

Introduction

As a University community we have introduced a range of provisions, measures and responses appropriate and necessary for the management of the COVID-19 health crisis.

We are keeping our campuses open, however, have advised all Victorian-based staff who are not required on campus to work from home wherever possible, with immediate effect until further notice.

Extraordinary efforts have been made across the board to transition our teaching to online learning and we are all playing our part to ensure we can continue to teach our students, conduct our research, and provide professional and administrative support services as best we can.

Our staff and students are at the forefront of our thinking and approach, in continuing to conduct our normal activities as we navigate this health crisis.

We have developed a set of key employment principles that will guide our thinking as we continue to monitor the situation and ensure we are responding appropriately. Our aim is to assist staff by providing clarity and certainty where we can, on how we will manage a number of key activities going forward that will enable us to maximise our efforts to keep staff engaged and working productively, while contributing to minimising the spread of the virus.

These principles will be reviewed and evolve as we continue to navigate the current situation.

Our commitments

We will continue to comply with requirements that are binding on the University and our staff in accordance with employment legislation, our enterprise agreements and our policies.

Working remotely and effectively

The University community is already collaborating to respond to current medical advice to control the spread of COVID-19 by practicing physical distancing and reducing in-person interactions.

We currently have the majority of our staff working remotely. Staff need to complete the ServiceNow [request to work remotely](#) to acknowledge work from home is being conducted in a healthy and safe manner.

Access to online delivery support will continue to be available, to enable staff to continue to prepare and deliver their online content in cases where they are unable to do so from home.

In certain circumstances, it may be necessary for some staff to be on campus for the delivery of necessary services, supports, research or other activities required for business continuity.

From 6 April staff members needing to attend a campus—for whatever reason—are required to advise security: Ballarat campuses, (03) 5327 6333 | Berwick Campus, (03) 5122 8555 | Gippsland Campus, (03) 5122 6662. Brisbane staff, please advise the Executive Director on (07) 3727 3333. Wimmera staff, please advise the Head of Campus on 0407 080 782.

This will allow our security officers to concentrate their patrols in areas occupied by staff, and quickly identify who is on campus if an incident was to occur.

We will continually assess the effectiveness of this arrangement, and ensure the appropriate support is provided to staff to work from home.

Supporting our staff

Health and wellbeing

We are deeply committed to the health and safety of our staff, students and the wider University community. As we progress our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the safety and wellbeing of our people is our highest priority.

[A suite of support mechanisms and guidance for staff and supervisors has been developed](#), and will continue to evolve based on feedback—together with other measures we may introduce—to support our staff in working from home, or where staff are required to work on University campuses or other work locations.

Alternative duties

Continuing and fixed-term staff

As a result of COVID-19, where the duties (and in turn workload) assigned to a **continuing or fixed-term staff member** reduces due to:

- government directives and advice;
- operational decisions by the University to require staff to work remotely or certain business activities are paused; or
- other factors beyond the University's control,

the University will work with the staff member to assign them other duties consistent with their employment fraction and classification level. This can include duties across other areas of the University.

If alternative duties are not able to be found, the University will work with the staff member to consider access to available annual or long service leave entitlements, and take leave for a period agreed between the staff member and their supervisor, or explore a reduction in time fraction.

Where a percentage of hours can be performed remotely, but not all duties, the staff member will be encouraged to explore a reduction in time fraction, or access their annual or long service leave before considering leave without pay options.

While the University's preference is to reach agreement on the taking of leave, if a staff member has excess annual leave or long service leave, the University may require staff to take leave consistent with the requirements and process outlined in our enterprise agreements.

Casual staff

The University recognises the significant contribution by our casual staff members. As a result of COVID-19, where the projected hours and/or duties of a casual staff member are unable to be performed due to:

- government directives and advice;
- operational decisions by the University to require staff to work remotely or certain business activities are paused; or
- other factors beyond the University's control,

The University will consider whether it can provide alternative duties, consistent with the work and hours outlined in the staff member's casual contract or other arrangements as agreed with the staff member. If this is not possible, the staff member will be paid for time they have worked to date, as approved by their supervisor, up until the date the work ceased.

Family responsibilities

The University recognises that many of our staff will have competing demands with family responsibilities into the future, particularly if staff are having to care for their family members due to COVID-19 measures introduced by the Federal or state government, or through school or childcare closures.

We want to be as accommodating as we reasonably can, to support and explore ways of managing these responsibilities alongside work requirements with individual staff, so that they can continue to support family members and remain engaged in their work, and continue to receive income during this difficult time.

If this is not possible and a staff member must take some time away from their usual work to care for their family, they may access appropriate leave entitlements in accordance with the requirements of our enterprise agreements.

The University provides a range of flexible work options in accordance with our [Flexible work arrangements toolkit](#) and these can be considered by a staff member at any time.

The University will explore alternative methods with staff based on their individual circumstances that may enable them to take different combinations of leave and work (e.g. work half day/half day off; work one day/one day off, etc.) and for professional staff, alter the customary hours of work (between 8:30am and 5:00pm) to carry out work within the broader span of ordinary hours (8:00am to 6:00pm); noting this cannot be more than 7.35 hours in a day, Monday to Friday inclusive.

Any arrangements must be at the request of the staff member based on their personal circumstances and will require agreement with the relevant supervisor or manager. Any arrangements that are agreed must be consistent with our enterprise agreements. For further advice, please contact the HR hotline (03) 5122 6300 weekdays between 8:30am to 5:00pm or via hr.hotline@federation.edu.au.

Staff recruitment

Our normal approach to recruitment is significantly compromised under the current circumstances and constraints. We also need to exercise appropriate fiscal responsibility on behalf of the University, and therefore we cannot be accruing additional ongoing cost commitments at this time. One of our key priorities is to seek to ensure that we are maximising employment continuity for our existing staff and focusing our resources on business critical services.

To this effect we have introduced the following principles:

- a) We are **pausing all staff recruitment** at this time including the new engagement of casual and sessional staff. This includes all vacancies currently in recruitment processes, unless an offer of appointment has been made in accordance with our recruitment procedure. This pause is imposed primarily because of the compromised recruitment conditions.
- b) We will only progress recruitment for positions deemed necessary for core business activity of the University to continue from this point onwards, with a review of this stance on 29 September 2020. Decisions around 'necessary for core business' will be made by a Recruitment and Resources Committee comprising the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Chief Operating Officer and Director, Human Resources. This is not saying that previously approved positions are no longer approved – rather we are not progressing the recruitment for those positions at this point in time. We recognise in some cases researchers will have grants that require people to be recruited by a certain date, or deliverables that have a time limitation. Any request to recruit in this circumstance will need to be assessed by the Recruitment and Resources Committee in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation).
- c) The default position for any recruitment will be internal recruitment. External recruitment will require Recruitment and Resources Committee approval.
- d) New starters who have already accepted formal written offers of employment will progress to join Federation University, subject to government travel restrictions, as follows:
 - i. new employees who have accepted an offer and are currently **interstate** will continue to come to Federation University in accordance with government advice.
 - ii. new employees who have accepted an offer and are from overseas will continue to travel to Australia based on government advice where they are **Australian Citizens** or **Permanent Residents** and will need to self-isolate on arrival.

We are currently reviewing arrangements for candidates who are not Australian Citizens or Permanent Residents in the context of current constraints.

Fixed-term employment

In the current circumstances, we are balancing maintaining normal service delivery as best we can and maximising employment continuity for our existing staff. We have introduced the following principles for the renewal of fixed-term contracts.

New fixed-term contracts and renewals

Maximum term 12 months

Except in the case of an externally-funded contract, where a further fixed-term contract is to be offered to an existing staff member, it may be offered for a term up to a maximum of 12 months only, following approval by the Recruitment and Resources Committee.

Where special circumstances exist to offer a term greater than 12 months, due to requirements of the enterprise agreement or where extending the term is due to critical business needs, this will also require approval by the Recruitment and Resources Committee.

External funding

A new fixed-term contract or renewal of contract may continue to be offered for a term that aligns to the cessation of the external funding attached to that contract, which must be approved by the Recruitment and Resources Committee.

Accessing leave

The following table outlines paid and unpaid leave arrangements available to staff in accordance with the University's enterprise agreements, including leave without pay and working from home arrangements.

Continuing and fixed-term staff	Working from home	Personal leave	Annual leave	Long service leave	Carer's leave [#]	Leave without pay	Isolation leave
Self-isolation	✓	✓	✓	✓			
COVID-19 illness							✓
Non-COVID-19 personal illness		✓	✓	✓			
Diagnosed medical condition or high-risk profile due to COVID-19	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Carer responsibilities			✓	✓	✓		
All other paid entitlements that are eligible to take have been exhausted						✓	

[#] full-time staff are credited five-days carer's leave per year (pro-rata for part-time staff). Any additional carer's leave is then deducted from personal leave.

TAFE teaching staff	Working from home	Personal leave	Annual leave	Long service leave	Leave without pay	Isolation leave
Self-isolation	✓	✓	✓	✓		
COVID-19 illness						✓
Non-COVID-19 personal illness		✓	✓	✓		
Diagnosed medical condition or high-risk profile due to COVID-19	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Carer responsibilities		✓	✓	✓		
All other paid entitlements that are eligible to take have been exhausted					✓	

- **Please note**, carer's leave cannot be used to look after children that are not sick.

Existing leave bookings

All existing approved leave bookings will continue as planned unless the staff member requests and their supervisor agrees to amend, defer or cancel a relevant booking.

Excessive leave

Staff that currently have excess leave in accordance with our enterprise agreements will be directed to take their excessive leave in accordance with these agreements unless they are currently teaching students online.

Outside Studies Program

Due to the current travel and other restrictions currently in place with COVID-19, the University will pause consideration of all applications for Outside Studies Program until at least 30 January 2021. A review will be conducted based on the prevailing circumstances at the time.

Any existing staff on approved outside studies leave may continue such leave within the current constraints and provisions for managing the response to COVID-19. Any variation to amend or cancel outside studies leave by a staff member must be approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

Academic promotion

The academic promotion process for 2020 will proceed as normal in accordance the Academic Promotions Policy and Procedure. We will however allow staff four extra weeks to submit their documentation for promotion. Further details regarding workshops and support can be found by visiting the [academic promotion web page](#).

Professional development/conferences/courses

There will be a pause on all external professional development, conferences and external courses until further notice. The University will continue to offer professional development opportunities via Teams and webinars.

External consultants

Prior to any engagement, the hiring of external consultants must first be approved by the Recruitment and Resources Committee.

Secondments

All existing secondments will continue as normal until their scheduled end date.

Line managers and supervisors will consider the ongoing need for offering new secondments in the current environment. Where special circumstances exist to meet ongoing business needs, secondments may be offered up to a maximum of 12 months only, and must be approved by the relevant Dean/Director.

Higher duties, loadings and reclassifications

Higher duties allowances

All existing approved higher duty allowances will continue as normal until their scheduled end date.

Line managers and supervisors will consider the ongoing need for higher duties in the current environment. Where special circumstances exist to meet ongoing business needs, higher duties may be offered in line with requirements in accordance with the enterprise agreement and must be approved by the relevant Dean/Director and Director, Human Resources.

Professional staff reclassifications

A staff member requesting to re-evaluate their position can continue in accordance with existing University reclassification processes.