University of Tasmania
Animal Ethics Committee
Terms of Reference
University of Tasmania Animal Ethics Committee

Terms of Reference

Contents

1 Establishment....................................................................................................................................... 2
2 The Scope of Responsibility ............................................................................................................... 2
3 Roles.................................................................................................................................................. 2
4 Functions........................................................................................................................................... 2
5 Membership...................................................................................................................................... 3
6 Appointment...................................................................................................................................... 4
7 Members Responsibilities and Entitlements ...................................................................................... 5
8 Chair and Deputy Chair Responsibilities and Entitlements............................................................... 5
9 Accountability .................................................................................................................................... 6
10 Subcommittees ................................................................................................................................ 6
11 Meetings ......................................................................................................................................... 7
12 Procedures ...................................................................................................................................... 7
13 Revision date................................................................................................................................... 7
1 Establishment

1.1 In accordance with the requirements of the ‘Australian Code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes’ (‘the Code’) and the granting of a licence to conduct animal research under S30 of the Animal Welfare Act of Tasmania (1993), the University of Tasmania has established the Animal Ethics Committee, to be known as the ‘AEC’.

1.2 The University of Tasmania Research Ethics Policy confers responsibility for the review of academic or educational projects involving animals that are undertaken by the University of Tasmania to the AEC.

1.3 The AEC will act in accordance with the Terms of Reference as amended from time to time.

2 The Scope of Responsibility

The primary responsibility of an AEC is to ensure that the ethical review, approval and monitoring of the care and use of animals, specifically non-human vertebrates and cephalopods, for scientific purposes conducted on behalf of the University of Tasmania in compliance with the Code.

The AEC is required to register and inspect all animal holding, experimentation, transportation and breeding facilities on behalf of the University.

3 Roles

The Governing principles of the Code require that all activities that involve the care and use of animals for scientific purposes must:

a) be subject to ethical review, approval and monitoring by an AEC
b) commence only after approval has been granted by an AEC
c) be conducted in accordance with AEC approval
d) cease if approval from the AEC is suspended or withdrawn

Further, the AEC must be satisfied that there is sufficient evidence to support a case that the proposed use of animals is justified (2.3 iii of the Code)

4 Functions

In fulfilling these roles, the AEC will:

a) Perform all duties in accordance with the requirements of Section 2.3 of the Code, the Animal Welfare Act and associated University of Tasmania policy and procedures
b) Provide independent, competent and timely review of academic or educational projects involving animals and only approve those that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code
c) Review applications and monitor 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 that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code

d) The AEC must conduct follow up review of approved projects and activities (see clause 2.2.32[iii]) and allow continuation of approval of project and activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code. The AEC must monitor the care and use of animals, including housing conditions, practices and procedures involved in the care of animals in facilities (clauses 2.3.17-24).

e) Consider and provide advice and recommendations to the institution on guidelines for the care and use of animals including the development of strategies to ensure that the requirements of the Code are maintained and that matters affecting animal wellbeing are addressed.

f) Take appropriate action regarding unexpected adverse events or non-compliance in accordance with the institution’s licence to conduct animal research and the requirements of Section 2.3.24-25 of the Code.

g) At the discretion of the AEC, accept the findings of other fully constituted and registered Australian Animal Ethics Committees.

h) Report annually to the Research Integrity and Ethics Committee of the University of Tasmania and to Biosecurity Tasmania, DPIPWE on the operations of the committee in accordance with the requirements of the Code and the University’s licence to conduct animal research.

i) Have the authority to establish an AEC Executive in accordance with the requirements of Section 2.2.23 of the Code.

5 Membership

The AEC will be constituted in conformity with the Code and will have at least five members, namely:

a) A Chairperson, with suitable experience whose other responsibilities must not impair the AEC’s capacity to carry out its obligations under the Code.

b) Category A — a person with qualifications in veterinary science and
   i. recognised for registration as a Vet Surgeon in Australia, and with experience relevant to the institution’s activities or the ability to acquire relevant knowledge.

c) 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.
   i. This must include possession of a higher degree in research or equivalent experience.

d) Category C—a person with demonstrable commitment to, and established experience in,
   i. 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.
   ii. Veterinarians with specific animal welfare interest and experience may meet the requirements of this category.
   iii. 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.
e) Category D—a person not employed by or otherwise associated with the institution and
   i. who has never been involved in the use of animals in scientific or teaching activities, either in their employment or beyond their undergraduate education.
   ii. 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.

f) One member will serve as Deputy Chairperson.

h) The University of Tasmania may add to the membership such other persons as is necessary to ensure that the AEC has access to the expertise necessary to enable it to address the ethical issues arising from the categories of research and/or teaching it is likely to consider.

i) The University of Tasmania seeks to supports and encourage membership applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

j) In accordance with the conditions of the University’s Animal Research Licence, the State Inspector of Animal Research shall be invited to attend all meetings of the AEC.

6 Appointment

The University of Tasmania may recruit members for the AEC in such manner and shall appoint them for such periods and on such terms and conditions as it determines, however in ordinary circumstances:

6.1 The University of Tasmania will adopt open and transparent processes including advertising for applications for membership and making appointments of members.

6.2 Members will be appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (DVCR) of the University of Tasmania for a term of two years and eligible for re-appointment for a second and third term but no member may serve more than three successive terms, except with the express approval of the DVCR, or, in the event that no suitably qualified alternative members can be identified.

6.3 All recommendations for membership will be provided to the DVCR of the University of Tasmanian who will make the appointments.

6.4 Members who are absent from three successive meetings of the AEC without the approval of the Chair will cease to be members.

6.5 Members may resign their membership by written notice to the Chair of the AEC.

6.6 The appointment of any member may be terminated if the Chair of the AEC or DVCR of the University of Tasmania is of the opinion that:

   • it is necessary for the proper and effective functioning of the AEC; or
   • the person is not a fit and proper person to serve on an AEC.
7 Members Responsibilities and Entitlements

7.1 Each member is responsible for deciding whether, in his or her judgment, a proposal submitted to the AEC meets the requirements of the Code and is ethically acceptable. A working knowledge of the Code and any associated policies and guidelines is expected of all members.

7.2 Each member will be provided with an induction and orientation to the functions of the AEC.

7.3 Each member is responsible to:

- disclose to the AEC any conflicts of interest that may affect the objectivity of the AEC’s review of a research and/or teaching proposal;
- maintain the confidentiality of information received in the exercise of his or her duties;
- prepare for and attend AEC meetings or, if unavailable, provide opinions on ethical acceptability of research and/or teaching proposals;

7.4 Members who are not staff members of the University of Tasmania may be offered an honorarium for each attendance at a committee meeting. The value of the honorarium will be determined from time to time by the DVCR of the University of Tasmania.

8 Chair and Deputy Chair Responsibilities and Entitlements

In addition to the responsibilities of general members, the Chair and Deputy Chair will have the following responsibilities:

a) The Chair should hold a senior position in the institution.

b) The Chair should not have other responsibilities that will impair the AEC’s capacity to fulfil the obligations under the Code and fulfil roles and carry out the functions set out in these Terms of Reference.

c) The Chair is responsible to ensure that AEC decisions are informed by an exchange of views from those members who comprise the minimum membership. Achieving such decisions requires that the Chair:
   - actively engages all members;
   - elicits their views; and
   - communicates their responses to other members.

d) The Chair is responsible for impartially guiding the operation of the AEC, resolving conflicts of interest and representing the AEC in any negotiations with management (S2.2.13, the Code).

e) As the AEC endeavours to reach decisions by general agreement, the Chair will need to facilitate the expression of opinion from all members, identify points of agreement and of disagreement and judge when a sufficient degree of general agreement has been reached.

f) The Chair is responsible for guiding the manner in which the AEC communicates with investigators and the decisions about inviting investigators to attend AEC meetings.
g) The Deputy Chair should support the Chair in the performance of, and be capable of fulfilling, the responsibilities of the Chair whenever the Chair cannot attend meetings or perform any other function.

9 Accountability

9.1 The AEC is accountable to the DVCR and Research Integrity and Ethics Committee (RIEC), of the University of Tasmania for the exercise of its functions and the fulfilment of its roles.

9.2 The AEC will provide copies of the minutes of its meetings to the office of the DVCR or Research Integrity and Ethics Committee as requested.

9.3 The AEC will provide an annual report to the DVCR/RIEC that will contain a summary account of:
   - the number of research and/or teaching proposals received, reviewed, approved and rejected;
   - any complaints received from either researchers or teachers about the conduct of the AEC or from participants or others about the conduct of research and/or teaching approved by the AEC;
   - any changes in membership of the AEC;
   - any changes in the procedures used for the performance of its functions; and
   - any changes in staffing levels and personnel who provide administrative support to the AEC.

9.4 The annual report to the DVCR/RIEC will also include an evaluation of the performance of the AEC identifying any factors, including the level of administrative support that has affected or may affect the integrity and efficiency of the AEC’s performance.

9.5 The Chair of the AEC will review and approve any reports of activities of the AEC, whether to the University of Tasmania or to the NHMRC.

9.6 The AEC, through the Chair, may at any time bring to the attention of the institution any issues of significant concern that merit prompt consideration and attention.

10 AEC Executive

10.1 If established, an AEC Executive:
   - must include the chairperson and at least one member from Category C or D (Clause 2.2.4) and the University of Tasmania’s Veterinarian.
   - may be delegated to approve minor amendments to approved projects or activities, for ratification at the next AEC meeting. A minor amendment may include a change to an approved project or activity where the proposed change is not likely to cause harm to the animals, including pain and distress
   - must not approve new applications.
11 Meetings
11.1 The AEC will meet each month and will publish the dates of its meetings and submission closing dates for applications.

11.2 Decisions at meetings must be made following an exchange of opinions from each of the members who constitute the minimum membership, whether at a face to face meeting, by teleconference or videoconference.

11.3 The AEC will endeavour to reach decisions by general agreement, which need not involve unanimity.

11.4 The AEC will record decisions about approval, amendment or rejection of proposals in written or electronic form, with reasons for those decisions linked to the relevant sections, chapters or paragraphs of the Code.

12 Procedures
The AEC shall establish, implement, document and notify the DVCR/RIEC of its working procedures concerning:

- Role of the Executive Officer
- Frequency of meetings
- Attendance at meetings
- Conduct and structure of meetings and deliberations
- Preparation of agendas and minutes
- Timely distribution of papers prior to meetings
- Presentation of applications for ethical review
- Timely consideration and review of applications
- Identifying, declaring and managing conflicts of interest
- Protection of confidentiality of the content of protocols and of committee proceedings
- Communicating, informally and formally, with researchers and teachers,
- Methods of decision-making
- Prompt notification of decisions
- Record keeping
- Reporting and handling of adverse occurrences
- Receiving and handling of complaints
- Advising institution(s) or organisation(s) of decisions to withdraw ethical approval of a research and/or teaching project
- Attendance of people other than members or researchers and or teachers as observers.

13 Revision date
These terms of reference shall be reviewed every 2 years.