



## **UNSW Business School guidelines for achievement relative to opportunity (ARO) during the Australian Bushfires 2019-2020 and COVID-19 crises.**

UNSW Business School recognises that the Australian bushfires in 2019-2020 and COVID-19 in 2020 have significantly disrupted the way we deliver our mission as an institution of higher learning. Particularly, the global pandemic has required an abrupt transition to online teaching, drastically curtailed opportunities for research, and constrained the scope of meaningful social engagement and impact. Professional and technical staff have also had to adapt to new ways of fulfilling the UNSW Business School's mission. Moreover, both academic and professional staff have had to go to extra lengths to meet the increasing needs precipitated by these unprecedented crises, working remotely and/or in isolation. At the same time, staff have had to shoulder added responsibilities of caring for the elderly, dependent children, and others who require assistance. Although it is difficult to anticipate the physical and mental toll that these challenges will take, many staff will likely experience bouts with their physical and mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, the aim of these guidelines is to provide a framework with which staff can articulate the impacts of the disruptions and hardship brought on by the crises in relation to their capacity to achieve their goals and highlight their effort and achievements despite the unprecedented circumstances. In doing so, UNSW Business School aims to recognise and support the academic and professional staff disadvantaged by the impact of the unprecedented crises due to their personal and professional circumstances in the short, medium or long term. This is to be understood in the light of existing supports for Achievement relative to opportunity as it relates to child rearing, caring, significant health issues or misadventure. It draws on the original material from the Australian Research Council – [Research opportunity and performance evidence](#) (ROPE).

### **Achievement relative to opportunity and contextual assessment of achievements**

These guidelines apply to all UNSW Business School staff and take an equitable and inclusive approach to what each staff has been able to achieve given unique individual adversities and hardship. ARO guidelines value the overall quality and impact of achievements rather than the quantity, rate or breadth of achievements. Consideration of ARO helps to acknowledge what has been achieved by staff given the (limited) opportunities available, and therefore, enables a more nuanced and contextual assessment of achievements. When preparing, staff should provide a clearly stated narrative to capture the impact of adverse circumstances on achievement.

**Situations where application of achievement relative to opportunity may be relevant include, but are not limited to:**

- Carer responsibilities such as looking after children, parents, extended family, housemates, friends, or those who need support in broader communities.
- Ill health, disability or medical conditions whether temporary, episodic or permanent
- Career interruptions related to parental leave, working in a different field or late entry to academia.
- Part-time, working from home and other working arrangements.
- Increased stress and/or anxiety as a result of the Summer bushfires 2019-2020 or COVID-19 2020 pandemic such as:
  - Having family or friends who have lost their businesses
  - Friends, family etc. who are overseas
  - Family members passing away (locally and overseas)
  - Pregnancies and births (locally and overseas)
  - Caring for people that are ill or supporting carers.
  - Caring for children who are learning at home.
  - Being called away for extraordinary emergency duties such as bushfire recovery or health expertise duties such as the Army Reserve or State Emergency Services.
  - Financial distress through loss of family income.
  - Physical and psychological abuse
  - Mental health issues
- Work-related situations
  - Added workload because of the abrupt transition to online classes
  - Added workload because of the size and/or nature of courses taught
  - Unable to start new projects or collect data
  - Unable to progress projects or collect data because co-authors have been adversely affected
  - Changes to journal Special Issue deadlines

The many dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic's human costs will not be fully understood for years to come, and the scope and relevance of ARO should be periodically evaluated.

## **When and how should staff provide information on their achievement relative to opportunity?**

All UNSW Business School staff can use the ARO guidelines to contextualise their achievement relative to opportunity, and in doing so, provide a narrative that captures the adversities created by the crises and the impact of these. Information provided is only used for assessing work-related achievements. Confidentiality of this information will be maintained and shared only with the permission of the staff member presenting the information.

## **Application of achievement relative to opportunity and performance evidence in performance evaluation exercises**

Maintaining pre-crisis levels of productivity has been difficult for many during the Australian Bushfires 2019-2020 and COVID-19 pandemic. The adoption of ARO, while recognising the difficulties of maintaining prior levels of achievement during the crises, provides a fair, equitable, and inclusive means of taking into consideration diverse contexts of hardship and adversity.

## **Situations to which the ARO guidelines can be applied include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- Professional and Technical myCareer conversations
- Conversion of academics to continuing appointments
- Scientia Fellow renewal applications
- Special Studies Program applications
- PWIL & AWIL applications
- Academic promotion applications
- Salary supplementation
- Dean's fellowship application and other faculty awards

## **Guidance for considering achievement relative to opportunity for managers and performance evaluators**

Heads of School and managers should use ARO statements to better understand one's achievement in the context of adverse personal situations precipitated by external crises.

## **Examples of how the principle of achievement relative to opportunity can be applied**

While all staff have different circumstances that need to be considered, scenarios where the principle of ARO may be applied are included, but not limited to examples below:

- In May 2020 a staff member rapidly transitioned to online teaching. From June 2020 the staff

member spent a higher proportion of their time on teaching than they would have planned for this year. The staff member's contribution to the education stream was superior according to the Academic Expectations Framework but during this time, they were able to achieve XX in their research stream.

- A researcher was unable to complete a piece of research because of government direction to work from home, causing the researcher to be unable to access research infrastructure. The academic pivoted their work quickly so that their contributions to the education and social impact streams were superior according to the Academic Expectations Framework. There was a temporary interruption in research for XX months, but the academic was able to complete XX in the education and social impact streams.
- In the period where staff were required to self-isolate during COVID-19 an academic was working from home and solely responsible for home-schooling their three children aged X, Y and Z. Following the return from self-isolation the staff member was able to return to normal levels of focus in July 2020. Disruption due to self-isolation led to a significant reduction in their research activity, although they were able to sustain their teaching duties for approximately XX months.
- A staff member had elderly family overseas and from the outbreak of COVID-19 they were increasingly anxious about their safety and spent considerable time overnight liaising with their family member and their medical team in a different time zone. During this time, they were able to achieve XX. They were then able to return to full-time focus in August 2020. Disruption due to stress led to a significant interruption in normal duties, in particular in maintaining their research program, for XX months.
- A staff member's partner lost their job due to COVID-19 in March 2020. During this time, they were able to achieve XX. Disruption due to family circumstances led to a significant interruption in normal duties, in particular in the design of new educational programs, for XX months.
- A staff member who lives by themselves has transitioned to working from home as instructed by the government. They have a mental health condition which has been exacerbated by working remotely and in isolation. In a time period of 6 months the staff member was able to deliver on most of their milestones in their myCareer plan. No performance management processes were put into place during this period.