

Animal Ethics - Governing Policy

1. Purpose of policy

1.1 The purpose of this policy and its associated procedure is to facilitate the design and conduct of excellent research and teaching that adheres to the national standards for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. It aims to assist researchers, teachers, animal carers and associated technical staff to consider their ethical responsibilities with regards to the design and conduct of research or teaching activities, to guide investigators in the correct ethical review pathway, to inform the University community of institutional responsibilities regarding animal ethics, and to articulate the responsibilities of those involved in the ethical review and related protocols.

2. Policy scope and application

2.1 This policy applies to all staff and students, visiting academics, volunteers and other personnel who conduct research or teaching activities that involve the care and use of animals for scientific purposes under the auspices of the University. It also applies to the USC Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) and all staff involved in the ethical review of animal research and teaching activities and related protocols.

3. Definitions

Please refer to the University's Glossary of Terms for policies and procedures. Terms and definitions identified below are specific to this policy and are critical to its effectiveness.

Animal – any live non-human vertebrates (that is fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals encompassing domestic animals, purpose-bred animals, livestock, wildlife) and cephalopods. It includes animals at earlier stages of their development, i.e. embryonic, foetal and larval forms that have the potential to experience pain or distress based on evidence of neurobiological development.

Animal carer: any person involved in the care of animals that are used for scientific purposes, including during their acquisition, transport, breeding, housing and husbandry.

The Act: the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 (Qld)*.

The Animal Code: the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) *Australian Code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*.

The Code: the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*.

Ethical review: the review of proposed research or teaching activities with regards to its adherence to the *Australian Code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*.

Research: as defined in the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*.

Scientific purposes: all activities conducted with the aim of acquiring, developing or demonstrating knowledge or techniques in all areas of science, including teaching, field trials, environmental studies, research (including the creation and breeding of a new animal line where the impact on animal wellbeing is unknown or uncertain), diagnosis, product testing and the production of biological products.

AEC: the University of the Sunshine Coast Animal Ethics Committee.

4. Policy statement

4.1 This policy is to promote the highest ethical and welfare standards in the University's animal research and teaching activities. It is an important element of the implementation of and compliance with the Animal Code, the Act and the Code.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Council

RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

DESIGNATED OFFICER

Director, Office of Research

FIRST APPROVED

24 June 2014

LAST AMENDED

22 April 2022

REVIEW DATE

22 April 2027

STATUS

Active

5. Principles

5.1 All animal research and teaching activities must be designed with an awareness of the principles outlined by the Code, the Act, the Animal Code and any other state or territory regulations that may be apply.

5.2 Animals must only be used for scientific purposes when their use is essential to one or more of the following:

- (a) obtaining and establishing significant information relevant to the understanding of humans and/or animals;
- (b) the maintenance and improvement of human and/or animal health and welfare;
- (c) the improvement of animal management or production;
- (d) obtaining and establishing significant information relevant to the understanding, maintenance or improvement of the natural environment; and
- (e) the achievement of educational objectives in science, as specified in the relevant curriculum or competency requirements.

5.3 Researchers and teachers have a responsibility to ensure that respect for animals underpins all decisions and actions involving the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, which must be demonstrated by the following governing principles and ethical framework:

- (a) use animals only when justified;
- (b) support the wellbeing of the animals involved;
- (c) avoid or minimise harm, including pain and distress, to animals;
- (d) apply high standards of scientific integrity;
- (e) apply Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (the 3Rs) at all stages of animal care and use; and
- (f) know and accept one's responsibilities.

5.4 The review processes as outlined in Animal Ethics - Procedures only apply to animals as defined in this policy and the Animal Code. However, emerging evidence about the ability of animals to experience pain and distress needs to be considered by animal researchers and teachers in the design and conduct of their projects.

5.5. Institutional responsibilities

5.5.1 In accordance with section 2.1.2 of the Animal Code, the University has a responsibility to:

- (a) ensure, through the operation of an AEC, that all activities involving the care and use of animals comply with the Animal Code;
- (b) promote compliance with the Animal Code;
- (c) ensure and support the effective operation of the AEC;
- (d) identify clear lines of responsibility, communication and accountability;
- (e) ensure that all people involved in the care and use of animals understand their responsibilities and the requirements of the Animal Code, have the necessary skills and knowledge, and have access to appropriate educational programs and resources; and
- (f) regularly monitor and review the institution's compliance with the Animal Code.

5.6. Ethical review

5.6.1 All animal research and teaching proposals must be submitted to the Office of Research for review via one of the ethical review pathways outlined in Animal Ethics - Procedures.

5.6.2 Research or teaching activities must not commence until approval via one of the ethical review pathways has been granted in writing.

5.6.3 All ethical review is to be timely, efficient and transparent. The review must be based upon the content of the Animal Code and the qualifying criteria and processes outlined above and in detail in the Animal Ethics - Procedures.

5.6.4 The conduct of the review should be collegiate, with the aim of facilitating research.

5.6.5 Where clarification, elaboration, modification, or a major change in approach is required, this should be in line with the Animal Code and/or other relevant guides/legislation or University policy documents, and helpful guidance provided as to useful approaches.

5.6.6 Activities involving more than one (1) AEC require an agreement between AECs to be in place prior to commencement of the research or teaching activity.

5.6.7 Projects partly or wholly conducted under the auspices of the University in other countries must comply with the governing principles of the Animal Code, provided that such compliance does not breach relevant local legislation. Projects must not be conducted in other countries as a mechanism of avoiding compliance with Australian standards.

5.6.8 Chief investigators (CIs) must be University staff members. Non-UniSC staff members will only be considered as CIs in the case of prior review as outlined in Animal Ethics - Procedures.

5.7. Ethical conduct of research

5.7.1 The conduct of research and teaching activities involving the care and use of animals for scientific purposes must comply with the approved protocol and all standard and specific conditions.

5.7.2 The AEC monitors compliance by reviewing progress reports for all approved projects and by any other means deemed necessary or appropriate, such as random audits (which may involve inspection of animals and associated records used in research and teaching activities).

5.7.3 All members of a research team have shared responsibility for the ethical and humane use of animals and must be aware of and satisfied with the degree to which the conduct of the activity meets legislative requirements and University policy.

5.7.4 The CI or teacher in charge has ultimate responsibility for the care and use of animals and is responsible for ensuring that all personnel involved are competent, receive appropriate training for the procedures they perform, and are adequately supervised by a competent person.

5.8. Reporting

5.8.1 The AEC meeting summaries are provided to Research Committee and Academic Board following each ethics committee meeting. The AEC Chairperson may report separately on other ethics matters as deemed relevant.

5.8.2 The AEC annual report is provided to Research Committee, Academic Board and the Audit and Risk Management Committee as per the AEC Terms of Reference. The AEC Chairperson may be invited to attend Research Committee to present the annual report.

6. Authorities/Responsibilities

6.1 The following authorities/responsibilities are delegated under this policy:

| ACTIVITY | UNIVERSITY OFFICER/COMMITTEE |
|---|---|
| Review and determine whether to approve all animal research and teaching applications. Monitors compliance by reviewing progress reports for all approved projects and by any other means deemed necessary or appropriate. | Animal Ethics Committee |
| Shared responsibility for the ethical and humane use of animals and must be aware of and satisfied with the degree to which the conduct of the activity meets legislative requirements and University policy. | Members of the research team |
| Ultimate responsibility for the care and use of animals and is responsible for ensuring that all personnel involved are competent, receive appropriate training for the procedures they perform, and are adequately supervised by a competent person. | Chief Investigator or teacher in charge |

END

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Animal Ethics - Procedures
- Managing and Investigating Breaches of Responsible Research Conduct - Procedures
- Resolution of Complaints (Staff) - Guidelines
- Responsible Research Conduct - Governing Policy
- Risk Management - Governing Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct - Governing Policy
- Student Conduct - Governing Policy

LINKED DOCUMENTS

- Animal Ethics - Procedures

RELATED LEGISLATION / STANDARDS

- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)
- Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 (Qld)
- Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th edition (2013)