

## Conscientious Objection Procedure

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### **Policy Supported:**

[Conscientious Objection in Teaching and Assessment Policy](#)

[Research Integrity Policy](#)

### **Audience:**

Staff, Students

### **Preamble:**

Murdoch University recognises that some staff and students may have a conscientious belief which is in conflict with their research or learning activities. Student assessment requirements, for instance, may occasionally raise issues related to conscientious objection. Murdoch University will endeavor to make reasonable accommodations to meet such beliefs as long as they do not contravene the law, statutory, regulatory or professional standards, or University policies and procedures.

In the event that a conscientious objection in research arises, a researcher may apply to withdraw from the research project, without disadvantage, before the research commences. Similarly, conscientious objections in relation to teaching or learning activities should normally be raised before the unit commences, or at least before the assessment task is commenced.

### **Objectives:**

- To ensure Murdoch University complies with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2007*, the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007* and the *Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 2013*.
- To provide researchers with a process to conscientiously object to research that compromises their values.
- To provide teaching staff with a process to conscientiously object to teaching activities that compromise their values.
- To provide students with a process to conscientiously object to learning or research activities that compromise their values.

## Definitions:

The definition of common terms appears in the Murdoch University Dictionary of Terms.

## Procedure:

### Conscientious Objection in Research

1. Applications for conscientious objection in research are usually not considered retrospectively i.e. once the research has commenced.
  - 1.1 If a researcher has a conscientious objection to the proposed research, he or she may seek to withdraw from the research by applying to the Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Innovation, if research staff; or the Dean of Graduate Studies, if a research student.
  - 1.2 The application must be in writing and must include the following information, as relevant:
    - 1.2.1 the substance of the conscientious objection in research;
    - 1.2.2 reasons for the conscientious objection in research;
    - 1.2.3 a proposed alternative or outcome (e.g. withdrawal from the entire project or sections of it);
    - 1.2.4 how the objection and proposed outcome impact on the applicant;
    - 1.2.5 how the objection and proposed outcome impact on the research project and any other researchers, if known;
    - 1.2.6 how the objection and proposed outcome impact on existing resources and any associated funding, if known;
    - 1.2.7 how the objection and proposed outcome comply with relevant legislation or policies, if known; and
    - 1.2.8 any supporting evidence.
  - 1.3 The application will be assessed based on:
    - 1.3.1 the extent of the impact of the conscientious objection;
    - 1.3.2 whether it has any negative legal implications or breaches of any statutory, regulatory and Murdoch University policy requirements;
    - 1.3.3 can be accommodated by available resources or funding;
    - 1.3.4 impacts on Murdoch University's reputation; and
    - 1.3.5 in the case of research students, complies with the *Graduate Research Degrees Regulations*.
  - 1.4 The applicant will be advised of the outcome in writing. In addition:
    - 1.4.1 The Heads of School, by whatever name known must be advised.
    - 1.4.2 If the applicant is a research student, the Dean Research principal supervisor must be advised.
    - 1.4.3 Research Ethics and Integrity must be advised of any potential impact on the researcher's ethics approval.

1.4.4 Other relevant areas must be also be advised.

### **Conscientious Objection in Teaching**

2. Unit Coordinators who foresee potential conscientious issues with the content of the unit, should state these in the unit study guide and advise any students with problems about this to contact the Unit Coordinator before engaging with the teaching/assessment practices in the unit. A student cannot appeal against a practice which they have already undertaken.
3. Teaching staff who have a conscientious objection in relation to teaching activities they are required to conduct should raise these concerns before the teaching period commences, in discussion with the Academic Chair or Unit Coordinator, if relevant.
4. If the matter cannot be resolved under clause 3, the teaching staff must provide a formal written application to the Heads of School, by whatever name known with the following information, where relevant:
  - 4.1 the substance of the conscientious objection in the teaching activity;
  - 4.2 reasons for the conscientious objection in the teaching activity;
  - 4.3 a proposed alternative or outcome (e.g. withdrawal from the whole unit, or particular teaching activities within the unit);
  - 4.4 how the objection and proposed outcome impact on the applicant;
  - 4.5 how the objection and proposed outcome impact on the unit or course, students or other teaching staff, if known;
  - 4.6 how the objection and proposed outcome impact on existing resources and the College budget, if known;
  - 4.7 how the objection and proposed outcome comply with relevant legislation or policies, unit's learning outcomes and assessments; and
  - 4.8 any supporting evidence.
5. The Heads of School, by whatever name known will assess the application based on the extent of the impact of the conscientious objection and also whether it:
  - 5.1 has any negative legal implications or breaches of any statutory, regulatory and Murdoch University policy requirements;
  - 5.2 can be accommodated by available resources or the College budget; and
  - 5.3 impacts on Murdoch University's reputation.
6. The Heads of School, by whatever name known will advise the applicant of the outcome in writing. In addition:
  - 6.1 The Unit Coordinator and/or Academic Chair or any other relevant areas must also be advised.

### **Conscientious Objection in Learning Activities**

7. If a student becomes aware of a conscientious objection in relation to critical units in the enrolled course, the student should discuss this with the Academic Chair as early as possible. If the matter cannot be resolved, the student should consider withdrawing from the course.

8. Conscientious objection applications in relation to learning activities and associated assessments within a unit should be raised with the Unit Coordinator before the unit commences, or within the first three weeks of semester. It cannot be raised retrospectively or after an assessment has been submitted or graded.
9. The application must be in writing and submitted to the Unit Coordinator before the unit commences, or within the first three weeks of semester, not retrospectively or after an assessment has been submitted or graded. It must include the following information, as relevant:
  - 9.1 the substance of the conscientious objection in the learning activity or assessment;
  - 9.2 reasons for the conscientious objection in the learning activity or assessment;
  - 9.3 a proposed alternative which meets the learning outcome of the unit or assessment in question;
  - 9.4 how the objection and proposed outcome impact on the applicant;
  - 9.5 how the objection and proposed outcome impact on the unit and any other students, if known (e.g. group work);
  - 9.6 how the objection and proposed outcome impact on learning outcomes and professional competencies;
  - 9.7 how the objection and proposed outcome comply with relevant legislation, policies, professional requirements or external registration bodies, if known; and
  - 9.8 any supporting evidence.
10. The Unit Coordinator will assess the application based on whether it:
  - 10.1 impacts negatively on the unit and whether other students will be disadvantaged in the quality of their education;
  - 10.2 impacts on learning outcomes and necessary professional competencies;
  - 10.3 can be accommodated by available resources or funding (e.g. time to put alternative arrangements in place); and
  - 10.4 complies with relevant legislation, policies, professional requirements or external registration bodies (e.g. will Murdoch University be in breach of its equal opportunity obligations).
11. The Unit Coordinator will advise the applicant of the outcome in writing. In addition:
  - 11.1 The Academic Chair must be advised.
  - 11.2 Enrolments and Fees must be advised of the details of the conscientious objection and the alternative arrangements made, for loading into the student record system.

### **Appeals**

12. Staff appeals in relation to the processes involved in applications for conscientious objection can be made in accordance with the *Complaints Management Policy*.

13. Undergraduate student appeals in relation to the processes involved in applications for conscientious objection can be made in accordance with the *Student Appeals Policy*.
14. Graduate research degree student appeals in relation to the processes involved in applications for conscientious objection can be made in accordance with the *Graduate Research Degrees Dispute Resolution Procedure*.

### **Recordkeeping**

15. A record of all requests, decisions and follow-up actions must be maintained, in accordance with the *Recordkeeping Policy*.

### **Related Documents:**

Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 2013

Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2007 (available at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/r39syn.htm>)

[Complaints Management Policy](#)

[Conscientious Objection in Teaching and Assessment Policy](#)

[Graduate Research Degrees Dispute Resolution Procedure](#)

[Graduate Research Degrees Regulations](#)

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007

[Recordkeeping Policy](#)

[Research Integrity Policy](#)

[Student Appeals Policy](#)

### **Approval and Implementation:**

<b>Approval Authority:</b>	President Academic Council
<b>Responsible Officer(s):</b>	Heads of College, by whatever name known
<b>Committee with oversight:</b>	Education Committee
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Secretary to Academic Council

### **Revision History:**

<b>Approved/ Amended/ Rescinded</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>	<b>Next Review Date</b>	<b>Resolution No. (if applicable)</b>
Approved by AC	23/11/2022	01/01/2023	23/11/2025	AC/117/2022(ii)
Administrative amendments	07/10/2020			

<b>Approved/ Amended/ Rescinded</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>	<b>Next Review Date</b>	<b>Resolution No. (if applicable)</b>
Approved by AC	12/03/2019		12/03/2022	AC/16/2019(ii)
Approved by Director R&D and PAC	05/02/2015		05/02/2018	
Noted by AC	28/01/2015			AC/12/2015
Recommended to AC by RDC	12/11/2014			RDC/11/2014(iv)