

University of Tasmania Animal Ethics Committee

Terms of Reference

Responsible Officer	Manager – Research Ethics Unit
Approved by	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Approved and commenced	7 th June 2021
Review by	7 th June 2023
Relevant Legislation, Ordinance, Rule and/or Governance Level Principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Policy • Research Ethics Procedure • Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes • Animal Welfare Act 1993 (Tas) • Veterinary Surgeons Act 1987 (Tas)
Responsible Organisational Unit	Research Ethics Unit

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1. Establishment

- 1.1. The University of Tasmania (“the University”) establishes the University of Tasmania Animal Ethics Committee (the “AEC”) under Section 4.2 of the Research Ethics Procedure.
- 1.2. The AEC is established and functions in accordance with the principles outlined in the *Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* (“the Code”) and any licences granted under s.30 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* (Tas) or equivalent legislation of other Australian states or territories.

2. Responsibilities and Functions

- 2.1. The AEC will review proposed activities involving the care and use of animals, specifically non-human vertebrates and cephalopods, for scientific purposes (“animal use”), which is undertaken under the auspices of the University, and either approve or not approve the commencement of such care and use as the case may be.
- 2.2. The AEC will only approve such applications which are ethically acceptable and demonstrate respect for animals, which will be determined by judgement of the members of the AEC based on the governing principles of the Code (s.1.1).
- 2.3. The AEC will make decisions on animal use as promptly as possible.
- 2.4. The AEC will maintain a register of all animal holding, experimentation, transportation and breeding facilities which operate under the auspices of the University, and inspect such facilities from time to time.
- 2.5. The AEC will ensure it is sufficiently informed on all aspects of the proposed animal use before deciding whether a proposal is approved or not approved.
- 2.6. The AEC is responsible for ensuring that animal use:
 - 2.6.1. is designed in accordance with the principles of the Code, the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* (Tas) and any other relevant national codes of conduct or legislation;
 - 2.6.2. appropriately balances the potential effects on the wellbeing of the animals involved with the potential benefits;
 - 2.6.3. is justified based on provision of sufficient evidence by those persons undertaking the proposal. Such evidence must demonstrate:
 - 2.6.3.1. the project has scientific or educational merit, and has potential benefit for humans, animals or the environment;
 - 2.6.3.2. the use of animals is essential to achieve the stated aims, and suitable alternatives to replace the use of animals to achieve the stated aims are not available;
 - 2.6.3.3. the project involves the minimum number of animals required to obtain valid data, and
 - 2.6.3.4. the project involves the minimum adverse impact on the wellbeing of the animals involved relative to the scientific method employed;
 - 2.6.4. is conducted by persons who the AEC believes are either adequately experienced,

- qualified or supervised;
- 2.6.5. is conducted in a manner which conforms to any proposal which has been approved by the AEC. Oversight or monitoring of conduct may be delegated to an independent body (for example, a subcommittee of the AEC) at the discretion of the AEC.
- 2.7. The AEC will document and implement, or accept and implement documented procedures published by the University or an external source for:
- 2.7.1. managing conflicts of interest from AEC members;
 - 2.7.2. the role and function of Category B members, as defined in Section 3.1, to support a culture of ethical conduct outside of the application review process;
 - 2.7.3. monitoring animal use, including monitoring of activities associated with the care and management of animals in facilities and any procedures applicable to breeding programs integral to the maintenance of an animal line;
 - 2.7.4. handling non-compliance, unexpected adverse events and complaints regarding animal use;
 - 2.7.5. the format and presentation of animal use proposals for review;
 - 2.7.6. ensuring the AEC is accountable for demonstrating fulfilment of the functions of an AEC as defined in Chapter 2.3 of the Code, and
 - 2.7.7. committee recordkeeping, confidentiality and operational guidelines.
- 2.8. The AEC will either assume or appropriately delegate any responsibilities within the procedures it documents or accepts.
- 2.9. The AEC will review all approved projects and activities annually. Projects and activities must conform to their approved terms and conditions to be granted approval to continue.
- 2.10. The AEC may accept the findings of other fully constituted and registered Animal Ethics Committees in Australia at the discretion of the chairperson.
- 2.11. The AEC will provide advice and feedback to University staff and students conducting, or proposing to conduct animal use on the requirements of the Code, and promote a culture of ethical conduct at the University.
- 2.12. To enable the AEC to fulfil its roles and perform its functions, it may form or appoint such subcommittees as it considers necessary.
- 2.13. The AEC will report on its operations to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) annually.

3. Membership and Meetings

- 3.1. The AEC be composed of at least four members of the following categories, ideally with an even gender balance:
- 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;
 - 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;

- 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, and
 - 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.
- 3.2. Quorum consists of at least four members from the categories outlined in 3.1. Should more than four members be present at a meeting, at least one third of the members must be from Categories C and D for the meeting to be quorate.
 - 3.3. Casual employees of the University may fill Category C and D positions if they have not undertaken any work for the University during the payroll cycle in which a meeting falls.
 - 3.4. Members of the AEC whom are also employees of the University of Tasmania will ordinarily be academic staff members, and will attend meetings as required and perform the responsibilities listed in Section 6 within the portion of their workload allocated to service functions. For the avoidance of doubt, no members will be remunerated directly for their appointment as a member.
 - 3.5. The Manager – Research Ethics Unit (“the Manager”) will also appoint at least one member to serve as Chairperson, and at least one member to serve as Deputy Chairperson, on such terms and conditions as the Manager determines. Ordinarily, the Deputy Chairperson will also lead and control meetings of the AEC in the absence of the Chairperson.
 - 3.6. For the purposes of a meeting of the AEC, no member may fill more than one of the categories listed in 3.1, although members may be selected from a pool of inducted members in each category.
 - 3.7. Other members may be added to the AEC at the discretion of the Chairperson or the Manager to ensure sufficient expertise is present to fulfil the responsibilities and functions of the AEC.
 - 3.8. Meetings will be held at a frequency determined by the Manager, and may be in-person, or via videoconference.
- 4. Decision making**
- 4.1. Decisions at meetings will be made following an exchange of views from those members who comprise the minimum membership.
 - 4.2. Decisions of the AEC will be made by general agreement, and need not involve unanimity of members’ opinions.
 - 4.3. The AEC will document minutes of every meeting which capture details of all decisions made by the committee, and include reasons for those decisions where relevant.
 - 4.4. The AEC will review and endorse reports on the function of the committee as prepared for external regulatory agencies or funding bodies.

5.Appointments

- 5.1. The University of Tasmania, via the Manager, 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. In ordinary circumstances:
 - 5.1.1. open and transparent processes will be adopted for the advertisement of membership opportunities and making appointments of members;
 - 5.1.2. members will be appointed by the Manager for a nominal term of two years, which may be extended by negotiation;
 - 5.1.3. members will be provided with an assurance of legal protection for liabilities which may arise in the course of bona fide conduct of their duties as a member;
 - 5.1.4. members who are absent from three consecutive meetings without approval of the Chairperson or Manager may have their AEC membership terminated;
 - 5.1.5. the appointment of any member may be terminated if the Chairperson or Manager determines that it is necessary for the proper and effective functioning of the AEC;
 - 5.1.6. members may resign their membership by written notice to the Manager and Chairperson;
 - 5.1.7. in the short term-term absence of a member, a proxy may be appointed in consultation with Chairperson as a temporary replacement, and
 - 5.1.8. new members will be provided with an induction and orientation to the functions of the AEC, and offered the opportunity of mentoring from an existing member.

6. Members Responsibilities

- 6.1. Each member must demonstrate a working knowledge of the Code and familiarity with other relevant guidelines or legislation.
- 6.2. Each member is responsible for deciding whether a proposal submitted to the AEC meets the requirements of the Code and is ethically acceptable.
- 6.3. Each member must:
 - 6.3.1. disclose any actual, perceived, and potential conflicts of interest that may affect their unbiased conduct and maintain impartiality during their membership;
 - 6.3.2. protect the confidentiality of the content of applications and deliberations of the AEC, and
 - 6.3.3. attend AEC meetings as scheduled.
- 6.4. Members who are not staff members of the University may be offered reimbursement of expenses incurred through attendance at meetings up to a maximum value as determined by the Manager.
- 6.5. In addition to the responsibilities listed in Sections 5.1-5.4, the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson(s) will have the following responsibilities:
 - 6.5.1. ensure that committee decisions are informed by an exchange of views from those members who comprise the minimum membership;
 - 6.5.2. facilitate the expression of opinion from all members, identify points of agreement

and of disagreement, and judge when a sufficient degree of agreement (which need not be unanimous) has been reached to make a decision, and

- 6.5.3. seek advice from non-member experts to assist in the review of animal use proposals where necessary.

7.Accountability

7.1. Under the terms of the University’s Legal Compliance Framework, as endorsed by the University’s Audit and Risk Committee and updated from time to time, the Code is a Tier 3 compliance risk. Accountability for compliance with the Code is apportioned as follows, with definitions of each responsibility level outlined in the Legal Compliance Framework:

7.1.1. Compliance Owner: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)

7.1.2. Delegate 1: Executive Director (Research Operations)

7.1.3. Delegate 2: Manager – Research Ethics Unit

7.1.4. Specialist Officer 1: AEC Chairperson

7.1.5. Specialist Officer 2: University Veterinarians

7.1.6. Specialist Officer 3: Head – Animal Services

7.2. Researchers have responsibility for the ethical design and conduct of research. For the avoidance of doubt, researchers are required to provide evidence of the ethical design and merit of their application in a format determined by the AEC. Researchers must ensure respect for animals underpins all actions involving the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

7.3. The AEC has responsibility for the ethical review of research, and for applying the principles contained in the Code during the conduct of such review.

7.4. The University has responsibility to ensure that ethical review of research occurs in accordance with the principles of the Code, and that the AEC is constituted and operated in an impartial manner without the application of influence towards ethical review outcomes.

8.Versioning

These terms of reference shall be reviewed every two years.

Former Version(s)	Version 1, 4 January 2019 (approved 19 August 2019)
Current Version	Version 2, drafted 7 May 2021.