

Policy Title: Academic Study Leave

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1. INTENT

This policy provides the framework for the availability of Academic Study Leave to eligible academic staff at the University.

2. ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE

All eligible Academic Staff appointed in an Academic Work Unit.

3. DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Academic Study Leave (ASL)	A period of leave primarily for the pursuit of research or scholarly work, or engagement in professional practice in the academic's discipline.
Academic Study Leave Committee	A Committee established for the purpose of assessing applications for ASL and making recommendations to the relevant Dean.
Industrial Instrument	The relevant ECU Collective Agreement and employment contract covering the terms and conditions of employment for the academic staff member.
Academic Work Unit	A School or related Research Institute.

4. POLICY CONTENT

4.1 This policy is to be read in conjunction with the respective provisions within the relevant Industrial Instrument, and any applicable guidelines to this policy.

4.2 Eligibility Criteria and Other Requirements

4.2.1 To be eligible for Academic Study Leave (ASL), an applicant must:

- a. be appointed as an academic staff member in a Teaching and Research Scholar or Teaching-Focused role within an Academic Work Unit;
- b. at the time of commencement of the proposed ASL, have an on-going or fixed-term contract (full-time or fractional) with a minimum of three (3) years continuous full-time equivalent academic service (excluding casual appointments) since:
 - i. joining the University; or
 - ii. any previous ASL period.
- c. have a contract duration that extends beyond the return from the proposed ASL by at least the duration of any approved ASL; and
- d. have satisfactorily completed all the requirements of any probationary period.

4.2.2 To be considered for ASL, an applicant must satisfactorily demonstrate:

- a. where there is an Excessive Leave Agreement (ELA) in place, the proposed ASL program includes measures to reduce excess leave prior to and/or during the ASL period;
- b. that relevant disclosures and declarations have been made in relation to the proposed ASL with regard to:
 - i. real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest; and
 - ii. any earnings, financial benefits or grants that will be received during the period from external source(s) or private consultancies.
- c. an acknowledgement of the requirement to return to the University after the completion of the ASL for a period equivalent to the period of ASL taken, and not resign or retire, except for approved medical reasons.

4.3 Period of ASL and Service

4.3.1 ASL will normally be taken over a full-time period of up to six (6) months.

4.3.2 The period of study leave approved will be determined through consideration of:

- a) the nature and purpose of the proposed ASL program;
- b) the time required for its objectives to be reasonably accomplished; and
- c) the funding available in the relevant Academic Work Unit.

- 4.3.3 In exceptional circumstances consideration may be given to an ASL application for a maximum period of up to twelve (12) months.
- 4.3.4 Applicants with six (6) or more years of continuous service with the University, who have not previously been granted ASL, will be considered for only one continuous period of ASL.
- 4.3.5 The total amount of time to be devoted to an ASL program must be declared at the time of application and must show any other leave absences including those at 2.2(a) in addition to the ASL program.
- 4.3.6 An Academic Study Leave Committee retains the right to grant a period of ASL shorter than that for which an applicant has applied.
- 4.3.7 The maximum period of ASL that may be granted and the following required period of service, will be determined by any relevant provisions within the Industrial Instrument, and/or this policy and any guidelines to this policy.
- 4.3.8 Eligible academic staff may apply for a subsequent period of ASL after completing three (3) years continuous service, as well as satisfactorily completing the required outcomes following the return from their previous ASL period.

4.4 Timeframes and Conditions

- 4.4.1 An Academic Work Unit will call for ASL applications which will be taken at the designated time in the following year.
- 4.4.2 An ASL application will be considered only where it meets the eligibility criteria and can satisfactorily demonstrate any other requirements, including the applicant:
 - a. using the approved application pro-forma provided by the University;
 - b. submitting their application by the nominated closing date and time; and
 - c. providing evidence that any prior research ethics, funding or regulatory approvals have been granted.
- 4.4.3 Applications not meeting those requirements at 4.2 will not be considered by the relevant Academic Study Leave Committee.
- 4.4.4 Where ASL has been approved, the following conditions apply:
 - a. Applicants are required to demonstrate the needs of other employees and students will be adequately met during their absence
 - b. Prior to departing on ASL the academic staff member must discharge or make necessary arrangements in relation to their academic and administrative responsibilities, including in the areas of:
 - teaching, marking and examinations;
 - research and project student supervision arrangements;
 - research and research funding obligations; and
 - any other required duties to the satisfaction of their relevant line supervisor or Head of the Academic Work Unit.

- c. Failure to complete required duties, or make necessary arrangements, or have in place adequate suitable and satisfactory measures to address the period of ASL absence may result in the delay of commencing ASL.
- d. Where a delay occurs in the commencement of ASL, for whatever reason, the ASL period will not be extended.
- e. Any paid or unpaid work undertaken during the ASL program must have been declared beforehand and meet the same conditions for approval as provided under existing University policies, including but not limited to the Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest and Consultancy Policy.
- f. Academics on approved periods of ASL are obligated to act in good faith and in accordance with the University's Code of Conduct, and abide by the statutes, policies and procedures in place at the University, as amended from time to time.
- g. Upon returning from a period of Academic Study Leave, an academic must:
 - i. within one (1) month, submit to the Dean or nominee a comprehensive report of on the outcomes of the ASL program relative to the approved program; and
 - ii. at a suitable time, present a seminar on the outcomes of the program to their School or other appropriate forum.
- h. Failure to adhere to ASL terms and conditions, or unauthorised variations or failure to complete an ASL program including serving the required period of service on return may result in the employee being required to repay the whole or part of any salary, allowances or financial assistance paid to or expended by them during the program.

4.4.5 For the purposes of determining Continuous Service in the context of this policy:

- a. Service in professional staff positions will not count as continuous service for the purposes of qualifying for ASL.
- b. Periods on ASL or leave without pay exceeding ten (10) continuous days will not count as continuous service for the purposes of credit towards calculating future ASL.
- c. Periods on paid Parental Leave with the University will count toward continuous service.

4.4.6 An approved period of ASL will not be accumulated or deferred in whole or part.

4.5 Assessment of ASL Applications

4.5.1 The Dean or nominee will establish an Academic Study Leave Committee within each School for the purpose of assessing applications from the School or related Research Institutes.

4.5.2 The role of the ASL Committee is to determine which if any applications for ASL received should be recommended to the Dean for approval.

4.5.3 The ASL Committee will comprise:

- Associate Dean (Research) - (Chair);

- All relevant Associate Deans (*Discipline*);
- The Directors of relevant Research Institutes;
- Two (2) academic staff (ALEVC or ALEVD) who are not applicants, elected by the academic staff of the School; and
- An Associate Dean from another School.

- 4.5.4 The Committee will consider each application on its merits with regard to:
- a. the stated eligibility criteria and any other requirements within this Policy and related guidelines;
 - b. the quality and completeness of the application;
 - c. the potential value of the ASL program to the individual and the Academic Work Unit; and
 - d. available funding to support study leave within the Academic Work Unit.
- 4.5.6 The composition of the Committee will have regard for diversity amongst the membership inclusive of gender diversity.
- 4.5.7 The Academic Study Leave Committee may at its discretion require the applicant to provide additional information.
- 4.5.8 Any decision of the Dean upon the recommendation of the Academic Study Leave Committee is final.
- 4.5.9 Preference will be given to those applications which demonstrate direct alignment to the strategic priorities of the Academic Work Unit.
- 4.5.10 An application being under consideration is not an indication that it will be approved, even when an applicant satisfies the eligibility requirements.
- 4.5.11 The Committee in its assessment may vary an application in any manner it sees fit, including but not limited to, any requests for financial assistance or length of ASL.
- 4.5.12 Formally approved ASL applications can only be varied with approval of the Dean or nominee.
- 4.5.13 Applicants will be advised in writing of the Committee's decision.

4.6 Leave Entitlements During ASL

- 4.6.1 Annual recreation leave, long service leave and sick leave will continue to accrue during any paid ASL period.
- 4.6.2 Annual recreation leave accrued during the approved period of ASL will be required to be taken by the academic staff member during the ASL program.
- 4.6.3 Illness during the ASL period will not qualify for any additional ASL or absence in lieu.
- 4.6.4 Requests for the use of additional leave types including leave without pay to be taken immediately before or following the ASL program must be made at the time of application and will only be considered where such leave is shown to be necessary to the success of the ASL program.

4.7 Financial Obligations and Support

- 4.7.1 Staff on approved ASL will continue to receive their normal salary payment in the usual manner, except for any period of approved unpaid leave.
- 4.7.2 Requests for financial support associated with an ASL program must be identified within the application and will be considered by the ASL Committee in relation to resources available.
- 4.7.3 The ASL Committee in granting ASL may refuse to provide, or vary, the identified resources recommended for any approved application.
- 4.7.4 An academic staff member may, if applicable, access alternative support and resources such as research grants and personal research funds during periods of ASL. Access to such funds are subject to the usual University approval processes.
- 4.7.5 Details of any known earnings, or other financial benefits to be received during the ASL must be in accordance with University policies and procedures including but not limited to the Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest and Consultancy Policy.

5. ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In relation to this policy, the following positions are responsible for the following:

Policy Owner

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) has overall responsibility for the content of this policy and its operation in ECU.

Managers

The relevant Heads of Academic Work Units are responsible for ensuring this policy is adhered to and the conditions applied equitably.

Academic Staff

Academic staff are required to comply with the content of this policy and to seek guidance in the event of uncertainty as to its application.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS:

1. The policy is supported by the following Guidelines:
 - Academic Study Leave (ASL) Guidelines
2. Other documents which are relevant to the operation of this policy are as follows:
 - Academic Study Leave (ASL) Application Form
 - Code of Conduct
 - Conflict of Interest Policy
 - Consultancy Policy
 - Conduct of Ethical Human Research
 - Conduct of Ethical Research and Teaching Involving Animals Policy
 - Relevant ECU Industrial Instrument
 - Responsible Research Conduct Policy

7. CONTACT INFORMATION

For queries relating to this document please contact:

Policy Owner	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
All Enquiries Contact:	Director, Human Resources Service Centre
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8. APPROVAL HISTORY

Policy Approved by:	Vice-Chancellor
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