

# THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

## ANIMAL ETHICS COMMITTEES

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

An Animal Ethics Committee's composition, terms of reference, functions and responsibilities and method of operation must conform to the requirements of the current *Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* ("the Code"), the Victorian *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* ("the Act"), and the Victorian *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2019* ("the Regulations").

#### 1. Membership

- 1.1. The Committee must comprise at least four persons, including a separate person appointed to each of the following categories in accordance with the requirements of the Code:
  - (i) **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 activities of the University. Veterinarians who lack this experience must familiarise themselves with the biology and clinical characteristics of the species of animals used;
  - (ii) **Category B:** a suitably qualified person with substantial and recent experience in the use of animals in scientific or teaching activities. This must include possession of a higher degree in research or equivalent experience;
  - (iii) **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 University, 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 nomination by, such an organisation; and
  - (iv) **Category D:** a person not employed by or otherwise associated with the University 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.
- 1.2 In addition to the prescribed membership Categories A to D, a person responsible for the routine care of animals from within the University shall be invited to meetings of the Committee.

- 1.3 To assist the Committee to function effectively, the University may appoint as members, people with skills and background of value to the Committee. These members may be additional to the members required by Categories A to D.
- 1.4 If the Committee has more than four members, Categories C and D together must represent at least one-third of the AEC membership.
- 1.5 An Animal Welfare Officer shall be invited to meetings of the Committee.
- 1.6 Category B members are nominated by the Nominated Person of the Scientific Procedures Premises Licence.
- 1.7 Appointments are made by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) or nominee and are effective for the period of 1 January to 31 December in any given year. Vacancies are filled on a casual basis for the remainder of a position's normal period of appointment to 31 December in any given year. Members are eligible for re-appointment on an annual basis at the discretion of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) or nominee.
- 1.8 Membership must be reported to and endorsed by The University of Melbourne Animal Welfare and Ethics Committee.
- 1.9 Members are required to acknowledge in writing their acceptance of the terms of reference of the AEC and any requirements for confidentiality and mandated training.
- 1.10 Members must declare any conflicts of interest before any business pertaining to a particular interest is considered by the Committee. The affected member(s) must absent themselves from any decision pertaining to their particular conflict of interest and, albeit at the Committee's discretion, shall ordinarily not be present at a meeting when any such decision is determined.

## **2. Chairperson**

- 2.1 A Chairperson is appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research). The Chairperson may be an additional appointment to Category A to D members.

## **3. Animal Ethics Committee and Institutional Accountability**

- 3.1 The Committee reports to the University of Melbourne Animal Welfare and Ethics Committee (AWEC). Through AWEC and the University of Melbourne Research Ethics and Integrity Strategy Committee (REISC), the Committee is accountable to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).
- 3.2 The Committee must submit a written report on its operations at least annually to the Licence Nominee who acts for the University. (The Code, Clause 2.3.28).

#### **4. Functions and responsibilities**

- 4.1 To ensure, on behalf of the University, that all activities relating to the care and use of animals are conducted in compliance with the Code (The Code, Clause 2.3.1).
- 4.2 To report to The University of Melbourne Animal Welfare and Ethics Committee (AWEC), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and regulatory authorities as required.
- 4.3 To review applications for projects related to the use of animals for scientific purposes and approve only those projects that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code (The Code, Clause 2.3.2 [i]). The committee may withdraw approval for any project or authorise the emergency treatment or euthanasia of any animal within its sphere of authority.
- 4.4 To 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 Code (The Code, Clause 2.3.2 [II])
- 4.5 To conduct follow-up review of approved projects and activities, and allow the continuation of approval for only those projects and activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code (The Code, Clause 2.3.2 [III])
- 4.6 To monitor the care and use of animals, including housing conditions, practices and procedures involved in the care of animals in facilities (The Code, Clause 2.3.2 [iv])
- 4.7 To take appropriate actions regarding unexpected adverse events (The Code, Clause 2.3.2 [v])
- 4.8 To take appropriate actions regarding non-compliance (The Code, Clause 2.3.2 [vi])
- 4.9 To approve guidelines for the care and use of animals on behalf of the University (The Code, Clause 2.3.2 [vii])
- 4.10 To provide advice and recommendations to the University (The Code, Clause 2.3.2 [viii]). This is achieved by discussing and making recommendations to the AWEC on any aspect needed to ensure that the standards of the Code and the Act and Regulations are maintained. This includes examination and comment on all University plans and policies, within its sphere of authority, which may affect the welfare of animals used for scientific purposes.
- 4.11 To report on its operations to the University (The Code, Clause 2.3.2 [ix])
- 4.12 To determine, based on information provided in the Animal Ethics Committee application form, that the research and teaching personnel are appropriately qualified to perform animal experiments and that relevant legislative and regulatory requirements, are adhered to.

- 4.13 To ensure that a record of proposals and projects is maintained and available for review by regulatory authorities.
- 4.14 To require accurate daily records of all animals used for scientific purposes held in the faculty/department(s), including any instructions for special care that may be necessary, are maintained.

## **5. Method of operation**

- 5.1 Committees shall meet at least quarterly.
- 5.2 Minutes shall be maintained by the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity and provided to the AWEC, as required (The Code, Clause 2.3.30).
- 5.3 The Committee is required to provide a written report to the AWEC on its activities at least annually in accordance with the Code.
- 5.4 The Committee may establish an Executive that must include the chairperson and at least one member from Category C or D (The Code, Clause 2.2.23 [i]).
- 5.5 The Executive may approve minor modifications to approved projects or activities and deal with emergencies. The Executive must not approve new applications. Any decisions made by the Executive must be ratified the next AEC meeting (The Code, Clauses 2.2.23 [ii], [iii]).
- 5.6 The AWEC expects that day-to-day responsibility for ensuring that high standards of animal care are maintained will rest with the Nominated Person of the Scientific Procedures Premises Licence(s). A report on the animal facilities should be made to each meeting of the Committee and the animal facilities should be available for inspection by the Committee at the time of each meeting. A formal inspection by the Committee of all animal facilities and laboratory areas from within the relevant Scientific Procedures Premises Licence(s) must be conducted at least once a year.
- 5.7 All members must have ready access to the faculty/department(s) animal facilities at any reasonable time during the year and to experiments performed within the relevant department. Such access must be arranged through the Chairperson of the Committee or nominee.