

10.2 The application form also requires the applicant's supervisor and CCM to comment on:

- (a) the staff member's performance and achievements;
- (b) the relevance and appropriateness of the proposed program to the staff member's current position and development; and
- (c) the management of workloads in order to accommodate the applicant's absence and maintain the integrity of program delivery and continuity of service, including effective supervision of HDR students.

10.3 A formal written statement of support must be submitted with the application, which confirms the content and outcomes of the collaborative project to be undertaken, from an appropriate authority at the organisations being collaborated with.

10.4 Evidence of estimated costs must be attached to the application form to support the amounts claimed for travel, accommodation and dependent care.

10.5 An applicant should ensure that all projected expenses and additional income, including grants or project allowances from sources within or outside of the University, are identified and declared.

10.6 All applications are forwarded to the CCM who completes a summary assessment, including whether or not an application is endorsed by the Cost Centre.

10.7 Complete applications are forwarded to [pdp@usc.edu.au](mailto:pdp@usc.edu.au) by a date specified in the call for applications. Incomplete or late applications are not considered by the PDP Committee.

## 11. PDP Committee

11.1 The PDP Committee comprises of:

- (a) Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) (as Chairperson);
- (b) Chairperson of the University's Learning and Teaching Committee (or nominee);
- (c) Chairperson of the University's Research Committee (or nominee); and
- (d) Director, People and Culture (or nominee).

11.2 To evaluate applications, the PDP Committee applies the criteria defining merit and ensures the requirements as outlined in Section 9.3 - Criteria defining merit are met.

11.3 For each academic application, Committee members can access the online My Research BI report.

## 12. Notification

12.1 Each applicant is advised in writing by the Chairperson on whether their application has been successful. A copy of the advice is also sent to the applicant's CCM and supervisor.

12.2 For successful applicants, a letter of offer, which outlines the details, terms and conditions, and financial assistance of the approved PDP, is provided. A response to accept the terms and conditions is required.

12.3 Full-time attendance (or pro rata for fractional staff) is expected for the duration of the PDP.

12.4 When a successful applicant is a member of a University Standing Committee, they are required to apply for leave of absence from the Committee for the duration of their PDP.

## 13. Funding

13.1 PDP participants continue to be paid their current salary throughout the PDP, except where substantial outside remuneration is received.

13.2 The salary costs are met by the Cost Centre. The Cost Centre also meets the costs of replacement staff and any other associated staff replacement costs that arise during the absence of the participant. Other costs not associated with travel or living expenses, for example consumables required to undertake research activities as part of the approved PDP, are also met by the Cost Centre, the host organisation or the staff member via their university professional account.

## 14. Financial assistance

14.1 Financial assistance is paid from a central PDP fund, which is allocated as part of the University's annual budget process.

14.2 Financial assistance can comprise of three components:

(a) travel expenses;

(b) accommodation expenses; and

(c) caregiving expenses provided by a registered care provider. Caregiving costs can relate to the cost of childcare or care for dependent adults with disabilities.

14.3 The maximum amount of PDP funding that can be applied for is a total of \$12,000, inclusive of travel expenses, accommodation expenses and dependent care expenses (where applicable), as well as any associated Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT). The \$12,000 maximum funding is also applicable to team applications.

14.4 Financial assistance is approved based on an estimation of costs. Once actual costs for travel, accommodation and dependent care are known, and the actual costs are less than the approved value, the balance is not provided to the PDP participant. When actual costs exceed the approved value, the costs above what was approved are to be met by the PDP participant or their PDP program amended to reduce the costs.

14.5 The travel and accommodation expenses are paid through UniSC Travel. The following conditions apply:

(a) air travel is in economy class only;

(b) travel arrangements must be made through the University's corporate travel service provider in accordance with the University's Financial Management Practice Manual;

(c) travel expenses can include surface travel, such as train or bus, instead of air travel to reach a destination;

(d) when the participant is undertaking PDP at an organisation that is located within 125 kilometres of the University campus at which the participant is based and they chose to commute, mileage claims up to 5000 km may be claimed (pro rata for PDP of less than 6 months duration or for a fractional staff member); and

(e) Airbnb (or similar) accommodation cannot be booked by UniSC Travel. PDP participants need to book direct and pay either in full or through a payment plan, and then be reimbursed through UniSC Travel.

14.5 Participants are encouraged to seek financial and other support, from the organisations at which the PDP is to be undertaken, when they are preparing to apply for PDP.

14.6 Participants must use funds from their University professional accounts where available, to augment the financial assistance. When funds are available but not being utilised for PDP, evidence must be provided showing that there is a pre-existing commitment for the use of the professional account funds.

14.7 Full disclosure of any income or financial support from sources other than the University must be provided, except for personal earnings unconnected with the staff member's employment with the University.

14.8 Travel expenses can include the costs of any required visas for the participant, including travel to the consulate if required. Participants are responsible for ensuring they are aware of the visa requirements for their PDP locations. UniSC Travel can facilitate visa applications.

14.9 Vaccination costs are not covered by PDP. Participants are responsible for ensuring they are aware of any vaccination requirements for their PDP locations and organising vaccinations.

## 15. Dependents and spouse

15.1 When dependent children or dependent adults requiring care are residing with the PDP participant at a location other than the participant's home, for the duration of the PDP, the dependent's travel expenses and care expenses from a registered care provider can be included in the financial assistance requested.

15.2 When a spouse stays with the PDP participant at a location other than the participant's home, for the duration of the PDP, for the purposes of providing care for dependents, the travel expenses for the partner can be included in the financial assistance requested.

15.3 Travel expenses can include the cost of visas for dependents and spouse.

15.4 Care expenses and travel expenses for dependents and spouse attract FBT to the University. The estimated FBT must be included in the estimated costs for the PDP funding.

15.5 Care expenses, travel expenses for dependents and spouse and FBT costs must be incorporated in the \$12,000 maximum PDP funding.

## 16. Insurance

16.1 The University provides travel insurance that covers staff undertaking PDP. A participant's spouse and dependent children are covered by the University's staff travel insurance when they travel and reside with the participant for the duration of the PDP. As the University insurance is renewed on an annual basis, the details of travel insurance can change from year to year. Details of coverage are available on MyUniSC.

16.2 Dependent adults travelling with the staff member are not covered by UniSC travel insurance. The staff member must organise independent travel insurance to cover dependent adults.

16.3 Extra cover can be required where a participant takes recreation leave combined with PDP.

16.4 Personal property which is lost or stolen but which was being used for business can be covered by University insurance, but prior approval to take the items on PDP must be obtained from the CCM. Laptops and other valuable portable items should be carried onboard aircraft to ensure insurance cover is provided in the event of theft or loss. An excess, which applies in such circumstances, can be paid for by relevant Cost Centre.

16.5 University staff are covered for worker's compensation and compensation is payable as if the injury were sustained in Queensland, when:

(a) an injury is sustained by a staff member in another state or country in circumstances that, had the injury been sustained in Queensland, compensation would have been payable; and

(b) at the time of the injury, the staff member's principal place of employment is in Queensland.

## 17. Variations

17.1 A participant must advise their CCM of any changes to an approved application as soon as possible. Approval of changes which affect the objectives, purpose, budget or outcomes must be sought, in writing, from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), via the CCM. Failure to submit this advice can result in cancellation of approval.

17.2 A participant who becomes sick or injured during PDP must notify their CCM as soon as possible and provide a medical certificate for any periods of absence for 4 days or longer.

17.3 In exceptional circumstances, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) can cancel or withdraw approval for PDP and require that a participant return to their duties at the University.

17.4 When a participant fails to fulfil the approved PDP and does not advise their CCM and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) until after their return from PDP, disciplinary action can be taken.

## 18. Resignation

18.1 In the event of the staff member resigning during PDP, the University can require the staff member's immediate return to normal duties for the full period of notice and the reimbursement of financial assistance paid during PDP, in whole or in part. Termination notice periods apply.

## 19. Reporting

19.1 Within 3 months of return from PDP, the staff member submits a written report (maximum 3 pages in length) on the implementation and outcomes of their PDP to their work area. The purposes of this report are to ensure that the approved project and activities have been undertaken satisfactorily and to evaluate the achievement of the outcomes of the PDP. The report includes:

- (a) a brief abstract providing an overview of the program and its outcomes;
- (b) a statement of the major objectives as set out in the original application (or in any subsequently approved variations);
- (c) a program description which evaluates the extent to which the objectives of the program were achieved;
- (d) a statement of actual or expected publications, collaborative projects, grant applications and other professional outcomes;
- (e) an assessment of the benefits gained by the staff member and a statement of how the PDP contributed to the staff member's professional and career development;
- (f) a statement of important contacts developed with other institutions or individuals and how these contacts assisted with the overall success of the program and will be maintained beyond the PDP;
- (g) an outline of the presentation and the audience it was delivered to, along with the recording of the presentation (if applicable); and
- (h) a statement of benefits to accrue to the University, the Cost Centre and the staff member.

19.2 The supervisor and CCM comments on the report and forwards a copy of the report and their comments to [pdp@usc.edu.au](mailto:pdp@usc.edu.au) for submission to the next PDP Committee for the Committee's review.

19.3 A report can be deemed to be unsatisfactory by the CCM or the PDP Committee if the report is deemed to be:

- (a) of poor quality;
- (b) lacks sufficient detail;
- (c) the approved program was not implemented; or
- (d) outcomes of the PDP were not achieved.

19.4 Where a report is deemed to be of poor quality, the staff member is advised in writing and can be asked to re-write the report within 10 working days. An unsatisfactory report can result in the staff member being precluded from applying for PDP at the University in the future.

## 20. Further development

20.1 Within one month of submission of the PDP report, the staff member and their supervisor meet to plan for the staff member's performance and development in order to optimise the benefits of the PDP, including strategies for maintaining productive links with their PDP collaborators.

## 21. Authorities and responsibilities

21.1 As the Approval Authority the Chief Operating Officer approves these procedures and any related guidelines to operationalise the Performance Management - Operational Policy.

21.2 As the Designated Officer of these procedures the Director, People and Culture is authorised to make associated documents to support the application of these procedures.

21.3 These procedures operate from the last amended date, and all previous procedures related to student complaints are replaced and will have no further operation from this date.

21.4 All records relating to Professional Development Program (PDP) must be stored and managed in accordance with the Information Management – Governing Policy.

21.5 These procedures must be maintained in accordance with the Policy Framework – Procedures and reviewed on standard 5 year policy review cycle.

21.6 Any exception to these procedures to enable a more appropriate result must be approved in accordance with the Policy Framework – Procedures prior to any deviation from the policy document.

21.7 Refer to Schedule C of the Delegations Manual in relation to the approved delegations detailed within these procedures.

END

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#### RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Performance Management - Operational Policy

#### LINKED DOCUMENTS

- Performance, Planning and Review (PPR) - Procedures

#### RELATED LEGISLATION / STANDARDS

- University of the Sunshine Coast Enterprise Agreement