

University of Tasmania Animal Ethics Committee

Terms of Reference

Responsible Officer	Manager – Research Ethics Unit
Approved by	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Approved and commenced	14 September 2022
Amendment incorporated	31 October 2023
Amendment Approved	7 November 2023
Review by	November 2025
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 primary responsibility of the AEC is 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.
- 2.2. The AEC will review proposed activities involving the care and use of animals (including breeding for scientific purposes), specifically non-human vertebrates and cephalopods, 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.
- 2.3. 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.
- 2.4. The AEC will only approve such applications which are ethically acceptable, conform to the requirements of the Code, and demonstrate respect for the care and use of animals, which will be determined by the judgement of AEC members based on the governing principles of the Code (s.1.1) and institutional accountability.
- 2.5. The AEC will make decisions on proposed activities involving animal use as promptly as possible and ensure that appropriate monitoring and reporting are undertaken for all proposed activities.
- 2.6. The AEC will take appropriate actions regarding non-compliance, unexpected adverse events and complaints involving animal use.
- 2.7. The AEC will maintain a register of all facilities used for the holding, experimentation, transportation, and breeding of animals which operate under the auspices of the University and inspect such facilities as required (normally once a year unless otherwise stipulated) For a new facility to be able to operate under the auspices of the University, the facility must first be approved by the AEC.
- 2.8. The AEC is responsible for ensuring that proposed activities involving animal use:
 - 2.8.1. are 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.
 - 2.8.2. appropriately balance the potential impacts on the welfare of the animals involved with any potential benefits.
 - 2.8.3. are justified based on the provision of sufficient evidence by those persons undertaking the proposed activities. Such evidence must demonstrate:
 - 2.8.3.1. the project has scientific or educational merit, and has potential benefit for

- humans, animals or the environment;
 - 2.8.3.2. 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;
 - 2.8.3.3. the project involves the minimum number of animals required to obtain valid data, and
 - 2.8.3.4. the project involves the minimum adverse impact on the welfare of the animals involved relative to the scientific method employed.
 - 2.8.4. are conducted by persons who the AEC believes understand their responsibilities and the requirements of the Code and are adequately experienced or qualified;
 - 2.8.5. include the use of guidelines for the care and use of animals as approved by the AEC on behalf of the University. Oversight or monitoring of conduct may be delegated to an independent body at the discretion of the AEC.
- 2.9. The AEC will document and implement, or accept and implement, documented procedures published by the University or an external source for:
- 2.9.1. managing conflicts of interest involving AEC members;
 - 2.9.2. 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;
 - 2.9.3. 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;
 - 2.9.4. handling non-compliance, unexpected adverse events and complaints regarding animal use;
 - 2.9.5. the format, presentation and review of proposed activities for animal use;
 - 2.9.6. ensuring that the AEC is accountable for demonstrating fulfilment of the functions of an AEC as defined in Chapter 2.3 of the Code, and
 - 2.9.7. committee recordkeeping, confidentiality, and operational guidelines.
- 2.10. The AEC will either assume or appropriately delegate any responsibilities within the procedures it documents or accepts.
- 2.11. 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.
- 2.12. The AEC may accept the findings of other fully constituted and registered Animal Ethics Committees in Australia at the discretion of the Chairperson(s).
- 2.13. The AEC will provide advice and recommendations to the University on the requirements of the Code, including to University staff and students conducting or proposing to conduct activities involving animal use, and to institutional management, and promote a culture of ethical conduct at the University.

2.14. To enable the AEC to fulfil its roles and perform its functions, the AEC may form or appoint such subcommittees as considered necessary.

2.15. 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:

CHAIRPERSON. A chairperson, when possible, should hold a senior position within the University. The chairperson is appointed in addition to Category A to D members;

- 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.
- E. a person responsible for the routine care of animals within the institution. This category is strongly recommended for all AECs at institutions with holding or breeding facilities, but not mandated by the Code.

3.2. Quorum consists of at least the Chairperson plus four members from the categories (A-D) outlined in 3.1. Should more than four members be present at a meeting, at least one-third of the Category A-D members must be from Categories C and D for the meeting to be quorate.

3.3. Members of the AEC who are also employees of the University 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 who are employees of the University will be remunerated directly for their appointment as a member.

3.4. The Chairperson (s) reports to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and receives broad direction from the Manager – Research Ethics Unit ("the Manager").

3.5. 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.

3.6. Other members may be added to the AEC at the discretion of the Chairperson(s) or the

Manager to ensure sufficient expertise is present to fulfil the responsibilities and functions of the AEC.

- 3.7. Meetings will be held at a frequency determined by the Manager, and may be in-person, or via videoconference.
- 3.8. Australian Antarctic Division (AAD). Since 2023, the university and the AAD have signed a memorandum of understanding in which the University will serve as the AEC for AAD projects, and the AAD will provide two representatives to the AEC. AAD representatives do not hold a member category and are not required by the Code.
- 3.9. The Manager has the option to participate in the meeting as an observer, without actively engaging in discussions or offering opinions, unless otherwise requested by the AEC members. Attending the meetings will enable the Manager to check for consistency and continuity between different AEC meetings.

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, 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. the Manager will appoint at least one member to serve as Chairperson, on such terms and conditions as the Manager determines;
 - 5.1.3. members (including AAD representatives) will be appointed by the Manager for a nominal term of two years, which may be extended by negotiation;
 - 5.1.4. 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;
 - 5.1.5. members who are absent from three consecutive meetings without the approval of the Chairperson(s) or Manager may have their AEC membership terminated;
 - 5.1.6. the appointment of any member may be terminated if the Chairperson(s) or Manager determines that it is necessary for the proper and effective functioning of

the AEC. This includes members who fail to meet appointment criteria (such as continued nonattendance to meetings or lack of contribution at meetings) or who do not adhere to the University Behaviour Procedure;

- 5.1.7. members may resign their membership by written notice to the Manager and Chairperson(s);
- 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 6.1-6.4, the 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(s)
 - 7.1.5. Specialist Officer 2: University Veterinarian(s)
 - 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.
- 7.5. In fulfilment of its obligations under the Code, the university must conduct an annual review and assessment of the operation of the AEC to ensure that it is effective and consistent with the Code and institutional policies (2.2.37). This report is prepared by the REU and must be endorsed by the AEC Chairperson and DVCR.

8. Versioning

These terms of reference shall be reviewed every two years.

Former Version(s)	Version 1, 4 January 2019 (approved 19 August 2019); Version 2, drafted 7 May 2021 (approved 7 June 2021); Version 3 drafted 25 August 2022 (approved 14 September 2022).
Current Version	Version 4, drafted 25 October 2023 (approved 7 November 2023).