Membership, terms of reference and related matters

The composition, terms of reference, functions and responsibilities and method of operation of the UNSW Australia Animal Care and Ethics Committees (ACECs) have been established to conform to the requirements of the Animal Research Act 1985, the Animal Research Regulations 2010, and the NHMRC Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes – 8th Edition 2013.

1. Scope

The UNSW ACECs shall act in relation to:

- UNSW and its affiliated organisations including those for which Affiliation Agreements are in force with respect to matters related to the care and use of animals for scientific purposes and the role of the UNSW ACECs; and
- All research, teaching or other activity that involves the care and use of live animals as defined under the relevant Act and the Regulations.

In addition to the responsibilities accorded under the Act, the Regulations, Guidelines and the Affiliation Agreements, the UNSW ACECs shall provide advice to the Vice Chancellor of UNSW (or delegated officer) in relation to any animal use in the course of, or relevant to, teaching, research or other activity within UNSW or its affiliated organisations.

2. Definitions

**Animal**: any non-human vertebrate, including fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals and encompassing domestic animals, purpose-bred animals, livestock and wildlife. This includes animals at early stages in their development.

**Animal Care and Ethics Committees (ACECs)**: Animal Care and Ethics Committees constituted according to the terms of reference and membership determined in the Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (2013).

**Animal Research Authority**: issued by the UNSW ACECs for each research project prior to commencement and following project approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research). In accordance with the Animal Research Act, authorities can only be issued for a 12 month period and will need to be renewed annually during the life of any approved project that runs for more than 12 months.

**Animal Research Establishment**: a corporation which uses animals in research and teaching in NSW and is accredited as animal research establishment under the Animal Research Act 1985.
Animal Research Review Panel (ARRP): a statutory body created by the Animal Research Act 1985 (NSW) to participate in monitoring the self-regulatory process that was established within institutions by the Act.

Chief investigator: the person who takes responsibility for the conduct of the animal research according to the protocol issued by the UNSW Animal Research Authority in the role of ‘person with ultimate responsibility’ as defined in the Code.


DVC(R): Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) of UNSW.

Unexpected Adverse Event: an event that may have a negative impact on the wellbeing of animals and was not foreshadowed in the approved project or activity.

3. Terms of Reference

3.1 ACEC Terms of Reference

The UNSW ACECs are accountable to the governing body of the UNSW, the Council, through the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and the Vice-Chancellor.

The UNSW ACECs report to the DVC(R) by providing recommendations on reviewed applications. The ACEC Chairpersons will meet periodically with the DVC(R) on an annual basis as a minimum.

UNSW ACECs operate according to the following terms of reference to:

- review applications for projects and recommend for approval to the DVC(R) only those projects and proposed amendments to projects that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code, the Animal Research Act 1985 (NSW) and the Animal Research Regulation 2010 (NSW);

- 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 recommend for approval to the DVC(R) only those activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code, the Animal Research Act 1985 (NSW) and the Animal Research Regulation 2010 (NSW);

- conduct follow-up review of approved projects and activities, and recommend to the DVC(R) the continuation of approval for only those projects and activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code, the Animal Research Act 1985 (NSW) and the Animal Research Regulation 2010 (NSW);

- monitor the care and use of animals, including housing conditions, practices and procedures involved in the care of animals in facilities;

- take appropriate actions regarding adverse events, including the authorisation of emergency treatment or humane killing of animals;

- take appropriate actions regarding non-compliance by referring any possible breach of the UNSW Research Code of Conduct to the DVC(R) and recommend to the DVC(R) withdrawal, suspension or termination of approval for any project on identification of deviations from the approved protocol or adverse events;

- provide advice to the DVC(R) on draft and existing institutional animal care and ethics policies, procedures and guidelines and on the implementation for the university of new and revised codes and legislation updates affecting the conduct of animal research;
• provide advice to the university on the building or modification of animal facilities or areas adjacent to animal facilities in relation to animal welfare;

• contribute to the professional development of researchers, research trainees and the induction of new committee members;

• fulfil all agreed obligations to any other accredited institution for which they are providing ACEC purview; and

• report on their operations annually to the DVC(R) and the Council.

3.2 ACEC Membership and Appointment

UNSW ACECs have a membership that allows them to fulfil its terms of reference, with at least one third of the members from outside the university and including separate persons appointed to each of the following categories:

• Chairperson, with suitable experience, whose other responsibilities will not impair the ACEC’s capacity to carry out its obligations under the Code;

• 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 UNSW’s activities or the ability to acquire relevant knowledge;

• Category B: a suitably qualified person with substantial and recent experience in the use of animals for scientific purposes relevant to UNSW and the business of the ACEC. This must include possession of a higher degree in research or equivalent experience;

• 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 UNSW, 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 endorsement by, such an organisation; and

• Category D: a person not employed by or otherwise associated with UNSW 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 ACEC, and must not fit the requirements of any other category.

The Director of Animal Care will sit on the ACEC as a Category A member, and the Animal Care Officer will attend ACEC meetings in an ex-officio capacity. At any time, at least one person representing UNSW animal facility management should be present.

All ACEC members are formally appointed by the DVC(R). The term of membership is normally for three years, with the possibility to renew membership for one more term as decided by the DVC(R). As part of the nomination process potential members are requested to declare real and potential conflicts of interest and facts that may preclude them from the nominated category. External candidates are interviewed followed by background and referee checks under the direction of the Director RECS.

Memberships may be terminated by the DVC(R) at any time by providing not less than 24 hour notice in writing. Members may voluntarily retire during their appointment by providing not less than 24 hour notice in writing to the DVC(R). Members that are staff of UNSW may need to seek approval from their Head of School or Dean prior to submitting a notice of retirement.

The university offers remuneration and professional development for ACEC members as determined by the DVC(R) to allow members to fulfil their duties according to the Code and UNSW policies and
procedures. ACEC members are covered as Insured Persons under the university’s Professional Indemnity and Medical Malpractice policies.

Animal Research Ethics information at UNSW can be found at:
https://research.unsw.edu.au/research-ethics-and-compliance-support-recs

For support and suggestions towards the content of this document please contact:
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