



ETHICAL OR RELIGIOUS OBJECTION BY STUDENTS TO THE USE OF ANIMALS AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS IN COURSEWORK SUBJECTS POLICY

Date first approved: 12 March 2003	Date of effect: Spring Session 2003	Date last amended: (refer Version Control Table) 23 June 2021	Date of Next Review: 23 June 2026
First Approved by:	Academic Senate		
Custodian title & e-mail address:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) dvcri-office@uow.edu.au		
Author:	University Animal Ethics Committee		
Responsible Faculty/ Division & Unit:	Researcher Development and Integrity, Research and Innovation Division (RaID)		
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy:	Code of Practice – Research Research Misconduct and Complaints Management Policy		
References & Legislation:	The Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (NHMRC, 2013) Animal Research Act 1985 (NSW)		
Audience:	Public – accessible to anyone		
Expiry Date of Policy:	Not applicable		

Submit your feedback on this policy document using the [Policy Feedback Facility](#).



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

Contents

1	Purpose of Policy	3
2	Application & Scope	3
3	Definitions.....	3
4	Policy Principles.....	4
5	Roles & Responsibilities	4
6	Version Control and Change History	5



1 Purpose of Policy

1. The University of Wollongong (the ‘University’) is committed to recognising the diversity of values held by students at the University and seeks to provide avenues for students to complete their chosen field of study without compromising conscientiously held ethical, religious or cultural views.
2. The University, through its Animal Ethics Committee, has a responsibility to ensure that animals are only used for teaching purposes when ethically justified and must therefore balance whether the potential effects on the wellbeing of the animals involved is justified by the potential benefits.
3. This policy provides a framework for recognising and responding to students' ethical or religious objection to animal use in coursework subjects at the University.
4. It should be noted that animals may only be used in teaching if approved in advance by the Animal Ethics Committee, and all such use must be in accordance with the [Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes \(2013\)](#) (‘the Code’) and the [Animal Research Act, 1985](#) (NSW).
5. It should also be noted that in some subjects and courses animal use may be unavoidable and students need to carefully consider their study choices in such cases.

2 Application & Scope

1. This policy applies to the use of animals, animal tissues or animal products in undergraduate coursework subjects.
2. This policy does not apply to the use of animals, animal tissues or animal products in post-graduate research or coursework, or as part of research-only activity; use of animals in these circumstances will require separate approval by the Animal Ethics Committee.
3. Where animals, animal tissues or animal products are to be used in teaching, this will be made known in course descriptions available to students prior to enrolling. Students with conscientious objections to that use should carefully consider their options, before enrolling.
4. Application of this policy does not extend to undergraduate activities that are not related to a subject or course in which the student is enrolled.

3 Definitions

Word/Term	Definition (with examples if required)
Animal	Any live non-human vertebrate (that is, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals encompassing domestic animals, purpose-bred animals, livestock, wildlife) and cephalopods. (As per the Code)
Teaching	Undergraduate coursework, honours projects, assessment tasks and other activities engaged in by undergraduate students primarily of an educational nature and forming a formal part of the program in which they are enrolled.
The Code	National Health and Medical Research Council Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (2013)
The University	University of Wollongong
Use of Animals	This includes any use of animals (including animals killed for purposes not directly related to the proposed use in teaching), animal tissues or animal products.



4 Policy Principles

1. The University of Wollongong recognises that some students conscientiously hold ethical, religious or cultural beliefs that entail avoidance of teaching or assessment activities involving animals, animal tissues or animal products.
2. The University will make reasonable efforts to accommodate the values of those students referred to in clause 4.1. by providing alternative teaching and assessment activities where possible. In some circumstances, such accommodation will not be possible.

5 Roles & Responsibilities

Responsibilities of Academic Units

1. Academic units are advised that under the Code, there is an obligation to ensure that methods that replace or partially replace the use of animals must be investigated, considered and implemented wherever applicable.
2. Academic Units in which teaching involving animals, animal tissues or animal products occurs will identify the use of animals, animal tissues or animal products in the Subject Outline. Where completion of a subject involving the use of animals, animal tissues or animal products is required to meet minimum course requirements, the course handbook and other relevant course materials should state this.
3. Academic units must make reasonable efforts to provide students or potential students with additional information upon request on matters relevant to their decision as to whether to proceed with a subject or course. Such information may include, for example, details regarding the source of animals, animal tissue or animal products.
4. Academic units will advise students in writing in the Subject Outline of their rights to conscientiously object to teaching and assessment activities involving the use of animals, animal tissues or animal products, and the availability of alternative teaching and assessment activities, where possible. This advice will be included in student information and subject materials for all such subjects by the end of the first week of formal contact for each subject.
5. Academic staff involved in teaching in relevant academic units may inquire into the basis for a student's objection and its scope, but should not interrogate the student in a manner that is disrespectful of the student's conscientiously held beliefs.
6. Where students are granted exemption from teaching activities or assessment tasks on grounds of conscientious objection, the subject coordinator may determine alternative teaching activities or assessment tasks at his or her discretion. Alternatives to teaching or assessment activity should have similar pedagogic goals that meet the identified subject learning outcomes, should be of comparable difficulty, should require a similar amount of time and effort, and should be assessed as rigorously as the activity which they replace. At the same time, the provision of alternative teaching and assessment arrangements should not be unreasonably burdensome with respect to academic workloads.
7. Research project supervisors must ensure that any student who is required to attend to the care and welfare of animals outside of normal office hours is willing to provide emergency welfare interventions if required. If a student objects to any immediate and necessary welfare interventions (eg humane killing) then that student shall not be rostered to attend outside of those hours where immediate assistance is available from technical or supervisory staff.



Responsibilities of Students

1. Students who seek to avoid a particular learning activity on the basis of conscientious objection to the use of animals, animal tissues or animal products, should notify the subject coordinator in writing as early as possible, not later than the end of Week 2 of the session.
2. Students must agree to respond to reasonable requests from relevant academic staff regarding the basis of their objection and its scope.
3. Individual cases will be referred to the Associate Dean (Education) for consideration.

6 Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment
1	12 March 2003	Academic Senate	New Policy
2	6 May 2009	Vice-Principal (Administration)	Migrated to UOW Policy Template as per Policy Directory Refresh
3	9 March 2010	Vice-Principal (Administration)	Future review date identified in accordance with Standard on UOW Policy
4	16 June 2017	University Council	Migrated to UOW Policy Template, updated to incorporate religious objections and current Code provisions and review as per the AEC on 8 December 2016.
5	23 June 2021	Vice-Chancellor	Minor amendments to purpose of policy, definitions and responsibilities of Academic Units.