

Religious and Spiritual Observance Policy

Section 1 - Purpose / Objectives

- (1) To describe the processes for:
- Enabling all students and staff to meet their obligations or needs in relation to religious and spiritual observance where practicable.
 - Dealing with requests for the allocation of facilities for religious and spiritual observance.
 - Approving the appointment of multi-faith chaplains who provide religious and spiritual support to students and staff.

Section 2 - Scope / Application

- (2) Nil

Section 3 - Definitions

- (3) The "University" means Victoria University and includes all campuses and associated centres.
- (4) "Staff" means all staff of the University including ongoing, fixed term, casual/sessional staff.
- (5) "Student" means a person who is enrolled in any VU program. This includes students on leave of absence from their studies; research students awaiting thesis examination results; and persons enrolled or registered in non-award programs.
- (6) "Multi-faith chaplain" means a recognised representative of a religious or spiritual group, including an Indigenous Australian Elder, who provides religious or spiritual support to students and staff of the University.
- (7) "Dedicated Prayer Room" means a room set aside for the use of a specific religious group.
- (8) "Multi-faith Space" means a room set aside for all religious groups.

Section 4 - Policy Statement

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, subject to prior notification to their supervisor / lecturer / teacher.
- (10) 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.

(11) In the case of staff, there is access to flexible working arrangements and/or leave entitlements as appropriate. Specifically, the provision of Clause 57 of the Victoria University Enterprise Agreement 2005 apply to academic and general staff who are required to take specified days of leave for religious or cultural observance.

(12) Clause 23 of the Multi Business Certified Agreement for TAFE Teaching Staff provides for Ceremonial/Cultural Leave.

Use of University facilities

(13) The University will consider written 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.

Appointment of multi-faith chaplains

(14) The University will consider written applications from religious and spiritual groups operating within the University for the appointment of multi-faith chaplains to assist in religious and spiritual observance. The appointment of such chaplains will be considered by the Manager, Counselling Services, in conjunctions with the Manager Student Equity and Disability and the Manager, Diversity and Inclusion who will make recommendations to the Director, Student Wellbeing who will confirm appointments. Where approval is given for a chaplain to operate within the University, they will operate within the University's guidelines. The University will approve the functions of a chaplain and the appointment will be subject to regular review.

Section 5 - Procedures

(15) Requests for the allocation of University facilities must be made in writing to the Manager, Counselling Services who will consult with the Managers of Student Equity and Disability and Staff Equity. The requests will be consistent with 5.3 of this policy. The Director, Student Wellbeing in discussion with the Director, Facilities will make consideration of such requests.

(16) Requests for the appointment of multi-faith Chaplains must be made in writing to the Manager, Counselling Services who will consult with the Managers of Student Equity and Disability and Staff Equity. The requests must include supporting materials and rationale as provided in this policy. The Director, Student Wellbeing will make decisions of such requests.

Section 6 - Guidelines

(17) Nil

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	4th September 2014
Review Date	4th May 2017
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor
Approval Date	4th September 2014
Expiry Date	30th January 2018
Responsible Officer	Yvonne Rolley Associate Director, Student Life and Wellbeing
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