
Animal Care Committee (ACC) Terms of Reference

Overview

Concordia University of Edmonton (CUE) holds that academic integrity and trust are vital to the responsible conduct of research and teaching practices. CUE is committed to upholding the ethical, humane use, and responsible care of animals in research, teaching and testing. The use of animals in research, teaching and testing is a privilege, not a right. Animals are used only for valid scientific studies with a reasonable expectation of obtaining knowledge for the potential benefit of people and/or animals. CUE is committed to ensuring the highest possible standards in the care, well-being, quality of life and use of animals in accordance with applicable laws, the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) guidelines and policy statements, and the *Tri-Agency Agreement on the Administration of Agency Grants and Awards by Research Institutions*.

In accordance with CCAC requirements and applicable laws, ethics approval is required before the use of animals¹ in research, teaching, or testing. A dynamic and collaborative peer review process is vital to our animal care and use program. CUE recognizes that the members of the animal care committee (ACC) and their work are critical, as they support and advocate for scientific excellence, as well as ethical and humane use of animals, in accordance with CCAC requirements and applicable laws.

The Principal Investigator (PI) | Director | Course Instructor (“the applicant”), and the ACC share the responsibility of ensuring the ethical conduct of animal care and use, and to promote animal welfare consistent with CCAC requirements. Whether the requestor personally works with animals or not, they are responsible for the animal care and use performed by their staff and trainees.

Membership

The composition of the ACC conforms with the requirements outlined in the Canadian Council for Animal Care (CCAC) *Policy Statement: Terms of Reference for Animal Care Committees*^{2,3}.

1. ACC members are appointed for terms of no less than two years and no more than four years, renewable to a maximum of eight consecutive years of service, unless the appointment is *ex officio*. All members are first appointed to two years of service on the ACC. Staggering of membership is encouraged to ensure continuity of experience and knowledge to support uninterrupted flow of activities.
2. *Ex-officio* members of the ACC hold their membership for the period that they hold their relevant role at CUE.
3. The voting membership should, at minimum, include the following:
 - i. A minimum of two (2) faculty member representatives involved in animal-based activities experienced in animal care and use.

¹Animal is defined as any living non-human vertebrate and any living invertebrate of the class of *Cephalopoda*, including free-living and reproducing larval forms (outlined in [CUE's Animal Ethics Policy RH 1050](#)).

² https://ccac.ca/Documents/Standards/Policies/Terms_of_reference_for_ACC.pdf

³ https://ccac.ca/Documents/Standards/Policies/CCAC_FAQs_on_Terms_of_reference_for_animal_care_committees-June_2023.pdf



- ii. A minimum of two (2) faculty member representatives, not involved in animal-based activities, past or present.
 - iii. A veterinarian experienced in experimental animal care and use, who serves *ex-officio*.
 - iv. At least one community member not affiliated with CUE and not involved in animal use for research, teaching or testing⁴. Specifically, the community member cannot be a former employee of CUE, cannot have real/perceived conflicts of interest, and cannot have past or current involvement in animal use in research. The community representative may serve more than 8 consecutive years, although CUE will make every effort to ensure new community members are brought on board, after a given member has served 8 consecutive years.
 - v. Technical staff representation as *ex-officio*, include facility managers, lab technicians, or biosafety|safety representative.
 - vi. Student representative involved in animal-based activities.
4. Additional voting members may also be added to support the objectives of CUE's ACC. For example, representation from collaborating institutions involved in animal-based activities may also be considered.
5. The non-voting membership includes:
- i. The ACC Coordinator (the institutional employee who provides advice and recommendations to ACC on animal use protocols, CCAC requirements, and ACC processes).
 - ii. The Scribe (the institutional employee who works with the ACC Coordinator and provides administrative support to the ACC).
6. The Chair of the ACC:
- i. is selected from among the current ACC faculty members not involved in animal-based activities, past or present (i.e.: ii above) by the Associate Vice-President, Research and Innovation (AVP-RI), who may choose to consult with the ACC.
 - ii. works with the ACC and Scribe to determine agenda and other documentation required for meetings, or other ACC activities.
 - iii. chairs the ACC meetings; encourages all members to participate in the discussion; only votes in case of a tie.
- together with the veterinarian and with support from the ACC Coordinator, the Chair shall provide an annual report on the activities of the ACC to the Provost and Vice-President Academic (P-VPA) and the AVP-RI
7. Members of the ACC, including community members, are not remunerated.

⁴ Refer to Q2: https://ccac.ca/Documents/Standards/Policies/CCAC_FAQs_on_Terms_of_reference_for_animal_care_committees-June_2023.pdf

Meetings

1. The ACC schedule runs annually, from July 1st to June 30th of the following year.
2. The ACC are scheduled to meet monthly, or as needed, ensuring a minimum of four meetings annually.
3. Quorum at meetings require a simply majority of voting members and must include the chair, the veterinarian, and one community member.
4. ACC members shall disclose any potential conflict of interest as soon as possible ahead of a meeting and recuse themselves from meetings or discussions about animal use protocols if they may have a conflict of interest.
5. Decisions are, to the extent possible, made by consensus. If consensus cannot be achieved, decisions must be supported by a simple majority of eligible voting members. In case of a tie, the Chair can vote to break the tie, otherwise the motion is defeated.
6. The Chair of the ACC and the veterinarian meet with the P-VPA and AVP-RI to present their annual report on the activities of the ACC.

Mandate

The ACC is established by the P-VPA, who delegates authority to the AVP-RI. The AVP-RI is responsible for the Office of Research and Innovation and its associated units, one of which is the Research Integrity Unit. Programs and services encompassing human and animal ethics (among others) are supported by the Research Integrity unit.

The mandate of the ACC is outlined as follows:

1. The ACC shall apply the principles adopted in the *Animal Ethics Policy* when reviewing and assessing an animal use application. The Committee should be aware of a range of approaches to promote the ethical conduct of animal use, and thus be willing to consider these alternatives and suggest them, as needed. The ACC may request input from the veterinarian, or other relevant sources (i.e.: Lab Manager), as necessary.
2. Ethics review will be based on fully detailed animal use applications submitted for review. The animal use applications will include the information defined in the *CCAC Guidelines on: Animal Use Protocol Review* and the *CCAC Policy Statement: Terms of Reference for Animal Care Committees* and other relevant CCAC policy and guideline documents.
3. The ACC shall function impartially, provide a fair and constructive review of an application, and provide reasoned and appropriately documented opinions and decisions. The ACC should make their decisions based on the ethical acceptability of animal use and compliance with CCAC requirements in an efficient and timely manner. All decisions are communicated in writing, either in print or by electronic means.
4. The ACC approves, requests modifications, or rejects any proposed or ongoing animal use for research, teaching, testing, or display at CUE.
5. The deliberations of the ACC are confidential into perpetuity.

6. The ACC conducts annual on-site reviews of any facilities or area in which animals are used, as outlined in approved applications. The ACC may develop alternatives to on-site reviews for research, teaching, or testing conducted in the field or at third-party facilities.
7. The ACC implements strategies and recommendations arising from post-approval monitoring activities, as required.
8. The ACC contributes to, and participates in, CCAC site visits and assessments, and other related assessments, as required.
9. The Chair of the ACC and the veterinarian, with support from the ACC Coordinator, shall provide an annual report on the activities of the ACC to the P-VPA and the AVP-RI.

Review Requirements

1. The ACC commits to reviews of animal use be done using an animal use protocol form that meets CCAC guidelines, including information regarding the Three Rs (replacement, reduction, and refinement alternatives) of animal use.
2. The ACC ensures that each research project has been found to have scientific merit.
3. The ACC reviews each proposal submitted for the use of animals in teaching only after it has received a pedagogical merit assessment through an independent peer review process.
4. The ACC evaluates animal use protocols and associated standard operating procedures (SOPs) in accordance with CCAC policies and guidelines.
5. Interim approvals may be permitted under some circumstances, where some flexibility is needed to allow some activities to begin before full ACC review; all applications for new protocols require full ACC review.
6. The ACC requires animal users to report within 48 hours any unanticipated problem or complication, as well as steps taken to address the issue(s).
7. The approval of new protocols, renewals, or amendments have a maximum period of twelve (12) months.
8. At the end of the approval period, the PI/Director is required to submit an annual report.
9. Renewals:
 - i. Where animal use requires ongoing ACC approval (i.e.: more than 12 months), it is the responsibility of the PI/Director to ensure that an annual report and application for renewal is made at least 2 months before the expiry date of the approval to permit review and incorporation of any changes required by the ACC before approval.
 - ii. A complete renewal, including a fully updated animal use application, must be submitted after three consecutive renewals, or when otherwise deemed necessary by the ACC.
 - iii. If the PI/Director does not provide an annual report by the approval expiry date, the protocol is closed, and no further animal work is allowed.

10. From time to time, approved animal use protocols may require an amendment to incorporate new procedures or design, new animal numbers or strains, changes in personnel and other changes to animal use.
 - i. Amendments to an approved animal use protocol must be completed and submitted. Regardless of the scope of the amendment(s) and the implications for animal care and use, the PI/Director must submit an amendment. Multiple changes and/or changes which are more likely to cause a change in animal welfare, will be subject to a higher level of scrutiny, and if changes are significant, the ACC may require the PI to submit a new animal use protocol.
 - ii. A minor amendment (e.g. a change in personnel, a small percentage increase in animals, a non-invasive procedure) may be approved by the Chair of the ACC in consultation with the Veterinarian and ACC Coordinator.
11. The ACC Coordinator liaises with other CUE personnel, as required, to ensure biosafety, hazardous materials, or other safety considerations are addressed prior to an application being sent to ACC for review and approval.
12. ACC meetings, including tours of facilities, and deliberations and decisions are documented in meeting minutes and correspondence.
13. ACC records and discussions are confidential, unless otherwise indicated.

Authority

1. The ACC and the AVP-RI have the authority to:
 - i. Stop any procedure, if deemed that unnecessary, unanticipated or unapproved distress or pain is being experienced by an animal.
 - ii. Stop the immediate use of animals which deviates from the approved use.
 - iii. Stop any animal use activity, whether for research, teaching or testing purposes, that was not reviewed and approved by the ACC.
 - iv. Have an animal euthanized if pain or distress caused to the animal is not part of the approved protocol and cannot be alleviated. This authority is delegated to the veterinarian, who has the authority to treat, remove from a study, or euthanize an animal if necessary, according to the Veterinarian's professional judgment. The veterinarian will attempt to contact the PI/Director before taking such action but has the authority to proceed if contact cannot be made.
2. The Chair of the ACC and the veterinarian must have access to all areas where animals are held or are being used, at all times.
3. The ACC Coordinator provides ACC members onboarding and training on the CCAC guidelines and policies, provincial and federal laws/requirements, and institutional policies and procedures.
4. With support from the ACC Coordinator, the ACC reviews and approves institutional policy(ies) and associated procedure(s) related to animal care, animal use, and experimentation for research, teaching, or testing.

Animal Care Committee Membership Composition

Role	Description	Term
Chair (Faculty Member)	Representative not involved in animal-based activities	TBD
Member	Veterinarian	TBD
Faculty Member	Representative involved in animal-based activities	TBD
Faculty Member	Representative involved in animal-based activities	TBD
Faculty Member	Representative not involved in animal-based activities	TBD
Member	Student representative involved in animal-based activities	TBD
Member	Community member not affiliated with CUE and is not involved in animal-based activities	TBD
Member	Lab Manager Safety Rep	<i>ex-officio</i>
ACC Coordinator	Supports the proper function of the ACC and assists ACC members fulfill their responsibilities. Also serves as the Research Security Rep.	<i>ex-officio</i>
Scribe	Supports the ACC Coordinator with administrative requirements (e.g. meeting agenda, minutes, etc.).	<i>ex-officio</i>