Animal Ethics Conscientious Objection Procedure

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) The purpose of this procedure is to document:

a. the procedure for Students to raise a Conscientious Objection.

Section 2 - Scope

(2) 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 or research practice, but does not otherwise mandate any general change to such practice at Melbourne Polytechnic.

(3) This procedure applies to all Melbourne Polytechnic staff, Students, Investigators, Project Participants, Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) members and volunteers who are involved in the use of Animals for the purposes of; care, teaching or research.

Section 3 - Procedure

(4) Melbourne Polytechnic 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.

(5) Melbourne Polytechnic recognises that raising a Conscientious Objection, is not an indicator of vocational suitability, skill or commitment for that Student. It is noted that research outputs indicate Student cohorts who raise Conscientious Objections are likely to be motivated, professional and caring. As these are recognised attributes for Melbourne Polytechnic graduates in animal care professions, wherever possible, Melbourne Polytechnic will attempt to support students.

(6) Melbourne Polytechnic recognising that supporting student mental health reliance and embedding associated strategies into course (curriculum) design and delivery, may significantly benefit Students when considering Conscientious Objections. Delivery activity supports may include:

a. development of critical thinking and reflective practice skills;
b. well informed discussions about animal procedures or activities;
c. discussions should be designed to reduce individual Student stress by promoting Student cohesion and not ‘judging’ students feelings or attitudes;
d. designing delivery so that Conscientious Objection sensitivities are recognised and ensuring Students are aware of student services supports available to them.
e. Students should not enrol in Courses (including individual units/subjects) when they have objections to core requirements that are inherent in the Course or subject. Information can be found on Melbourne Polytechnic Website Course pages or in the student Learning Management Systems (Moodle) with reference to Learner

guides or handbooks, Practical Assessment Learner guides and Unit/Subject outlines.

(7) Students with a Conscientious Objection which cannot be accommodated may consult with the relevant subject/unit or Course coordinator, or a student adviser, about the possibility of other enrolment options. If students choose to remain enrolled in the relevant subject/unit or Course, they must participate in all required activities.

(8) Conscientious Objection cannot be raised after the Teaching Activity has been undertaken.

(9) Students with a Conscientious Objection that cannot be accommodated may consult with the relevant subject/unit or Course coordinator, or a student adviser, about the possibility of other Enrolment options. If Students choose to remain enrolled in the relevant subject/unit or Course, they must participate in all required activities.

(10) All Animal care and use for the purposes of teaching and research require Animal Ethics approval. Animal Ethics approval delegations' may only be exercised by the Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) and approval is based upon the principle that the intended animal use activities (Animal Ethics Projects), will comply with the 'Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes' 'the Code' and The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (Vic) 'the Act'. Animal Ethics approval by the AEC also requires consideration to the following:

a. the reduction in the number of Animals used;
b. to replacement of Animals with other methods;
c. to refinement of techniques used to minimise the adverse impact on Animals.

Requesting Alternative Arrangement Procedure

(11) Students who are concerned that 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. Melbourne Polytechnic 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.

Assessing Conscientious Objection Requests

(12) Melbourne Polytechnic will assess Conscientious Objections in the teaching Activities taking into account a range of factors. Factors that will be considered when determining whether alternative arrangements are possible include, but are not limited to:

(13) the academic integrity of the Course or subject (HE);

a. privacy considerations;
b. the skill and knowledge development requirements of the Course or unit (VET);
c. professional, accreditation and registration requirements and the need to certify that graduates have particular competencies;
d. whether the subject/unit in question is core or elective (for electives, a possible alternative arrangement is selecting a different subject/unit);
e. legal requirements (including equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation).
f. 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); and
g. the impact of alternative arrangements on other Students.

(14) When the subject coordinator is considering alternative arrangements for Students, the Animal Ethics Project Investigator is required to be informed and should be consulted before alternative arrangements are confirmed.

(15) Where alternative arrangements are made the Animal Ethics Project Investigator is required to check if these arrangements will impact any AEC approved Project associated with the Teaching Activities. Amendments may include:

a. changes to the number or type of animals used;
b. changes to investigators;
c. changes to facilities;
d. request to extend approval Project timeframe; and
e. changes that are not likely to cause harm to the Animals, including pain and distress.

(16) The Investigator is required to complete and submit a revised proposal form to AEC Executive Officer where a change to the Projects are required to facilitate the Conscientious Objections. Refer to the Animal Ethics Conduct of Projects Procedure.

(17) The Project supervisor can continue the Project once approval has been received from AEC Executive.

(18) Students that are not satisfied with the outcome of their Conscientious Objection(s) can lodge an complaint in accordance with the Student Complaints and Appeals Policy.

Section 4 - Responsibility and Accountability

(19) All Melbourne Polytechnic staff, Project Investigators, Project Participants, Students and AEC members will be responsible for:

a. complying with the Code and the Act
b. considering Conscientious Objection concerns sensitively and in accordance with this Procedure.

(20) Melbourne Polytechnic 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.

(21) Melbourne Polytechnic staff will be responsible for adhering to Melbourne Polytechnic Code of Conduct Policy at all times.

(22) Teaching staff will be responsible for:

a. respecting Conscientious Objection and being mindful to sensitively manage Conscientious Objections at all stages throughout subject/unit delivery;
b. trying to support Students to minimise the impacts of activities associated with Conscientious Objection, for example utilising one or all of the practices:
    i. by describing activities before demonstration to give students time to consider how they feel about these activities;
    ii. Ensuring Students are aware of Melbourne Polytechnic counselling and student support services, in an event the Student experiences trauma.
    iii. drawing on their own experiences of working in the sector (professional and personal reflections), sharing perspectives and strategies that assisted their own mental resilience, noting this will only be undertaken where the teacher feels comfortable to do so;
    iv. demonstrating Activities and where possible providing Students with opportunities to leave or have a

break, where the Student is finding the activity stressful;

v. as part of well-informed discussions, present information without judgement to the Student's views;
vi. utilising critical thinking and reflective practice strategies in delivery where suitable as a tool to support Students with Conscientious Objections.
vii. where well informed discussions are being undertaken, build a sense of team work, Student cohesion (which will promote less individual anxiety) and providing mutual support;
viii. providing guidance to the activities, ensuring this guidance provides all insights (like exploring well informed discussions about the benefit of an activity outweighing the impact of that activity on the animal, or overviewing the therapeutic and non-therapeutic effects of pharmaceutical interventions).

(23) Teaching staff will be responsible for:

a. informing Students if their unit/subject of study requires the student to participate in Animal use Activities at the beginning of the teaching period and no later than the second week of delivery;
b. reviewing Conscientious Objection concerns and where possible, accommodating alternative arrangements. As part of this Teachers should:
    i. consult with educational leaders (Lead Teachers, Program Leads or Heads of Program) when Conscientious Objections are raised by students;
    ii. seek approval before changing class arrangements (Lead Teachers, Program Leads or Heads of Program).

(24) Teaching staff will be responsible for:

a. notifying Students who have raised Conscientious Objection:
b. of details of alternative arrangements that can be accommodates in response to their Conscientious Objection; or
a. if alternative arrangements cannot be accommodated,
b. advising the Student that;
    i. they need to decide if they wish to remain enrolled in the unit/subject and where they chose to stay enrolled they must participate in all required Activities or
    ii. if the student wishes to change their unit/subject of who to contact to get Enrolment advice.

(25) Educational leaders (subject coordinators / Heads of Program; Lead Teachers / Program Leads) will be responsible for:

a. for reviewing student and staff Conscientious Objection concerns;
b. during the planning of (1) course design (curriculum) and (2) delivery, include appropriate Activities that promote Student mental health resilience and support Students.
c. for assessing the request by considering all factors, including but not limited to:
    i. the academic integrity of the Course or subject (HE);
    ii. the skill and knowledge development requirements of the Course or unit (VET);
    iii. professional, accreditation and registration requirements and the need to certify that graduates have particular competencies;
    iv. whether the subject/unit in question is core or elective (for electives, a possible alternative arrangement is selecting a different subject/unit);
    v. legal requirement assessment made by the Educational Leaders (including equal opportunity, anti-discrimination legislation, the Code and Act;

vi. 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);
vii. the implications of alternative arrangements on the AEC approved Animal Ethics Project conditions and requirements;
viii. the impact of alternative arrangements on other Students;
ix. where possible accommodating alternative arrangements.

d. where changes to subject / unit have financial implications, seeking appropriate approval (as per Melbourne Polytechnic delegations) before changing delivery;
e. instructing teachers of any approved changes to class arrangements; and
f. maintaining records of Conscientious Objections and approved alternative arrangements.

(26) Educational leaders (subject coordinators / Heads of Program; Lead Teachers / Program Leads) will be responsible for:

a. investigating or providing information as part of complaint investigations; and
b. instructing teachers of any approved change to class arrangements.

a. Students will be responsible for:
i. raising any Conscientious Objection(s) they have, with the relevant unit/subject teacher / coordinator(s);
ii. noting that Melbourne Polytechnic recognises that raising a Conscientious Objection, is not an indicator of vocational suitability, skill or commitment for that Student. Research outputs indicate that Students who make Conscientious Objection are motivated, professional and caring. These values are recognised by Melbourne Polytechnic, as excellent graduates outputs in animal care professions, and therefore wherever possible, Melbourne Polytechnic will attempt to support;
iii. raising their concerns at the earliest opportunity before the Teaching Activity is undertaken (usually at the start of the relevant teaching period) to increase the chances that alternative arrangements can be made;
iv. raising their concerns before census date if there are enrolled in a Higher Education Course (degree/master programs). Census dates are published by Melbourne Polytechnic via the website academic calendar page;
v. adhering to the Student Code of Conduct Guidelines while raising their concerns;
vi. deciding if they will continue to participate in the unit/subject where Melbourne Polytechnic cannot accommodate alternative arrangements to address Students' Conscientious Objections.
vii. Alternatively, Students may wish to change Enrolment options (unit or Course) by consulting with the relevant subject/unit or Course coordinator, or a student adviser, about the possibility of alternative Enrolment options.
viii. if Students continue to participate in the unit/subject, they must participate in all required Activities.

Contact 1300 635 276

ix. How to Enrol; and
x. Students may request alternative arrangements, but cannot demand that arrangements take a particular form. Melbourne Polytechnic 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 Teaching Activities.

b. students who are not satisfied with the outcome of their Conscientious Objection(s) can lodge an complaint in accordance with the Student Complaints and Appeals Policy. Complaints concerning the care and use of Animals by Melbourne Polytechnic are managed in accordance with Melbourne Polytechnic's Complaints, Non-

Compliance and Adverse Events Procedure.

c. Melbourne Polytechnic Student Complaints Liaison Officer will be responsible for:
    i. supporting complaints pertaining to Conscious Objectors;
    ii. informing the AEC Executive Officer that a Conscious Objector complaint has been lodged and describe the nature of the complaint;
    iii. the Student Complaints Liaison Officer will liaise with the AEC Executive Officer to determine the investigation responsibility (e.g. AEC or Education Excellence delivery areas); and
    iv. Collating and summarising complaint data for Melbourne Polytechnic committees (including the AEC) or reporting requirements as require

Section 5 - Supporting Documents and Template

(27) Related Melbourne Polytechnic policies and procedures:

a. Student Enrolment, Fees and Charges Policy
b. Animal Ethics Complaints, Non-Compliance and Adverse Events Procedure
c. Animal Ethics Conduct of Projects Procedure
d. Animal Ethics Policy
e. Code of Conduct Policy
f. Enrolment (HE) Policy
g. International Students Deferral, Leave of Absence, Suspension and Cancellation of Enrolment Policy
h. Re-enrolment and Addition to Enrolment (HE) Procedure
i. Student Complaints and Appeals Policy
j. Student Discipline Policy

(28) Related Forms:

a. Animal Ethics Project Proposal
b. Animal Ethics Project Summary Form
c. Animal Ethics Return Reporting Template
d. Planning Projects.

(29) Related Terms of Reference:

a. Animal Ethics Committee

(30) Related Legislation and Regulation:

a. Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th edition 2013
b. Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018
c. Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
d. Education Services for Overseas Student (ESOS) Act 2000
e. Equal Opportunity Act 2010
f. Higher Education Support Act (HESA) 2003
g. Higher Education Support (VET) Guideline 2015
h. Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA)
i. Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2008

j. Racial Discrimination Act 1975
k. TAFE VET Funding Contract Skills First Program
l. Work Health and Safety Act 2011
m. Veterinary Practice Act 1997
n. Veterinary Practice Regulations 2008

(31) Related Guidelines:

a. Animal Ethics Use of Animals for Scientific and Teaching Purposes Guidelines
b. A guide to Australia's anti-discrimination law
c. Guide to the Equal Opportunity Act 2010
d. Student Code of Conduct Guidelines
e. Australian Horse Industry Council Australian Horse Welfare and Well- being Toolkit Resource for horse organisations and event-based welfare officers, 2013
f. Australian Veterinary Association - Prescribing Guidelines
g. Australian Horse Industry Council Resources Procedures for the Delivery of Horse Industry Training, v3, January 2016 (adapted from the TAFE NSW Procedures for Delivery of Training, January 2016 v4.0)
h. Association of Zoos and Aquariums (USA) including AZA Regional Studbook Keeper Handbook
i. Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses (Revision 1)
j. Code of practice for the Welfare of Horses Competing at Bush Race Meetings (Revision 1)
k. Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses at Horse Hire Establishments
l. Horse Safety Australia
m. Identify, assess and control hazards
n. International Standard Organisation Australian Standard: AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009, Risk management – principles and guidelines
o. Poisons Standard, February 2017
p. Model codes of practice
q. National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS)
r. Safe Work Australia Guide to Managing Risks when New and Inexperienced Persons Interact with Horses
s. Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons (SUSMP) and relevant state and territory legislation and regulations
t. Student Code of Conduct Guidelines
u. Transportation and Care of Horses Purchased from Private or Commercial Sale
v. Zoo and Aquarium Association 4.6 Guidelines – Animal Records Keeping
w. WorkSafe Victoria.

Section 6 - Definitions

(32) For the purpose of this procedure the following definitions apply:

a. Act: The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (Vic).
b. Animal/s: Any live non-human vertebrate (that is, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals encompassing domestic animals, purpose-bred animals, livestock, wildlife) and cephalopods.
c. Animal Ethics Committee (AEC): A committee constituted in accordance with the terms of reference and membership laid down in the Code.
d. Animals Ethics Project Investigator: Any person who uses Animals for Scientific Purposes. Includes researchers,

teachers, undergraduate and postgraduate students involved in research Projects, and people involved in product testing, environmental testing, production of biological products and wildlife surveys.

e. Animal Facility: Any place where Animals are kept, held or housed, including yards, paddocks, tanks, ponds, buildings, cages, pens and containers.
f. Code: Australian Code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th edition 2013 (updated 2021).
g. Conscientious Objection: a conflict with a personal beliefs or values, where that person refuses to provide, or participate in the associated activity.
h. Course: A program of study, which leads to a qualification.
i. Cultural: ideas, customs and social behaviour of a society.
j. Enrolment: The process by which a student registers for subjects in a course.
k. HE: Higher Education.
l. Investigator: Any person who uses Animals for Scientific Purposes. Includes researchers, teachers, undergraduate and postgraduate Students involved in research Projects, and people involved in product testing, environmental testing, production of biological products and wildlife surveys.
m. Moodle: Melbourne Polytechnic supported learning management system which allows Students to Study in Courses.
n. Monitoring: Measures undertaken to assess, or to ensure the assessment of, the Wellbeing of Animals in accordance with the Code. Monitoring occurs at different levels (including those of investigators, animal carers and Animal Ethics Committees).
o. Project: An activity or group of activities using Animals for teaching or research purposes that have been given approval by AEC.
p. Project Participants: A person who is involved in a Project, that uses Animals for teaching or research purposes that have been given approval by AEC.
q. Reduction: methods for obtaining comparable levels of information from the use of fewer Animals in Scientific Procedures or for obtaining more information from the same number of Animals.
r. Refinement: methods that alleviate or minimise potential pain and distress, and enhance Animal Wellbeing.
s. Religion: the belief in and worship of a God(s) (non-human controlling power).
t. Replacement: methods that permit a given purpose of a Teaching Activity or Project to be achieved without the use of Animals.
u. Scientific Procedures: Include the use of Animals for:
    i. acquiring, demonstrating or developing scientific knowledge;
    ii. acquiring, demonstrating, developing or exercising scientific techniques; or
    iii. developing or testing the use, hazards, safety, or efficiency of vaccines, substances, drugs, materials or appliances intended for use in connection with human beings or Animals.
v. Student: means a Melbourne Polytechnic enrolled student or prospective student. It can also mean groups of students or prospective students.
w. Scientific Purposes: All activities conducted with the aim of acquiring, developing or demonstrating knowledge or techniques in all areas of science, including teaching, field trials, environmental studies, research (including the creation and breeding of a new animal line where the impact on Animal Wellbeing is unknown or uncertain), diagnosis, product testing and the production of biological products.
x. Teaching Activity: Any action or group of actions undertaken with the aim of achieving a Scientific Purpose, where the Scientific Purpose is imparting or demonstrating knowledge or techniques to achieve an educational outcome in science, as specified in the relevant curriculum or competency requirements.
y. VET: Vocational Education and Training.
z. Wellbeing: An animal is in a positive mental state and is able to achieve successful biological function, to have positive experiences, to express innate behaviours, and to respond to and cope with potentially adverse

conditions. Animal Wellbeing may be assessed by physiological and behavioural measures of an animal's physical and psychological health and of the animal's capacity to cope with stressors, and species-specific behaviours in response to social and environmental conditions.

Status and Details

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