

GUIDELINES

Accommodation of Students with Strict Religious Observance Obligations

Preamble

As part of the Monash College vision to deliver student-centred education, Monash College promotes an inclusive environment that reflects the Monash College key values of Passion, Responsive, Innovative, Diversity and Engagement. Monash College will make every effort to accommodate students who hold strict religious observance obligations. This document provides guidance on the accommodation of Monash College students with strict religious observance obligations.

The following guidelines are provided to articulate these obligations and foster discussion and approval of suitable accommodations.

Accompanying Policies

Special Consideration Diplomas Policy

Special Consideration Diplomas Procedure

Definition

Strict religious observance obligations are practices required by a religious doctrine to be precisely obeyed by followers of the religion. These are recognised in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Guidelines

Monash College

Where a student identifies to Monash College the requirement of religious observance obligations, Monash College may:

- Require evidence from the student of their strict observance obligations and
- Seek advice from recognised leaders of a particular faith regarding strict religious observance requirements.

Monash College accepts that there will be circumstances when potential conflict is unavoidable. In such circumstances Monash College will make all reasonable attempts to accommodate the student's religious observation obligations by providing alternative means to complete the assessment or course activity.

Accommodation of requests will be considered on a case by case assessment. Students must submit a request as per the Special Consideration Procedure. Approval will be dependent upon whether the student can still meet the essential obligations of their study and whether Monash College has resources available to support the accommodation.

Guidelines – Students

Monash College encourages students to be proactive in recognising potential conflicts:

- Where a unit/study timetable is provided in advance, students choose the class that reduces potential conflicts as far as possible.
- Where the detailed course outline sets out assessment requirements is provided after the commencement of the course, students should inform unit coordinators of their religious observance obligation as soon as possible.

Students may be required to explain the conflict between the course/assessment requirements and the religious observance obligations, and the accommodations that are sought. Monash College may require written evidence of the religious observance obligations and Monash College may consult with a relevant religious leader to explore possible alternative arrangements.

Monash College will not normally extend the deadlines of assessable work for religious observance obligations. Monash College expects that students will schedule their study time to meet these assessment deadlines.

When situations arise where Monash College is unable to accommodate the religious observance obligations because of specific nature of the course requirements or limitations on flexibility for legitimate discipline related or operational reasons, Monash College will support the student to reduce negative impacts on a student's course progression.

Reasonable accommodation is offered to students with the intention that students are able to meet their course requirements and practice their religion.

Guidelines – Staff Responding to requests from students

Monash College strives to create a safe and inclusive environment for students. Teachers should be sensitive to cultural considerations, including that some students may not feel comfortable speaking about their religious observance obligations.

- At the beginning of the semester students should be made aware of who to contact to discuss any special requirements they may have.
- Where a Unit Leader becomes aware of a student's religious observance obligations that conflicts with compulsory course requirements, deadlines or assessment requirements, time should be made to meet with the student to determine appropriate arrangements. This meeting should take place soon after it is raised.

- Unit Leaders may request documentary evidence from the student explaining their strict religious observance obligations to aide with understanding the impact on the student's ability to meet the specific requirements of the course.
- Where attendance of classes or assessment is impacted by religious observance obligations, flexible modes of delivery should be considered as an alternative. Possible solutions are to make handouts available electronically, reschedule assessment where possible, or allocate assessment tasks on dates or at times when the student is able to attend.
- Where a student's strict religious observance obligations prevent attendance at examinations, students are required to submit a request as per the Special Consideration Policy for alternative arrangements.
- Prior to refusing a request for adjustment academic staff should refer the request to the program delegate to ensure that all reasonable options have been considered before refusing the request.
- Where a request is refused when alternative arrangements are not possible, the consequences of a student's decision to maintain strict religious observance on the student's course progression should be discussed with the student.

When considering the request, the following should be taken into consideration:

- Maintenance of academic standards and course.
- Providing reasonable accommodations, where possible, will avoid discrimination. Approved accommodations should not provide an advantage to the students requesting accommodation of religious observance obligations, but enable the student to observe and practice their religion while continuing to meet the course requirements.
- Upholding the privacy of the student. Information about religious and cultural observance is sensitive and must be taken into consideration when considering and discussing possible accommodations.
- Sufficient notice time has been provided by the student for alternative arrangements to be made.

Other important considerations for accommodating religious diversity

Religious Attire

Monash College welcomes the wearing of religious attire. Where certain forms of religious attire may create a risk to health and safety, the risk should be assessed and a determination made as to whether it is possible to make accommodations while ensuring a safe learning environment. Monash College Occupational Health and Safety can be consulted in such situations for advice.

Where a female student is required to provide an identity check (i.e. obtaining a student card, sitting examinations) and the student is wearing a garment that covers their face, the student will be requested to reveal their face to a female staff member in a private area.

Monash College discourages staff and students from wearing clothing that displays potentially offensive material.

Strict religious observance

A religious observance obligation may be the requirement and need to pray. Impacted students should discuss with their teacher if they have any special prayer requirements that impact on or coincide with their study requirements. Any conflict between study requirements and prayer obligations are to be addressed according to these guidelines.

Monash College provides dedicated prayer spaces for students to be used at any time. The location of the prayer rooms can be found at:

<http://www.monashcollege.edu.au/life-at-monash-college/campuses/melbourne-city>

Wellbeing

The Monash University Chaplaincy and Monash University Mosque are available to Monash College students. They provide pastoral and spiritual care for all members of the Monash Community, of all faiths and none.

Monash College students can access these services, as this aspect of care and support is an important feature to address the wellbeing of students.

<http://www.monash.edu/spirituality/chaplains>

<http://www.monashmosque.org.au/>

Responsibilities

All staff and students are expected to treat others with respect, and refrain from any forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or vilification based on race or religion. This includes harassment or coercion which relates to current or historical conflict between people of different religious groups, and inciting hatred or serious contempt or ridicule of others based on race or religion.

Any attempt to intimidate others to comply with a particular religious viewpoint, for example through hate publicity, offensive remarks and/or misuse of the Monash College services or facilities, or actions that may bring Monash College into disrepute, may result in disciplinary action.

Complaints

Students who believe that these guidelines have been breached should in the first instance consult a Monash College Appeals Officer.

Guidelines Owner	Director, Governance
Job Title	Governance
Division	
Contact	Director, Governance
Approval Body	Academic Committee
Date Effective	02 February 2018