6.10  PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

1.  INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The University is committed to providing all staff with the opportunity to maintain and enhance their professional skills. This policy outlines the provisions of the Professional Experience Program (PEP) scheme for academic staff. A PEP is a period of paid release from normal duties granted to provide academic staff with the means of undertaking a structured program aimed at:

(a) improving professional and vocational knowledge
(b) obtaining practical experience that is germane to their professional development as academics
(c) undertaking research (including applied research) that is germane to the research profile of their faculty or
(d) acquiring new skills and competencies in order to benefit their work and thus that of the University in meeting its objectives.

Eligible academic staff will be encouraged to apply to participate in the PEP scheme whenever opportunities exist.

This is a statement of conditions for what are expected to be the most common cases of PEP, but it is intended that the PEP scheme should be flexible and will be administered in as equitable a manner as possible to deal with a wide variety of proposals.

Notwithstanding that an applicant may be eligible to apply to participate in the PEP scheme, no applicant has a right to so participate, and the University has no obligation to grant the application. Each proposal is considered on its merits, having regard to such factors as the needs of the University, the nature of the proposed project, the capacity of the staff to make effective use of the opportunity and the resources available to the University.

For details of other programs whereby academic staff may be released from normal duties for the purpose of professional development, refer to human resources policies Secondment/Exchange, University Readerships and Faculty Readerships. Generally, attendance at conferences is not an additional form of leave or special program, but is considered to be absence on duty.

Staff undertaking an approved PEP are not absent from duty as PEP is not leave.

2.  TYPICAL ACTIVITIES

The following are typical of some of the activities which may be included in PEP:

(a) research, either individually or as part of a team including research work for a higher degree by research
(b) industrial or professional employment
(c) inspections or surveys of works appropriate to a professional discipline
(d) visits to industrial, professional or educational establishments
(e) teaching in an appropriate institution
(f) research into teaching and/or educational development
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(g) scholarly activities conducted in settings like libraries, museums and other institutions which lead to output such as publications aimed at practitioners and other professionals

PEP programs are usually undertaken off campus. However, they may be undertaken within the University if the proposed program is considered to be appropriate. Academics wishing to undertake a PEP program in another faculty/division should liaise with the appropriate Dean/Director before submitting an application.

3. AMOUNT OF PEP GRANTED AT FACULTY/DIVISION LEVEL
The number of staff on PEP in any one semester will normally not exceed 14% of the full-time and part-time academic staff of the faculty/division. The Dean/Head of Division will provide an annual report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) on the amount of PEP granted.

4. ELIGIBILITY
All full-time and part-time academic staff with substantive appointment as an academic Level A through to E\(^1\) are eligible to apply for a PEP. Eligibility becomes effective when the staff member will have completed three years service on 1 January or 1 July prior to the semester when the PEP is to be taken. Provided that a satisfactory report has been received relating to any previous PEPs taken (refer Obligations below).

With the exception of staff with continuous service from another Australian university, staff appointed on a fixed-term of three years or less are not eligible to participate in PEP. However, if a staff member receives a further academic appointment which follows without a break in service, the earlier service of the academic staff member at UTS will be counted towards qualification for PEP.

Staff appointed for a fixed-term in excess of three years will be eligible to apply for PEP, as it is the University’s responsibility to ensure that adequate funding provision has been made for such.

A person on a fixed-term contract who is granted PEP will normally be expected to fulfil the requirements of the post-PEP service obligation (see Obligations below).

Periods of unpaid leave will not count as service for the determination of PEP eligibility, unless determined otherwise by the Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

Full-time and part-time continuous service (at the level of Associate Lecturer and above) at another Australian university will be counted towards initial eligibility to apply for a PEP. Continuous service is deemed to be where the period between ceasing with one employer and commencing with the next is not greater than two months. This intervening period is not counted as service.

It should be noted that length of service does not of itself ensure that an application will be recommended by the Dean or nominee \(^2\). The other criteria which are taken into account are detailed under Consideration of Applications.

An academic staff member who has completed additional service with the University following a period of PEP, and who has complied with all of the conditions which may have been imposed by the staff member’s faculty/division, may apply for a further PEP. (Refer Obligations which must be fulfilled when a PEP has been granted. Non-compliance with the obligation to report on PEP taken, or undue delay in complying, will be sufficient grounds for denial of a future application.)

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\(^1\) with the exception that Deans, Associate Deans and Heads of School are not eligible to take or to accrue PEP during their term of office, but are eligible to apply for special development leave (refer to policies Appointment of Deans, Associate Deans and Heads of School respectively).

\(^2\) from this clause on, references to Dean or nominee include academic Directors.
6.10 PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

The minimum period of qualification for eligibility for a second and subsequent PEP will be proportionate to the length of PEP applied for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of PEP applied for</th>
<th>Minimum service qualifying period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13-14 weeks</td>
<td>4 semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-18 weeks</td>
<td>5 semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-26 weeks</td>
<td>6 semesters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For PEP in excess of 26 weeks the minimum qualifying period shall be calculated on the basis of 3.6 weeks for each semester.

5. CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATIONS

Prior to consideration of individual applications, the Dean or nominee will determine the number of staff absences on PEP which can be sustained bearing in mind the faculty/division limit and report this number to academic staff at the time applications are called. In doing this the following should be taken into account:

(a) the faculty’s teaching and research program for the relevant period
(b) any initiatives requiring additional staff resources
(c) likely absences of staff due to postponed PEP, long service leave, parental leave, leave without pay etc
(d) known or anticipated vacancies due to retirements, resignations, expired contracts etc
(e) any reduced teaching load allocations for staff undertaking higher degrees
(f) availability of funds for travel allowances
(g) availability of funds for replacement staff.

Each faculty/division will monitor the numbers of successful and unsuccessful PEP applications by gender and academic level.

Each faculty must have its PEP applications considered and approved by a committee with the minimum membership constituted as follows:

(a) Dean or nominee as chair
(b) a senior academic nominated by the Dean and
(c) an academic staff representative.

A faculty may choose to establish a separate faculty PEP committee to approve its PEP applications or may have its PEP applications approved by a faculty committee such as the Dean’s Advisory Committee which is not constituted solely for the purpose of approving PEP but whose membership fulfils the criteria outlined above.

For academics in a division, PEP applications will be recommended by the academic’s supervisor and approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor [Academic]. Where the supervisor is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor [Academic], these applications will be approved by the Vice-Chancellor.

The applicant’s supervisor will provide a written assessment of the application to the approving body taking into consideration the criteria outlined below:

(a) The way in which the proposed program will contribute to the work of the area and the University and the professional development of the individual
(b) the likelihood of the staff member making effective use of the opportunity
6.10 PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

(c) the likelihood of the staff member, on return, contributing to the work of the University as a result of the program

(d) whether the area’s academic program can be effectively carried out during the absence

(e) whether the application is suitably detailed.

A copy of the assessment must be made available to the applicant who may make a submission to the approving body regarding the assessment.

In some cases, all applications may broadly satisfy the above criteria but it will not be possible for them all to be approved because of the limits on availability of PEP in relation to financial and teaching resources. The approving body may wish to give precedence to applicants whose PEP program is in an area critical to the faculty/division at this time or if the PEP is critical to their ability to contribute effectively to the Faculty. In addition, the approving body should take into account the staff member’s individual PEP eligibility in relation to other applicants. Individual PEP eligibility is based on length of service to the University and the length of any previous PEP period[s] taken. It is not acceptable for an applicant with a proposal that meets the criteria to be repeatedly denied approval to take PEP. If a proposal meets the criteria but is not approved due to limits on the number of academics who can take PEP at one time, then the proposal should be given priority next time. In addition the approving body should take into account the staff member’s individual PEP eligibility and their present level of professional development.

It is a requirement of the University that all research involving humans and animals must be conducted in accordance with guidelines established by the Human Research Ethics Committee and the Animal Care and Ethics Committee. These guidelines cover staff and students conducting research which includes questionnaires, surveys and physically invasive procedures. The body approving PEP should ensure that if a PEP proposal includes a research component which involves gathering data from humans and/or animals, that it has been considered by one or both of the Committees mentioned above prior to the academic commencing PEP.

6. DURATION OF PEP

A normal PEP period consists of 26 consecutive weeks. In special circumstances, PEP may be less than 26 weeks, but must be whole consecutive weeks and not less than 13 consecutive weeks. The usual pattern would be three or more years’ service followed by 26 weeks of PEP.

Any staff intending to be absent from the University for a whole semester shall apply for a 26 week period of PEP.

Where a PEP between 13 and 26 weeks is applied for, staff should state their intentions in detail for the balance of the 26 week semester, either by way of duty or by applying for leave of absence.

In special circumstances, an application may be considered for PEP in excess of 26 weeks. However, no PEP in excess of two semesters will be granted. Any staff intending to be absent from the University for two semesters shall apply for a 52-week period.

7. LOCATION

In drawing up their program, applicants should choose a location that best suits the objectives of PEP.

The concept of “refreshment” is crucial to PEP and it is therefore to be accepted as a general guide that greater than half the PEP would be required to be carried out at a location other than the staff’s home and/or the applicant’s faculty/division. An exception to this may be PEP programs involving higher degree work.

8. APPEALS

If a PEP proposal is rejected by a faculty committee the applicant may make written submission to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) giving reasons the proposal should be reconsidered. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will then decide upon subsequent action which may include resubmitting the application to the faculty committee. For academics in the divisions, appeals will be considered by the Chair of Academic Board.
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9. **SALARY AND OTHER EARNINGS**

Subject to certain conditions (described below), a staff member on PEP will be paid full salary, subject to the usual deductions, for the duration of the program. Prior to proceeding on PEP, staff may apply for their salary covering the PEP period to be paid in advance.

While on PEP, staff are entitled to receive:

(a) their normal UTS salary, plus

(b) net monies earned during the PEP period from other than UTS sources (i.e., total ‘other earnings’ less PEP associated expenses) up to the equivalent of 40% of their UTS salary for the PEP period.

Net monies received in excess of this amount are to be paid to the relevant management centre within the University.

Anticipated net ‘other earnings’ are to be nominated in the initial application. All other earnings actually received should be detailed in the report which is required on return to the University.

10. **TRAVEL ALLOWANCE**

At any time, staff may make application for payment of travel allowance. Payment of a travel allowance is not automatic but is dependent upon applicants demonstrating that they will incur travel and associated expenses amounting to at least the amount of the allowance.

The travel allowance may be granted at either of two levels: local or overseas. A local allowance is payable when a staff takes PEP in Australia or New Zealand and an overseas allowance is payable when a staff member travels outside these countries during the PEP. To be eligible for payment of the overseas allowance, applicants will demonstrate to the Dean or nominee that time will be spent on activities integral to the PEP project. Normally this should involve a minimum of ten working days outside Australia and New Zealand.

No allowance is normally payable to support a PEP taken in the Sydney area as the staff would not incur travel and associated expenses up to the amount of the allowance. For the purpose of this clause, the Sydney area refers to the geographical area bounded by Wyong in the north, Katoomba in the west, and Wollongong in the south.

The current local and overseas allowances payable are shown at Appendix A to this policy. These amounts are adjusted annually by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) taking account of the consumer price index.

Part-time staff may be granted the pro rata amount of the appropriate travel allowance.

11. **OBLIGATIONS**

It is a condition of acceptance of the grant of PEP that the staff member is able to serve the University for at least one semester after the completion of PEP. Upon return from PEP the staff member will, within three months, submit through the Dean or nominee:

(a) a report on activities undertaken during the PEP, the ways in which the objectives of the PEP were accomplished (and the reasons any PEP objectives were not accomplished)

(b) an abstract of 300 to 400 words setting out the chief purposes of the PEP and how these were accomplished; this abstract will be published in the appropriate internal publication except where there are questions of confidentiality

(c) a separate statement of all net monies earned during the period of PEP from sources other than the University

(d) sufficient documentation to prove the expenditure of the allowance on acceptable travel and PEP associated costs.

The PEP report referred to above will be evaluated by the Dean or nominee to determine whether the PEP objectives were met and, if not, whether there is a satisfactory reason for this. If the report is satisfactory, the Dean or nominee should forward it, together with the evaluation, to the faculty committee for noting and to the Human Resources Unit for filing, together with the other documents mentioned above. If the report is initially
unsatisfactory, the Dean or nominee should counsel the staff concerning possible unsatisfactory aspects of the report, to ensure that a satisfactory report is provided.

A staff member who is unable to submit the report within the designated three months time frame may apply in writing, through the Dean or nominee, for an extension of time.

Staff who do not submit a satisfactory report within the approved time frame or who have not received an extension of time will have their entitlements for future PEP calculated from the date of submission of a satisfactory report. If the faculty committee agrees that a report is unsatisfactory, or that no report has been submitted it may, at its discretion, recommend that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) require the staff member to refund any travel allowance granted to support the PEP.

For academics in a division, if the supervisor believes that a satisfactory report has not been received then the supervisor may request the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to require the staff member to refund the travel allowance. If the supervisor is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), then the Vice-Chancellor will approve the request for refund of the allowance.

During the semester following return to the University, the staff member is required to give a short talk or presentation to University staff on the PEP and its outcomes. Staff will also make other efforts to acquaint members of the University’s community with information and ideas gained during the program by lectures, seminars and written papers.

All staff who proceed on PEP agree to repay the full amount of any allowance plus the normal salary paid during the PEP, should they not return to satisfactorily serve the University for a period of one semester.

12. VARIATIONS TO PEP ARRANGEMENTS
If a staff member is obliged to alter a PEP or to return prematurely, it is necessary to seek the approval of the Dean or nominee, setting out the reasons for the change, which will be given in sufficient detail to enable any changes in travel allowance, leave entitlements, salary and future PEP eligibility to be made. The Dean or nominee is to advise the approving body of the decision.

A staff member who, as a result of ill health, is unable to fulfil some of the objectives of the PEP may make application for the relevant period of PEP to be recredited at a later date. Applications should be supported by a medical certificate and submitted to the Dean or nominee for approval who will then advise the approving body of the decision.

13. SUSPENSION OF ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES
A staff member is normally required to suspend membership on all UTS committees and relinquish all activities of an administrative nature during PEP. The staff member will notify the chairperson of each such committee as soon as PEP is approved.

14. INSURANCE WHILST ON PEP
During absence on PEP, staff are covered by the provisions of the University’s workers’ compensation policy for all periods during which the staff member is validly engaged on approved PEP activities. The University also covers staff under a comprehensive travel policy when travelling on official University business. The policy provides for personal accident cover, medical costs, loss of baggage and money and cancellation due to medical reasons (for further information contact the Financial Services Unit).
# 6.10 PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

## APPENDIX A

### TRAVEL ALLOWANCES

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local (includes NZ)</td>
<td>$2,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>$4,710</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Application forms are available from the faculty/division and should be submitted to the Dean or nominee by the advertised date.

2. When considering applications, the approving body will carefully review each one according to specified criteria as described in Consideration of Application.

3. After the approving body has considered and ruled on the applications, applicants will be notified of the decisions.

4. In normal circumstances the approving body will seek further information from candidates before rejecting any application on the grounds of its inadequacy.