

## **Conscientious Objection Policy and Procedures**

**Commencement Date:** 27 March, 2009

**Category:** Teaching and Learning, Students, Human Resources

### **1. PURPOSE**

To provide a consistent University-wide approach to conscientious objection which recognises that some students and staff may have a conscientious belief that is in conflict with teaching, assessment practices and/or fieldwork education.

### **2. APPLICATION**

All Staff and Students

### **3. EXCEPTIONS**

Higher Degree by Research students (refer to relevant HDR Regulations)

### **4. DEFINITIONS**

#### **Conscientious Belief**

Is defined as an individual's genuine and sustained inward conviction of what is morally right or wrong, uninfluenced by any consideration of personal advantage or disadvantage either to oneself or others. A Conscientious Belief can be linked to ethical, religious, or cultural values.

#### **Staff Member**

Means a person who has been offered and has accepted a contract of employment from Curtin University of Technology.

#### **Student**

Is a person who is enrolled in, a unit, course or program of study approved by Curtin, and which leads to, or is capable of leading to, an academic award of the University.

### **5. POLICY STATEMENT**

The University accepts that a conscientious belief is an individual's genuine and sustained inward conviction of what is morally right or morally wrong and that this is uninfluenced by any consideration of personal advantage or disadvantage either to oneself or others. If put to the test a person holding such a belief would ordinarily be willing to act according to the particular conviction although this may involve personal discomfort or suffering or material loss.

### **6. PRINCIPLES**

6.1 The onus is on the person who has a conscientious belief to identify their objection and to provide reasonable notice of it to the relevant area.

6.2 Where it foresees that a prospective or current student, or staff member, may have a conscientious objection in relation to their education or employment the University will publish relevant information in the Course Handbook and the Unit Outline or the Position Description. This information will identify any requirement to perform procedures or participate in activities that the University considers likely to be the subject of conscientious objection. Such procedures might include, for example, the handling of animals, cadavers or other persons.

6.3 Students with a conscientious objection to a particular teaching, assessment or fieldwork requirement will not simply be excused from an activity but, where appropriate, will be given an alternative assessment or teaching activity or fieldwork education opportunity that is of comparable difficulty and which requires a similar amount of time and effort to complete.

6.4 Alternatives made available to students with a conscientious objection are not required to be made available to all other students.

6.5 Faculties/teaching areas will document details of conscientious objections in order to determine whether there are patterns to objections to be taken into consideration in the future design of alternative teaching/assessment or fieldwork education.

6.6 Teaching areas, in consultation with the Conscientious Objection Committee, will develop discipline-specific approaches based on this policy and its attached schedules.

## 7. PROCEDURES

### 7.1 LIMITS

7.1.1 A student/staff member can request that there be a suitable alternative, but may not demand that an alternative take a particular form.

7.1.2 The University is not obliged to accommodate a conscientious belief:

7.1.2.1 Where such accommodation would be in breach of legislation (eg equal opportunity legislation) or expose the University to legal liability (eg breaches the University's duty of care and/ or Occupational Health responsibilities);

7.1.2.2 Where the task or process objected to is deemed an essential or core component of study and where, unless the task or process is completed, staff are unable to certify that a graduate has the basic competencies to fulfil the requirements of the course and/or external professional registration bodies;

7.1.2.3 Where the task or process objected to is deemed an inherent requirement of the staff person's position and duties;

7.1.2.4 Where time constraints determine an alternative is not possible;

7.1.2.5 Where it will disadvantage other students in the quality of their education; and

7.1.2.6 Where it creates unreasonable hardship.

### 7.2 APPEALS

7.2.1 A student/staff member who is dissatisfied with the decision of a Unit Coordinator/Manager can appeal to the Conscientious Objection Committee.

7.2.2 The student/staff member will have 20 working days from the date on which they were formally notified of a decision by the Unit Coordinator/Manager to lodge an appeal to the Conscientious Objection Committee outlining in writing their reasons for dissatisfaction.

7.2.3 The Conscientious Objection Committee shall comprise:

- the Chair, Research Ethics Committee;
- the Head of the area involved in the complaint;
- a Pro Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) from an area not involved;
- the Student Guild President (or nominee),
- the Multi-Faith Officer, and
- the Director Student Services (or nominee) if the appellant is a student; or Director Staff Services (or nominee) if the appellant is a staff member.

7.2.4 The decision of the Committee is final.

## 8. LIST OF SCHEDULES

[Schedule A - Procedures for Students and Staff regarding Conscientious Objections](#)

RESPONSIBILITIES	
<b>Policy Manager</b>	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education
<b>Contact</b>	Director, Support Services
	Tel: 9266 2663
	Fax: 9266 3052
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Academic Board
<b>Review Date</b>	Mar 1, 2012

---

## REVISION HISTORY

Revision Ref. No.	Approved / Rescinded	Date	Committee / Board	Resolution Number	Document Reference
	Approved	27/03/2009	Academic Board	AB 39/09	Attachment 1 to Document No 00115/09