

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY ANIMAL ETHICS COMMITTEE(S)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The University of Sydney (the **University**) has a strong tradition in research excellence, along with a commitment to the ethical, humane and responsible care and use of animals. In accordance with the requirements of the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (Animal Code)*, the University has established 2 University of Sydney Animal Ethics Committees (**AEC**).

The AEC is responsible for ensuring that all activities relating to the care and use of animals for scientific purposes are conducted in compliance with the *Animal Research Act 1985* (NSW), the Animal Code, and any other relevant legislation, guidelines and University policies and procedures.

The AEC is an executive committee of the Vice-Chancellor of the University. The AEC reports to the Deputy-Vice Chancellor (Research) (**DVC-R**), as a delegated representative of the Vice-Chancellor.

1. Objectives

- 1.1. Support the wellbeing of animals involved in research and teaching (scientific purposes).
- 1.2. Promote ethical standards when working with animals for scientific purposes.
- 1.3. Facilitate ethical use of animals for scientific purposes through efficient and effective review processes, in accordance with the Animal Code.
- 1.4. Ensure, on behalf of the University for which it acts, that all research and teaching projects involving animals undertaken by its employees, affiliates and students are compliant with the Animal Code and any other relevant legislations and guidelines.

2. Scope of responsibility

It is the responsibility of the AEC to:

- 2.1. Review ethics project applications and reports involving animals used for scientific purposes. This review must be competent, fair, consistent and timely. Ethics project applications are accepted from staff and students at the University. The AEC may also review ethics project applications from staff, affiliates, and students at other accredited research establishments with which a current Memorandum of Understanding exists with the University.
- 2.2. Review applications for projects and approve only those projects that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Animal Code. The judgement as to whether a proposed use of animals is ethically acceptable must be based on information that demonstrates the principles of the Animal Code and must balance whether the potential effects on the wellbeing of the animals involved is justified by the potential benefits to humans, animals and/or the environment.
- 2.3. Review applications for activities associated with the care and management of animals in facilities, including procedures applicable to breeding programs integral to the maintenance of an animal line, and approve only those activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Animal Code.
- 2.4. Conduct follow-up review of approved projects and activities and provide continuation of approval for only those projects that are ethically acceptable, in accordance with the Animal Code and any other relevant legislations and guidelines. The monitoring of approved projects will be in accordance with the *Animal Ethics Procedures 2025*.
- 2.5. Withdraw ethical approval for projects where the review has determined that the project is not ethically acceptable and/or is not in accordance with the Animal Code or any other relevant legislations and guidelines.
- 2.6. Assess and take appropriate actions, as outlined in the AEC procedures, regarding adverse events, including unforeseen events.
- 2.7. Assess and take appropriate actions regarding non-compliance.
- 2.8. Monitor the care and use of animals, including housing conditions, practices and procedures involved in the care of animals in facilities.
- 2.9. Approve guidelines and standard operating procedures for the care and use of animals on behalf of the University.

- 2.10. Delegate to an Executive some of its functions that are capable of being delegated, to assist in the expeditious and effective ethical review of ethics projects. The AEC will remain responsible and accountable for the activities and recommendations of the Executive.
- 2.11. Provide advice to University investigators on the proposed conduct of their projects.
- 2.12. Provide advice and recommendations to the DVC-R, or their nominee, on ethical issues including the ethical aspects of complaints against ethics projects and associated staff, affiliates and students.
- 2.13. Provide advice to the DVC-R, or their nominee, on matters related to the building or modification of animal facilities or areas adjacent to animal facilities.
- 2.14. Report on the AEC operations to the University through the DVC-R.

3. Relationships and reporting

- 3.1. The AEC is accountable to the Vice-Chancellor through the DVC-R.
- 3.2. The AEC has the Vice-Chancellor's approval to act in accordance with these Terms of Reference, the *Animal Research Act 1985* (NSW), the Animal Code and any other relevant legislation, guidelines and University policies and procedures.
- 3.3. The AEC must submit a written report on its activities at least annually to the DVC-R. The content of the report will be in accordance with requirements outlined by the Animal Code and the NSW Department of Primary Industries. At a minimum, the report must advise on:
 - AEC membership, meetings and facility inspections;
 - the numbers and types of projects assessed and approved or rejected;
 - the physical facilities for the care and use of animals by the University;
 - activities that have supported the educational and training needs of AEC members, and of personnel involved in the care and use of animals;
 - administrative or other difficulties experienced;
 - any matters that may affect the University's ability to maintain compliance with the Animal Code and, where appropriate, recommendations to resolve these matters; and
 - examples of implementation of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction, Refinement)
 - considerations of rehoming.
- 3.4. The AEC reports annually to the NSW Department of Primary Industries. The AEC will also report to other State and Territory Governments as required.

4. Composition of the AEC

- 4.1. The composition of the AEC will be in accordance with the Animal Code and will include at least one person from each of four categories of membership:
 - Category A – a person with qualifications in veterinary science that are recognised for registration as a veterinary surgeon in Australia, and with experience relevant to the institution's activities or the ability to acquire relevant knowledge;
 - Category B – a suitably qualified person with substantial and recent experience in the use of animals for scientific purposes relevant to the institution and the business of the AEC. This must include possession of a higher degree in research or equivalent experience;
 - Category C – a person with demonstrable commitment to, and established experience in, furthering the welfare of animals, who is not employed by or otherwise associated with the institution, and who is not currently involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. Veterinarians with specific animal welfare interest and experience may meet the requirements of this category. While not representing an animal welfare organisation, the person should, where possible, be selected on the basis of active membership of, and endorsement by, such an organisation; and
 - Category D – a person not employed by or otherwise associated with the institution and who has never been involved in the use of animals in scientific or teaching activities, either in their employment or beyond their undergraduate education. Category D members should be viewed by the wider community as bringing a completely independent view to the AEC and must not fit the requirements of any other category.
- 4.2. Categories C and D must together represent at least one-third of the AEC membership. To ensure the membership will equip the AEC to address all the relevant considerations arising from the categories of research likely to be submitted to the AEC, some or all of the above categories may be represented by more than one person.
- 4.3. Each person nominated in any category must receive approval from the Animal Research Review Panel (NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development), and the equivalent government bodies in Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia

- 4.4. A Chairperson must be appointed. This person should hold a senior position in the University, and may be appointed in addition to Category A to D members. If the Chairperson is an external appointee, the University will ensure the Chairperson has the necessary support and authority to carry out the role effectively.
- 4.5. A Deputy Chairperson (from within the AEC's membership) must be appointed to cover short-term absences by the Chairperson.
- 4.6. As specified in the Animal Code, for the purposes of holding a meeting of the AEC, a quorum will exist when at least one member from each category is present throughout the meeting. Categories C and D together must represent at least one-third of those members present.
- 4.7. The AEC may consult or seek expert advice from external persons to assist in the review of an ethics project application, subject to the disclosure and management of any conflict of interest and to the provision of the same undertaking of confidentiality as required from AEC members.

5. Responsibilities of the Chairperson

- 5.1. Impartially guide the operation of the AEC, supported by the Ethics Office, managing any differences of opinion within the AEC and conflicts of interest related to the business of the AEC.
- 5.2. Ensure that the AEC operates in accordance with the principles and requirements of the Animal Code, all relevant legislation, guidelines, University policies and AEC procedures.
- 5.3. Ensure the AEC meeting considers AEC business as required to fulfil the AEC's responsibilities.
- 5.4. Advise the DVC-R on the levels of resources required by the AEC.
- 5.5. Represent the AEC in negotiations with the University while maintaining confidentiality.
- 5.6. Oversee all requirements of the AEC to report and review its operation as outlined in the Animal Code.
- 5.7. Provide final approval of projects that have been conditionally approved by the AEC, where such delegation has been granted by the AEC, pending a satisfactory response from the investigator regarding the conditions of approval.

6. Responsibilities of members

- 6.1. Each member is responsible for deciding whether, in their own judgement, an ethics project application or other matter under consideration by the AEC is ethically acceptable and meets the requirements of the Animal Code and any other relevant legislation and guidelines. To fulfil this responsibility, members should:
 - be familiar with the Animal Code and other legislation and guidelines relevant to the business of the AEC; and
 - provide opinions on the ethical acceptability of ethics project applications and other matters under consideration by the AEC.
- 6.2. During their appointment to the AEC, and before any deliberations by the AEC, members must declare any interest that could influence the objectivity of their decision making.

7. Non-voting members assisting the AEC

- 7.1. Non-voting members may attend meetings to assist the AEC to function effectively.
- 7.2. Examples of non-voting members include, but are not limited to: Animal Ethics Manager, Ethics Officers, Animal Welfare Veterinarians and Senior Laboratory Animal Services staff.
- 7.3. The role of the Animal Ethics Manager and Ethics Officer with respect to the AEC are to:
 - assist the AEC by the timely provision of information concerning matters relevant to the work of the AEC;
 - assist the AEC in any necessary or desirable liaison with relevant Government departments;
 - provide advice to the AEC on process;
 - approve minor administrative amendments on behalf of the AEC; and
 - act as secretariat for the AEC.
- 7.4. The role of the Animal Welfare Veterinarians with respect to the AEC is to:
 - inspect facilities on behalf of the AEC;
 - monitor the conduct of procedures by investigators at the request of the AEC;
 - provide advice to the AEC on animal welfare issues; and
 - pre-review applications to the AEC at the request of investigators.
- 7.5. The role of the Senior Laboratory Animal Services staff with respect to the AEC is to:
 - provide advice to the AEC;
 - report on the operations of the Laboratory Animal Services as they relate to ethics projects approved by the AEC; and

- provide advice on the husbandry and routine care of animals such as those housed within Laboratory Animal Services facilities.

8. AEC Executive Committee

- 8.1. The University may establish an executive committee (**Executive**) to conduct activities delegated to it by the AEC.
- 8.2. The Executive must include the chairperson and at least one member from Category C or D.
- 8.3. Activities that may be reviewed, considered and, where appropriate, approved by the AEC Executive include the following:
 - responses to ethics project applications and amendments that have been conditionally approved by the AEC;
 - the addition/removal of associated investigators on AEC approved projects;
 - minor amendments to approved projects or activities; and, in exceptional circumstances,
 - other matters where animal welfare will not be compromised.
- 8.4. All decisions by the Executive are reviewed and ratified by the AEC at the next meeting.

9. Meetings

- 9.1. The AEC is expected to meet approximately 12 times per year at monthly intervals, or as required.
- 9.2. The conduct and operations of AEC meetings are outlined in the *Animal Ethics Procedures 2025*.

10. Records and reporting of the AEC

- 10.1. The Ethics Office will prepare and maintain written records of the AEC's activities, including new applications, renewal applications, amendments, adverse events, progress and final reports and minutes of all meetings.
- 10.2. Record keeping and reporting will be in accordance with the *Animal Ethics Procedures 2025*.

11. Complaints and review

- 11.1. Any concern or complaint about the conduct of a project approved by the AEC should be directed to one of the following: the Animal Ethics Manager, Animal Welfare Veterinarian or Director Research Integrity and Ethics Administration.
- 11.2. The management of complaints will be in accordance with the *Animal Ethics Procedures 2025*.

12. Amendments to the Terms of Reference

- 12.1. These Terms of Reference may be amended in consultation with the AEC.