

From the Provost

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to provide an update on the university's remediation of wage underpayments for affected casual (sessional) academic staff.

ACU is committed to wage integrity, in accordance with our legal obligations and our dedication to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Our mission as a Catholic university commits us to treat every human person with dignity and respect.

Background

ACU identified underpayments to some casual (sessional) academic staff employed across the university from 2016 to 2023.

On 17 January 2024, the Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Zlatko Skrbis, wrote to the university community to advise that the university was undertaking a thorough review of historic employee payments relating to casual (sessional) academic staff.

An extensive review identified underpayments of approximately \$3.6 million affecting approximately 1,100 casual (sessional) academic staff across the university from 2016 to 2023. These primarily relate to unpaid or underpaid entitlements for higher rates of payment where casual (sessional) academic staff have PhD qualifications or are undertaking subject/unit coordination duties or lecturer-in-charge duties. The process for making payment corrections began in February 2024.

A further review process has identified approximately **140 current and former staff engaged as casual (sessional) academic staff that require a "top up" payment**. The estimated impact of the "top up" payments is a total of approximately \$213,000 including superannuation and interest.

The university has voluntarily disclosed the underpayment and “top up” payments to the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO). The university will continue to provide updates to the OFWO regarding the pay remediation process, and will also inform the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TESQA), Australian Tax Office (ATO) as well other relevant external agencies and organisations.

Payments to staff eligible for a “top up payment”

The university has begun the process of communicating with individual casual (sessional) academic staff who are entitled to a “top up” payment. Current staff, and former staff who have confirmed their identity and bank details, will be paid monies owed before the end of 2024. Former staff eligible for a “top up” payment who have not yet received a payment correction in 2024 will be asked to provide identity documents and bank details to process the payment.

Update on payments to affected staff and controls

The university began making payment corrections in February 2024. All 538 **current casual (sessional) academic staff** who are eligible for a payment correction have been paid monies owed. In addition, 412 **former employees** have been paid and the university is continuing to make contact and or/or support the outstanding 154 impacted former staff in providing any necessary updated documentation.

Where there have been delays in payment, the university has paid the appropriate rate of interest on monies owed.

People and Capability (P&C) have introduced the necessary controls within the Sessional (Casual Academic) Employment System (SES) and related systems to ensure that the appropriate pay rates are applied when contracts of employment for casual (sessional) academic staff are made. When a staff member accepts an offer of casual (sessional) academic employment, they will be required to confirm their PhD status.

Further information and support

You can find answers to many of your questions about the remediation process in the FAQs on our wage underpayments website. Staff and former staff who are directly affected or wish to

provide feedback can also contact People and Capability via Service Central, by email to entitlements@acu.edu.au, or telephone +61 7 3623 7272 and select option 4.

The university's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), provided by Acacia EAP, provides a 24/7 service telephone counselling service to staff. The EAP is available to both current and former staff for this matter. Refer to the EAP web page for further information or contact Acacia EAP directly via phone (1300 364 273) or online.



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