

Conscientious Objection to Animal Use Procedure

Approved by	Pending
Contact	Executive Officer, Swinburne Research
Date effective	11 November 2015
Date of next review	November 2016

Scope

This procedure applies to situations where a student has a conscientious objection in relation to a particular form of animal use (including the use of animal tissue and animal products) involved in teaching and learning practice, but does not otherwise mandate any general change to such practice at the University.

Exclusions

This procedure excludes the Sarawak Campus

Related policy and documentation

Legislative context

Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007)

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)

Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (8th Ed 2013)

Internal related policies and procedure documents

People, Culture and Integrity Policy

Conduct of Research Procedure

Research Misconduct Procedure

Definitions

Word/term	Definition
Animal use	The use of animals for teaching and research in Victoria, defined as a 'scientific procedure' and regulated by Part 3 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (Vic) and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 1997.
Conscientious objection	More than just a strongly held view, but does not need to have a religious basis. For the purposes of this procedure, a conscientious objection is one which: • is an intrinsic conviction held by an individual as to what is ethically correct; • is genuinely held, after careful consideration of an issue; and • is not influenced by personal advantage or disadvantage either to oneself or to others, and when put to the test must include a willingness to accept personal disadvantage or material or personal loss (the student need not incur a personal cost for their belief, but should be able to demonstrate a willingness to do so).

Procedure

1.	University action to avoid unnecessary action on animals
	1.1. Within the prescribed scope of this procedure, the University will actively seek to avoid unnecessary practice on animals by replacing learning, teaching and assessment methods involving animal use with alternatives (such as computer simulations, supervised clinical experience, ethically-sourced tissue preservation, dissection models and mannequins) where possible.
2.	Provision of information
	2.1. Academic staff will include appropriate information about animal use activities in particular subjects for teaching and learning purposes, especially where it is not possible to make alternative arrangements for students with conscientious objections, in course and subject descriptions and other materials. 2.2. Graduate research supervisors must discuss animal use activities with applicants at the application interview where animal use is intrinsic to the particular field of research.

3.	Requesting alternative arrangements
	3.1. The University actively seeks to avoid unnecessary practice on animals by replacing learning, teaching and assessment methods involving animal use with alternatives (such as computer simulations, supervised clinical experience, ethically-sourced tissue preservation, dissection models and mannequins) where possible. However, students should note that animal use activities are essential to the development of relevant skills and attributes in some courses or to the research questions being investigated. 3.2. Students must make themselves aware of course and subject requirements as set out in the course and subject materials, and identify instances where they may be asked to participate in animal use activities to which they have a conscientious objection. 3.3. Students concerned they may be asked to participate in animal use activities to which they have a conscientious objection should raise the matter with the relevant subject coordinator(s) at the earliest opportunity (usually at the start of the relevant teaching period) to increase the chances that alternative arrangements can be made. Students may request alternative arrangements, but cannot demand that they take a particular form. The University will endeavour to make reasonable accommodation for conscientious objections of students in this area, although it will not always be possible to excuse students from particular activities. 3.4. Students seeking to undertake graduate research study must indicate their concerns to their supervisor prior to commencement of their course. 3.5. Subject coordinators and other staff members do not need to accept the underlying rationale for a student's conscientious objection.
4.	Assessing requests
	4.1. The relevant subject coordinator will determine if a student's claim constitutes a conscientious objection, and if so, whether it is possible to make alternative teaching, practice or assessment arrangements to accommodate it. Subject coordinators may ask students to provide information in writing, or supporting documentation (such as from religious, cultural or other certifying bodies), to assist with making determinations. Subject coordinators should consider conscientious objection sensitively at all times, and may seek advice from other University staff, including the relevant course coordinator, if required. 4.2. Students will only be excused from activities to which they have a conscientious objection where alternative arrangements can be put in place.

	4.3. Where alternative arrangements are made to accommodate a student's conscientious objection, they will apply only to the individual student in question, not to all the students enrolled in the course or subject. 4.4. Students should note that in some courses and subjects it will not be possible to make alternative arrangements to accommodate a conscientious objection to animal use activities. Factors that will be considered when determining whether alternative arrangements are possible include, but are not limited to: • the academic integrity of the course or subject • professional, accreditation and registration requirements and the need to certify that graduates have particular professional competencies • whether the subject in question is core or elective (for electives, a possible alternative arrangement is selecting a different subject) • legal requirements (including equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation) • the practicality of alternative arrangements, including the impact on resources in assessing and preparing alternatives and developing alternate assessments as may be required (for example, different exam questions) • the impact of alternative arrangements on other students. 4.5. Graduate research students should note that it will not normally be possible to make alternative arrangements to accommodate a conscientious objection to animal use activities. Alternative arrangements may only be made in exceptional circumstances after taking into consideration the items in clause 4.4 above, and whether a revised graduate research project could be completed within the period of candidature, availability and expertise of supervisors.
5.	Outcomes
	5.1. Students with a conscientious objection which cannot be accommodated may consult with the relevant subject or course coordinator, or a student adviser, about the possibility of other enrolment options. If students choose to remain enrolled in the relevant subject or course, they must participate in all required activities.
6.	Appeals
	6.1. Students who are dissatisfied with the application of this procedure may appeal to the Executive Dean (or nominee) of the relevant faculty.

Version control

Version Number	Approval Date	Approved by	Amendment
2	11 Nov 2015	DVC(R&D)	Final approval of document
1	May 2015		Development of procedure