



CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

Policy

DEFINITIONS

Terms in this document, for which definitions are not provided in the text or may not be self-evident or for which usage at ACC may differ to that in other higher education institutions are as follows:

Conscientious Belief : 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.

Conscientious objection: a genuinely held, enduring and considered ethical, cultural or religious conviction that an action or proposed action is morally wrong. Conscientious objections are independent of fear, personal advantage, convenience, and preference.

Inherent requirement: essential requirement of a course that students must satisfy if they are to be granted credit for that course. (Note that some inherent requirements may be quite general and require study or the development of skills relating a wide range of contexts. For example an inherent requirement may refer to 'diverse cultures in Australia').

Staff Member: a person who has been offered and has accepted a contract of employment from Australian Chiropractic College.

Student: a person who is enrolled in, a unit or program of study approved by ACC, and which leads to, or is capable of leading to, an academic award of the College.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a consistent approach to conscientious objection which recognises that some students and staff may have a conscientious belief that is in conflict with teaching and learning activities (content and mode of delivery), assessment practices, fieldwork education, or engagement in scholarly, professional and/or research activities. Areas of potential conscientious objections may include, but are not limited to vaccination requirements, site visits, scheduling of fieldwork on Saturdays (Sabbath worship day), handling cadavers, physical contact between students of both genders particularly if minimally clad when practising chiropractic related procedures, and the use of animals in laboratory work.

SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Staff Members and Students of the College.

POLICY

The ACC values the diversity of the ethics, culture and religions of the members of its community.

It recognises that some students may have conscientious beliefs that conflict with College requirements and aims, where possible, to facilitate students completing their studies without compromising their ethical, religious or cultural convictions, thus providing for an individual student to request a reasonable adjustment to the requirements when that student has conscientious objection to a requirement of a unit.

The College also endeavours to provide an optimal learning environment and sound pedagogy.

Nothing in this Policy or the associated Procedure may be taken as allowing less than optimal scholarship including defence and critique of scholarly research and knowledge.

The College will therefore endeavour to include sufficient detail in official College publications for students to identify requirements and activities that may give rise to conscientious objections.

A student concerned that he or she may be required or expected to participate in activities that compromise his or her ethical, religious or cultural commitments is encouraged to raise the matter with the Lecturer for the unit, the Unit Coordinator or the Academic Dean at the earliest opportunity.

Specifically, regarding vaccination and immunisation, the College is committed to ensuring the health and safety of its staff, students, Chiropractic Centre clients and the general public. All reasonable steps will be taken to protect the community from the potential danger of exposure to infectious diseases.

Under normal circumstances, completion of an ACC program does not require a student to be vaccinated. However, if special circumstances arise during the program of study e.g. clinical or fieldwork placements in health facilities, that pose a risk of exposure to infectious and Vaccine Preventable Diseases, students will be advised of the risks (to the health of themselves and others, and also to progression with their studies) and the immunisation options available to mitigate those risks, so that they can make informed decisions.

Students who, on the basis of Conscientious Objection, choose not to be vaccinated where it is required for completion of a unit or practical placement, will be provided with alternative options where possible to enable completion of their program of study. In the event that alternatives are not possible, student will also be provided with support services for resolving any dilemma as to how they might proceed.

With respect to staff members (academic and professional), the College does not require them to be vaccinated. However if special circumstances arise or are likely to arise, during the course of their employment, that pose a risk of exposure to infectious and Vaccine Preventable Diseases, they will be advised on the risks to the health of themselves and others, and whether lack of vaccination and immunisation poses a risk to their employment at the College. As for students, support will also be provided to assist staff in resolving any dilemma as to how they might proceed.

The ACC supports the scientific protocol of first screening for evidence of immunity against preventable diseases, and if immunity is not confirmed, vaccination is recommended, followed by a second screening to ensure the vaccine has produced the desired outcome. Students are responsible for all costs incurred for screening and vaccination requirements.

Where a student has a conscientious objection to participation in a requirement of a unit, the College will endeavour to make reasonable adjustments on a case by case basis. However, adjustments will not be made in the following circumstances:

- it is an objection to an inherent requirement of the course and unless the requirement is met staff are unable to certify that the graduate has the basic competencies of the program or competencies required for external professional registration;
- the only adjustment available would be in breach of legislation or expose the College to legal liability;
- the only adjustment available will disadvantage the quality of education of other students;
- the resources (including time) required for adjustments are not available; or

- it is an objection to a requirement of an external body, compliance with that external body's requirement is necessary to complete the course and that external body does not allow the objection.

Similar considerations to those that apply to students will apply to staff, who have a conscientious objection to participation in an activity inherent in their role or specifically requested by their Manager. Adjustments will not be made if a staff member will:

- be in breach of legislation or expose the College to legal liability;
- disadvantage the quality of education of students or pose a risk to their health;
- pose a risk to the health of other staff;
- require resources to which the College cannot commit; or
- be in contravention of the requirements of an external body, to which the College has given assurance of compliance.

APPEALS

A student/staff member who has evidence that consideration was not provided to their conscientious objection may appeal in accordance with the *Student Grievance and Appeals Policy* and associated procedures or the *Staff Grievance Management Policy* and associated procedures.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

The President is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this Policy.

POLICY REVIEW

The ACC's *Conscientious Objection Policy* is normally reviewed every three years.

It is a policy of the ACC that any Policy or Procedure may be reviewed earlier as indicated by internal or external factors (including but not limited to such factors as changes in the guidelines of regulatory authorities, accreditation/registration requirements of the profession, or relevant legislation at state or federal level) as determined the Board of Directors and/or Academic Board.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Student Grievance and Appeals Policy and Procedures
- Staff Grievance Management Policy and Procedure
- Equity and Diversity Policy
- Academic Progress Policy and Procedures
- Code of Conduct
- Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedures.

VERSION CONTROL

Document: C015 Conscientious Objection Policy		
Responsible Officer: President		
Reviewed and endorsed by: Academic Board		Date: 12 May 2021
Reviewed and approved by: Board of Directors		Date: 25 May 2021
Reviewed and approved by: FARC		Date: 8 Dec 2021
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Version: V2.0	Replaces Version(s): V1.0	Next Review: July 2026
HESF	2.2 Diversity and Equity	2.2.1
Nature of Change	<p>December 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removed the requirement for students to adhere to healthcare workers COVID-19 rules <p>July 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the formatting of the Policy to align with the standard formatting Separate the Policy and Procedure Extend to cover all ACC programs Change Policy number from A to C to reflect that it covers the whole College Clarify responsibilities Update references to ACC policy and procedure documents. 	