

Religious and Spiritual Observance Procedure

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Procedure describes the process for enabling all students and staff to meet their obligations or needs in relation to religious and spiritual observance where practicable, including provision of religious or spiritual observance space and multi-faith chaplains.

Section 2 - Accountability

Accountable / Responsible Officer	Role
Accountable Officer	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)
Responsible Officer	Director, Student Services

Section 3 - Scope

(2) All students and staff.

Section 4 - Definitions

(3) Staff

(4) Student

(5) Chaplain

(6) Prayer Room

(7) Aboriginal

Section 5 - Policy

(8) See [Religious and Spiritual Observance Policy](#).

Section 6 - Procedures

Release for Religious or Spiritual Observance

(9) Where a student or staff member is required to undertake religious or spiritual observance activities during the

University's operating hours, they may request to be released from their duties or excused from class attendance or study requirements in consultation with their manager or Course Chair.

- a. In the case of students, and where it is reasonable, the University accommodates these religious needs through measures such as flexibility in the provision of learning materials, assessments and access to facilities. Students should follow the [Alternate Examination process](#) should they require flexibility in exam dates or times.
- b. In the case of staff, there is access to flexible working arrangements and/or leave entitlements as appropriate.
 - i. The provision of Clause 54 of the [Victoria University Enterprise Agreement 2013](#) apply to academic and general staff who are required to take specified days of leave for religious and cultural observance.
 - The University will not unreasonably refuse the grant of cultural and/religious leave as unpaid leave.
 - Staff members who identify and are accepted as members of Aboriginal communities shall be entitled to paid leave up to a maximum of five working days, and leave without pay up to a maximum of ten working days, per calendar year for the purpose of fulfilling ceremonial obligations. Such obligations may be 'traditional' or 'urban' in nature and may include initiation, birthing and naming, funerals, smoking or cleansing and sacred site or land ceremonies.
 - ii. Clauses 42 and 43 of the [Victoria University Vocational Teacher Enterprise Agreement 2019 provides for Ceremonial/Cultural leave.](#)

Use of University Facilities

(10) While all Prayer Rooms operate on a drop-in basis, the University will also consider requests from students and staff to use a University room for religious or spiritual observance purposes. This may include a dedicated prayer room or other facility that can be used by the group in question. In considering such requests the following factors will be taken into account:

- a. Number of students and staff who would use the room.
- b. The need for a discrete facility that cannot be shared with others.
- c. The amount of time that such a facility would be used during University operating hours.
- d. The accessibility of other appropriate facilities in the community.
- e. Whether shared use arrangements are possible.
- f. Whether special provisions are required which would involve significant cost to the University.

(11) Room bookings can be made via the [Facilities website](#).

Appointment of Chaplains

(12) The University will consider applications from religious and spiritual groups operating within the University for the appointment of chaplains to assist in religious and spiritual observance.

(13) The appointment of such chaplains will be considered by the Manager, Wellbeing Services who will make recommendations to the Director, Student Services who will confirm appointments.

(14) Where approval is given for a chaplain to operate within the University, they will operate within the University's [policies and procedures](#). The appointment will be subject to regular review.

(15) Requests for the appointment of chaplains must be made in writing to the Manager, Wellbeing Services and should include materials and vetting as per the Manager, Wellbeing Services' request.

(16) Chaplains operate on a volunteer basis and are to be vetted/endorsed by the [Council for Chaplains in Tertiary Institutions](#).

(17) The Director, Student Services will make the final decision on appointments.

Spiritual Ceremonies on Campus

(18) When requesting an external space on campus for spiritual ceremonies, i.e. Indigenous smoking ceremonies, the Executive Director, Facilities or nominee is to be approached formally in writing by the Director, Moondani Balluk or nominee for authorisation.

Part A - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Director, Student Services	Receives, considers and determines requests to use a University room for religious or spiritual observance purposes.

Section 7 - Guidelines

(19) Nil

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	31st January 2018
Review Date	31st January 2021
Approval Authority	Vice-President (Infrastructure and Students)
Approval Date	21st December 2017
Expiry Date	14th December 2021
Accountable Officer	Lisa Line Deputy Vice-Chancellor Enterprise and Digital Lisa.Line@vu.edu.au
Responsible Officer	Michelle Gillespie Chief Student Officer 9919 5106
Enquiries Contact	Heather Marsh Director, Student Equity, Safety and Wellbeing Services 9919 5178

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Student" - - a person enrolled at the University in a course leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, licence or other award; or - a person whose study performance is being or is to be assessed by the University, notwithstanding that such a person is not enrolled at the University in a course leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, licence or other award. (The above definition of student is from section 3 of the Victoria University Act 2010 and Council Resolution C2010 - 070).

"Staff" - Staff means: - all employees of the University, on all domestic and offshore locations, including student residences, and while engaged in all work-related activities such as conferences and work-sponsored social occasions; - all contractors and consultants performing work on University sites or on behalf of the University; - visiting academics, honorary, adjunct and exchange staff; - the Council and its committees; and - any volunteer in the workplace and study environment.

"Chaplain" - A Chaplain is a recognised representative of a religious or spiritual group, which may include an Indigenous Australian Elder, who provides religious or spiritual support to students and staff of the University.

"Prayer Room" - A room set aside for prayer or reflection.

"Aboriginal" - The use of the word Aboriginal throughout VU Policy and Procedure refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people connected to and/or residing in South East Australia.