

## Professional Experience Program (PEP) Vice-Chancellor's Directive

### Abstract

This directive outlines the provisions whereby academic staff are granted a paid period of release from normal duties in order to maintain and enhance their academic and professional skills and advance the University's strategic objectives. The directive covers typical activities including research, industrial or professional employment and visits. Eligibility and period of PEP are explained. The directive also covers criteria for granting PEP and administrative implications including salary, travel advance and staff obligations.

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	Vice-Chancellor	
Implementation Officer	Dean of Faculty / Head of Division	
Relevant to	All academic staff	
Related documents	<a href="#">PEP on Staff Connect</a> (staff only) <a href="#">Academic Staff Agreement</a> <a href="#">Records Management Vice-Chancellor's Directive</a> <a href="#">UTS Travel Vice-Chancellor's Directive</a>	
Legislation	None	
File number	92/738-2	
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### 1. Purpose

This directive outlines the provisions of the Professional Experience Program (PEP) scheme for academic staff. PEP is a period of paid release from normal duties granted to provide academic staff with the means of undertaking a structured program which benefits their work and advances the University's strategic objectives.

### 2. Scope

This directive applies to academic staff and some academic managers (refer to section 4.3 on eligibility), and is implemented by faculties and divisions in which academic staff are located. This directive sets out arrangements 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 variety of proposals that meet the purposes of PEP.

### 3. Definitions

For the purposes of this directive, **Director** means the director of an academic unit or research institute.

### 4. Directive principles

PEP can be used by academic staff for the following purposes:

- (a) undertaking research that is relevant to the strategic research profile of their faculty/division
- (b) improving professional knowledge and experience relevant to their academic role at UTS
- (c) acquiring new skills and competencies that benefit their work and that of the University in meeting its [strategic objectives](#).

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

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 the [Staff Secondments and Exchanges Vice-Chancellor's Directive](#) and the University's [secondment and exchanges](#) provisions (staff only).

Generally, attendance at conferences is not an additional form of leave or special program, but is considered to be absent on duty.

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

Staff returning to normal duties after an approved PEP must fulfil specific obligations on their return, as outlined in section 5.12 of this directive.

## **5. Directive statements**

### **5.1 Typical activities**

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

- (a) research, 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 teaching in an appropriate institution
- (e) research into teaching and/or educational development
- (f) 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 to obtain their support before submitting an application.

### **5.2 Amount of PEP granted at faculty/division level**

The number of staff on PEP in any one semester will normally not exceed 14 per cent of the full-time, part-time and sessional academic staff of the faculty/division. The Dean / Head of Division will provide an annual report to the Provost on the amount of PEP granted.

### **5.3 Eligibility**

Full-time, part-time and sessional academic staff (Level A to E) are eligible to apply for PEP. Part-time and sessional staff will accrue eligibility for PEP on a pro-rata basis.

Eligibility becomes effective when the staff member will have completed three years service on 1 January or 1 July prior to the proposed commencement date of the PEP. Eligibility is also dependent on a satisfactory report having been received relating to any previous PEPs taken (refer to obligations in section 5.12).

With the exception of staff with continuous service from another Australian university, staff appointed on a fixed-term contract 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.

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 section 5.12 on obligations).

Deans with a substantive continuing appointment as an academic (Level A to E) will have their service as Dean counted towards their PEP eligibility at half the normal rate. Deans will not be eligible to apply for or be granted PEP during their appointment(s) as Dean, but will be eligible for special development program (refer to the [Recruitment and Appointment Vice-Chancellor's Directive](#)).

Associate Deans, Heads of School and other academic managers appointed to the Senior Staff Group (SSG) are not eligible to take or accrue PEP during their term of office. They may be eligible for special development leave (refer to the [Recruitment and Appointment Vice-Chancellor's Directive](#)).

Periods of unpaid leave will not count as service for the determination of PEP eligibility, unless determined otherwise by the Provost.

Full-time and part-time continuous service (at Level A to E) at another Australian university will be counted towards initial eligibility to apply for 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 only establishes eligibility and does not ensure that an application will be approved. The other criteria which are taken into account are detailed under consideration of applications (section 5.5).

A staff member who has completed additional service with the University following a period of PEP and who has complied with all of the conditions imposed by the staff member's faculty/division may apply for a further PEP. (Refer to section 5.12 for obligations which must be fulfilled when 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.)

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

<b>Period of PEP applied for</b>	<b>Minimum service qualifying period</b>
13–14 weeks	Two years
15–18 weeks	Two and a half years
19–26 weeks	Three years

For PEP in excess of 26 weeks, the minimum qualifying period shall be calculated on the basis of 3.6 weeks for each six-month period after the third year of service.

#### **5.4. Applications for PEP**

Prior to consideration of individual applications, the Dean or nominee<sup>1</sup> 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:

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1 From this clause on, references to Dean or nominee include directors of academic units and institutes.

- (a) the faculty's strategic teaching and research focus 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 advances
- (g) availability of funds for replacement staff.

Applications for PEP will be prepared in accordance with requirements prescribed by the University and the relevant faculty/division. Application forms are available from the faculty/division.

Applicants should discuss their applications with their supervisor well in advance of the closing date for applications. The supervisor should provide advice to the staff member on how to develop an application that addresses the criteria for PEP.

Applications must be submitted to the Dean or nominee by the advertised date.

### **5.5 Consideration of applications**

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

- (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 who are not in a faculty, PEP applications will be recommended by the Director and approved by the Provost. Where the supervisor is the Provost, 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 strategic priorities and work of the faculty/division and the University
- (b) the professional development of the individual
- (c) the likelihood of the staff member making effective use of the opportunity
- (d) the likelihood of the staff member, on return, contributing to the work of the University as a result of the program
- (e) whether the area's academic program can be effectively carried out during the absence
- (f) 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. The faculty/division should ensure that applicants have the opportunity to make their submission regarding the assessment prior to the approving body finalising its consideration of applications.

The approving body will review each application according to above criteria. The approving body may at its discretion seek further information from an applicant before rejecting his/her application on the grounds of its inadequacy.

In some application rounds, 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 give precedence to applicants whose PEP program is in an area critical to the faculty/division at this time or 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 and their present level of professional development. Individual 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 normally should be given priority next time.

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. The body approving PEP should ensure that any PEP proposal including a research component that requires approval by one or both of the Committees mentioned above has been considered by the appropriate committee(s) prior to the academic commencing PEP.

After the approving body has considered and ruled on the applications, applicants will be notified of the decisions. The approving body will provide feedback on the reason(s) against the purpose of PEP for unsuccessful applications.

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

## **5.6 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. PEP should normally be aligned with one teaching period.

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

Where PEP between 13 and 26 weeks is applied for, staff should state their intentions in detail for the balance of the 26 weeks, either by way of duty or by applying for leave (eg annual leave, long service leave).

In special circumstances, an application may be considered for PEP in excess of 26 weeks. However, no PEP in excess of two major teaching periods will be granted. Any staff intending to be absent from the University for two major teaching periods shall apply for a 52-week period of absence (refer to section 5.7).

### **5.7 Leave taken in conjunction with PEP**

The amount of annual leave which accrues during the period of PEP will be taken in conjunction with PEP. For example, 10 days of annual leave will be taken in conjunction with a 26-week period of PEP. An absence of 52 weeks (refer to final paragraph of section 5.6) will be inclusive of at least 20 days annual leave. The requirements in relation to annual leave and PEP may be waived by the Dean or nominee due to specific University operational needs or other truly extenuating circumstances.

Other forms of leave may be taken in conjunction with PEP, subject to approval and in accordance with the relevant leave guidelines (refer to [leave](#) on Staff Connect).

### **5.8 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 will normally be at a location other than the staff member's home and/or faculty/division. An exception to this may be PEP programs involving higher degree work.

### **5.9 Appeals**

If a PEP proposal is rejected by a faculty committee, the applicant may make a written submission to the Provost giving reasons the proposal should be reconsidered. The Provost will then decide upon subsequent action which may include resubmitting the application to the faculty committee. For academics who are not in a faculty, appeals will be considered by the Chair of Academic Board.

### **5.10 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, each fortnight for the duration of the program.

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 (ie total 'other earnings' less PEP associated expenses) up to the equivalent of 40 per cent 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.

### **5.11 PEP Travel advance**

An application for a travel advance may be made on the Notification of PEP arrangement form which is submitted three months prior to commencing PEP.

Payment of a travel advance is not automatic and is dependent upon applicants demonstrating that they will incur travel and associated expenses<sup>2</sup> amounting to at least the amount of the advance. The travel advance may not be used for expenses incurred for a person other than the applicant. If a travel advance is approved and paid, it must be acquitted with evidence of expenditure (refer to section 5.12 on obligations).

Current travel advance levels are published on [PEP on Staff Connect](#).

To be eligible for payment of the overseas travel advance, 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 10 working days outside Australia and New Zealand.

No travel advance is normally payable to support PEP taken in the Sydney area. 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 travel advance rates are adjusted annually by the Provost taking account of the consumer price index.<sup>3</sup>

Part-time and sessional staff may be granted the pro rata amount of the appropriate travel advance.

## **5.12 Obligations**

### **5.12.1 Post-PEP service agreement**

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 major teaching period after the completion of PEP. All staff who proceed on PEP agree to repay the full amount of any travel advance plus the normal salary paid during the PEP, should they not return to satisfactorily serve the University for one major teaching period.

### **5.12.2 Acquittal of any travel advance**

Upon return from PEP the staff member will submit sufficient documentation (including a travel diary) to prove the expenditure of the travel advance on acceptable travel and associated PEP expenses in accordance with the [Travel Vice-Chancellor's Directive](#) section on [travel acquittal](#). Any portion of the advance which is not acquitted must be repaid to the University by the staff member.

### **5.12.3 Submission of PEP report**

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 UTS.

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2. The associated expenses on which the travel advance may be spent may vary in response to changes in taxation regulation. Refer to [PEP on Staff Connect](#) or contact HR Staff Services on ext 1060.

3. The Provost is authorised to approve the amendment of the advance rates specified in this Directive following approval of adjustments to those rates. Rates will be published at [PEP on Staff Connect](#).



The PEP report and other documents 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. The PEP report and other documents will be held on the staff member's PEP file (refer to section 5.16). If the Dean or nominee is initially unable to form a clear judgement about the success of the PEP, the Dean or nominee should counsel the staff member about the aspects of the report requiring clarification, to ensure that a complete report is provided.

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

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 Provost require the staff member to refund any travel advance granted to support the PEP.

For academics who are not in a faculty, if the Director believes that a satisfactory report has not been received then the supervisor may recommend to the Provost that the staff member refund the travel advance. If the supervisor is the Provost, then the Vice-Chancellor will approve the request for refund of the advance.

#### **5.12.4 Information sharing**

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.

#### **5.13 Variations to PEP arrangements**

If a staff member is obliged to alter a PEP or 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 advance, 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.

#### **5.14 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 appropriate chairperson of the duration of their membership suspension as soon as PEP is approved. For casual vacancies and leave of absence for members of Academic Board, refer to [Rule G3 \(Part 1, Division 1\)](#) in the General Rules. Staff who supervise higher degree research students will ensure that alternate supervision has been arranged for the period.

### **5.15 Insurance while 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 Vice-Chancellor's Directive](#) when travelling on official University business. For more information on insurance while on PEP, refer to [PEP on Staff Connect](#).

### **5.16 PEP files**

An official PEP file will be created for each staff member granted approval to undertake PEP. These files contain documents relevant to PEP and are held and maintained within the relevant faculty or, in the case of academics who are not in a faculty, within the Human Resources Unit.

PEP files must be retained and destroyed in accordance with the [Records Management Vice-Chancellor's Directive](#).

## **6. Roles and responsibilities**

### **6.1 Staff**

It is the responsibility of staff to:

- (a) prepare applications for PEP in accordance with requirements prescribed by the University and the relevant faculty/division
- (b) discuss their applications with their supervisor well in advance of the closing date for applications
- (c) diligently undertake their approved PEP program
- (d) fulfil their post-PEP obligations.

### **6.2 Supervisors**

Supervisors should assist staff to develop an application that addresses the criteria for the PEP.

Supervisors will provide a written assessment of applications from staff for whom they are responsible to the approving body.

### **6.3 Approving body (ie faculty committee, or Director and Provost, or Provost and Vice-Chancellor)**

The approving body will consider and rule on applications for PEP.

Directors will recommend applications for PEP to the Provost for approval. Where an applicant reports directly to the Provost, the application will be approved by the Vice-Chancellor.

Consider further action when no PEP report is submitted or the report is unsatisfactory in accordance with section 5.12 above.

The approving body will ensure that applicants are notified of the decision in relation to their application.

#### **6.4 Dean or nominee (ie Dean or nominee, or Directors)**

It is the responsibility of the Dean or nominee to:

- (a) determine the number of staff absences on PEP in accordance with section 4.4 above
- (b) determine whether a travel advance will be paid
- (c) determine whether a PEP report is satisfactory and to take action in accordance with section 5.12 above
- (d) provide an annual report to the Provost on the amount of PEP granted
- (e) monitor numbers of successful and unsuccessful PEP applications by gender and academic level
- (f) where appropriate, approve variations to PEP and report them to the approving body.

#### **6.5 Provost**

The Provost will:

- (a) review the travel advance rates and approve adjustments taking account of the consumer price index
- (b) consider and determine subsequent action in relation to appeals. For academic staff who are not in faculties, this role will be performed by the Chair of Academic Board
- (c) consider recommendations from faculty committees (or supervisors within academic units and Institutes) for the refunding of any travel advance paid to staff if they do not submit a PEP report or their report is unsatisfactory.

#### **6.6 Human Resources Unit**

The Human Resources Unit is responsible for maintaining the [PEP webpages on Staff Connect](#) (staff only).

### **7. Version control and change history**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Approved by, resolution no. (date)</b>	<b>Amendment</b>
24/04/1997	1	Council	Approved Professional Experience Program Policy
10/02/2006	2	Council	
18/06/2008	2	Council, COU/08-3/51	Rescinded by Council effective from the date of issue of a Vice-Chancellor's operational directive.

22/12/2009	3	Vice-Chancellor (22/12/2009)	Policy renamed as a directive and merged with existing directive. Rationalisation and reorganisation of information. Broadening of scope to cover support and senior staff.
24/10/2011 (effective date)	4	Vice-Chancellor (24/10/2011)	CPI increase to travel allowance, administrative changes to align with Academic Agreement 2010.
19/05/2015 (effective date)	4.1	Director, Governance Support Unit (GSU) (11/12/2014)	Changes (approved under Delegation 3.17) to implement 2014 Senior Executive restructure.
19/12/2016 (effective date)	4.2	Director, Governance Support Unit (GSU) (30/11/2016)	Changes (approved under Delegation 3.17) to remove circular referencing within the document and to related governance instruments. Updates to links and to the PEP travel advance.