1. OVERVIEW

The University of South Australia is committed to continued learning of staff and provides an environment and opportunities for staff to maintain and develop professional knowledge, skills, and expertise. The Study Assistance initiative aims to support staff to gain a qualification that is relevant to their current position or career goals, and maximises their contribution to the achievement of the University’s goals.

Study assistance is provided for staff enrolled in study and may consist of one or both of the following:

- Financial Support
- Time Release

This guideline reflects the preferred practice of the University and guides effective and transparent decision making regarding the approval of financial support and study release time for staff engaged in an approved program of study.

2. ELIGIBILITY

The Study Assistance Guidelines apply to Professional, Security, Grounds and Document Services staff employed on a full time or part-time continuing or fixed term contract of twelve months or more.

Staff employed on successive fixed term contracts which individually are not in excess of twelve months are eligible to apply for study assistance when they have completed twelve months of service provided there is no break in service.

Study assistance, as outlined in this guideline, does not apply to senior staff covered by the Senior Staff Collective Agreement.

2.1 New eligibility requirements for study commencing in 2017

All staff were initially notified in December 2015 the guidelines had been identified for review in order to assess their ongoing purpose and focus.

As an outcome of the review some changes to the guidelines will be introduced progressively over the next two years. This progressive implementation is required because financial support is made available on a retrospective annual basis.
For staff commencing a new program of study in 2017 onward, financial support and time release will be provided by the University for study at UniSA only. Special exemptions to this eligibility criteria can only be made through a business case to the Executive Director: People, Talent and Culture.

Staff already engaged in approved programs of study outside UniSA will be supported under the terms of the guidelines at the time of enrolment until that program is completed (in reasonable time).

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

UniSA has a long history of supporting its staff by providing financial support and time release for those who wish to undertake further study related to their employment and to advance their career goals.

This approach is reinforced by the principles of performance management, and based on an understanding of reciprocity and shared commitment between the University and staff member.

4. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The University, through the Human Resources Unit’s Study Assistance fund, may reimburse a proportion of tuition fees for Commonwealth supported and fee paying programs of study undertaken at UniSA.

The level of financial support will vary each year as it is dependent on the allocated budget in the Human Resources cost centre and the quantum of claims.

Upon approval of the Executive Director: People, Talent and Culture, reimbursement of study costs will be distributed equally, as a percentage of total costs claimed by successful applicants, via the University payroll system.

Eligible staff must fulfil the following criteria before submitting an application for financial support:

• received prior approval by their immediate manager to undertake the study for which financial support is claimed
• successfully completed the units of study for which they seek financial assistance
• have not received other financial support for their studies, e.g payment by the local area
• are maintaining a satisfactory level of work performance

4.1 Financial Support Application Process

Staff will be invited to submit their application for financial support in January each year via the all staff announcements.

Staff seeking financial assistance for study must complete HRIS 031 Financial Support Application form, with all relevant documentation, to their immediate supervisor for approval.

Applications must be received by the Study Assistance Committee in the Human Resources Unit no later than the last business day of February each year. Applications will be assessed for compliance against this guideline and the relevant policy, and forwarded to the Executive Director: People, Talent and Culture for approval and reimbursement.

The complete procedure for applying for financial support and the application form is provided in Appendix 2.

5. STUDY RELEASE

Staff enrolled in approved programs of study may also receive support through time release to attend lectures/tutorials on or off campus, attend summer/winter schools, to undertake research or to meet external study requirements.
5.1 Conditions for granting study release

When calculating and approving an appropriate amount of study release time, supervisors and managers will need to consider:

- the staff member’s capacity to manage both study and work commitments
- the business requirements and likely impact on other staff in the local work area
- how the level of service provision can be maintained in the staff member’s absence
- the number of requests from other staff for study release and how this can be managed fairly and equitably

Study release is usually approved for one study period at a time. Continued support through study release time will be dependent on a satisfactory level of work performance and evidence of successful progress with studies.

5.2 Restrictions

Study release cannot be used to repeat a course, except in exceptional circumstances provided in writing to the senior manager of the local work area as per the Vice Chancellor’s authorisation (e.g. Head of School, Director or Executive Director).

If a staff member withdraws from a course the study release arrangement and provisions are considered forfeited, and new arrangements will need to be discussed and agreed upon between the staff member and their immediate supervisor as part of performance conversation.

Study release through weekly leave and travel time is only available during official study periods, and will not be available while the staff member is on other forms of leave, e.g. sick, recreation, parental.

Study release should not be approved if it will result in the replacement of staff, paid overtime or a request for leave in lieu of overtime.

5.4 Study Release Provisions

To be considered for maximum study release, staff should be undertaking at least a 0.25 equivalent fulltime student load (EFTSL) in the study period for which study release is sought.

Where the study load is less than this, study release will be adjusted accordingly.

5.4.1 Provisions for study requiring on campus attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Maximum Release time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory weekly attendance</td>
<td>Up to 6hrs per week + 1hr travel time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive attendance</td>
<td>Up to 10 days block leave over the academic year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly attendance combined with intensive attendance</td>
<td>Up to 3hrs per week +2.5 days block leave within the study period</td>
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5.4.2 Provisions for study not requiring on campus attendance

Staff enrolled in approved programs of study not requiring on campus attendance may be granted up to 10 days across the academic year. Where study does not require on campus attendance, the staff member and the immediate supervisor should discuss and agree on the timing and method of taking leave.

5.5 Examination Leave

Study release may include leave for the period of an examination held during customary hours of work. Arrangements relating to examination leave must be discussed and agreed upon between the staff member and their immediate supervisor as soon as details of examinations become available.
5.6 Study Release Application Process

Staff must complete the HR8.1 Study Assistance: Study Release Application form and forward, with the relevant documentation, to their supervisor for approval.

If an application is not approved, the senior manager will outline the reasons for the decision in writing to the staff member.

The complete procedure for applying for study release and the application form are provided in Appendix 2.

6. APPEALS

Staff members are referred to the Staff Appeals Policy HR - 6.4 or procedures contained in the applicable industrial instrument with respect to grievances regarding study release or financial support.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITIES

Application of these guidelines is a joint responsibility of the staff member, their supervisor and the senior manager.

The Human Resources Unit is responsible for the development and continuous improvement of these guidelines.

8. CROSS REFERENCES

- HR 8.1 - Study Release Application
- HRIS 031 – Financial Support Application
- HR 25.1 - Performance Management Policy
- University of South Australia Enterprise Agreement 2014
- HR 6.4 - Staff Appeals

9. FURTHER ASSISTANCE

Management and staff may seek further advice from:

- The local HR contact
- The Human Resources Unit
- The Human Resources Website

Updated January 2017
APPENDIX 1: APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

1. Call for applications

Claims for study successfully completed in the academic year prior are submitted to the Study Assistance Committee for retrospective reimbursement, and must be received by the last business day of February each year.

The formal invitation for staff to submit an application for financial support is made via the UniSA all staff announcements in January of each year.

Claims will not be backdated for study in previous academic years.

2. Submitting an application

When preparing an application for financial support, staff members must complete the HRIS 031 Financial Support Application form and forward it, with relevant documentation, to their supervisor for approval. Relevant documentation includes:

- Document showing enrolment and fee information, such as the Commonwealth Assistance Notice (CAN) or Enrolment Confirmation Notice (ECN)
- Evidence of satisfactory progress e.g. copy of academic transcript or letter from study supervisor
- Evidence of supervisor approval for the studies for which they are claiming reimbursement e.g. a copy of the Study Release application form or the relevant section from their performance management and development plan

The supervisor either recommends or does not recommend the application.

Approved applications are forwarded to the senior manager for secondary approval.

If the application is not approved the senior manager will outline the reason in writing to the staff member concerned.

| In this context, supervisor refers to the person who directly supervises or manages the applicant and is responsible for performance management. |
| Senior manager refers to the academic or administrative manager as per the Vice Chancellor’s Authorisations e.g., Head of School, Research Institute Director, Unit Director, Division Manager. |

Once approved, the completed application form is sent directly to:

- Study Assistance Committee
- HR Unit
- Level 3, 101 Currie Street

3. Confirmation of receipt of application

Staff will receive an email from the HR Unit acknowledging receipt of their application.

4. Reimbursements

The Study Assistance Committee will meet to consider applications and make recommendations to the Executive Director: People, Talent and Culture.

Staff will be advised of the amount to be reimbursed and the date it will be paid through the payroll system.

Any payment will be incorporated in the individual’s taxable income on their group certificate. Tax will be deducted, however staff should consult their tax advisor regarding amount claimable as a tax deduction in the relevant tax year. Original copies of all documentation should be retained for audit purposes.
APPENDIX 2: APPLYING FOR STUDY RELEASE

Study release is negotiated and approved as part of performance management and development discussions. The recommended process for negotiating study release involves:

1. Seeking approval
Staff member and supervisor will discuss proposed program of study and the supervisor confirms the best choice of study and method of study based on the development needs of the individual and the business needs of the local work area.

2. Completing the Application
Staff members must complete the HR 8.1 Study Assistance: Study Release Application form and forward it, with relevant documentation, to their supervisor for approval. Relevant documentation includes:
   - an official statement of the previous year’s assessment (continuing study release applicants)
   - the letter of offer (new applicants)
   - evidence of timetable indicating study times and study load of proposed course

In their application, staff should present a sound rationale for support when making an initial application or when their work or study circumstances change, e.g changing program of study or moving to a new position or work area.

3. Submitting the Application
   The supervisor either recommends or does not recommend the application.

   If the application is not approved the supervisor will outline the reason in writing to the staff member concerned.

   Approved applications are forwarded to the senior manager for secondary approval.

   The senior manager considers the application for approval. Approved applications are forwarded to the HR team or nominated HR contact in the local work area for processing, and staff members notified in writing by the senior manager or nominee (e.g. local HR).

   If the application is not approved the senior manager will outline the reason in writing to the staff member concerned.

PLEASE NOTE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrolment in doctoral studies</th>
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<td>Staff considering enrolment in doctoral study must seek support for enrolment from their senior manager to be eligible for study leave provisions, e.g Head of School, Director.</td>
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<th>Additional study release</th>
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<tr>
<td>Additional study release for higher degree studies may be granted, on a case by case basis. This requires the support of the senior manager and approval by the relevant Pro-Vice Chancellor or Executive Director.</td>
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