COMPLETING YOUR ACEC APPLICATION

Applications are to be submitted for projects rather than for each experiment or separate procedure. Projects are normally approved for a maximum period of three years provided no significant modifications are made to the approved protocol. However, State legislation requires that all projects be reviewed by the ACEC on an annual basis. Researchers will be required to provide a brief, annual progress report for their projects. A complete application for renewal of a project must be submitted at the end of three years if it is to be continued.

After approval for the project is granted, the applicant must submit a request for modification regarding any substantive changes in the project. For example, substantive changes include a new species, different housing, different anaesthetic, a new drug, or a different behavioural test, particularly for pain.

Please answer all questions, even if only to indicate they are not applicable. As noted on the application form itself, incomplete applications will not be considered by the Committee.

Documents

Applicants are required to be familiar with the following documents. They can also be of help when completing the application. In addition, they must be readily available in your laboratory. Both ACEC and State inspectors can and will require you to present them.

- Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 7th edition 2004
- NSW Animal Research Act 1985
- UNSW Guide to Housing and Care of Laboratory Animals 1994

When completing the application, please feel free to add remarks or attach additional information/documents. The Committee recognises that there will be occasions when the application form does not fit the particular features of a project.

COMMENTS ON PARTICULAR QUESTIONS IN THE APPLICATION

A1: Title of Project. Where possible use "plain English". However, a more technically-phrased title that matches that of a grant application is also suitable.

A2: Name and Designation of Chief Investigator. The Chief Investigator must be an employee of UNSW and preferably a person with an academic appointment. Under NSW legislation, a Chief Investigator is the person who must take primary responsibility for the ethical conduct of the project. In brief, a Chief Investigator must adopt a "buck stops here" attitude. Ordinarily, the Chief Investigator is closely involved with a project, and there is no doubt about that person's responsibility. On some occasions, Chief Investigators have been only remotely involved with a project, but the ACEC discourages this practice.

Where students are using animals in a teaching and/or research program, then the Chief Investigator has responsibility to ensure that students carry out procedures and conduct themselves in an ethical manner. Acceptance of this responsibility is implicit when the application is signed and submitted.
A3: Conjoint appointments and collaborators. When submitting an application, the Chief Investigator has a duty to identify all interactions with other institutions relevant to that proposal. This question is aimed at ensuring appropriate oversight of the animals’ welfare when a single project is being conducted across more than one institution, especially if the animals are moved from one institution to the other.

A5 and A6: Proposed date of commencement and proposed date of completion.

Please make sure you submit your application so that it can be considered at a meeting at least one month before your starting date.

There has been an ongoing problem in coordinating the ACEC approval dates with the span of grant funding. Many researchers want approval to conduct initial studies to take to NHMRC interviews that occur in the year before a grant commences. Accordingly, it would be convenient if the ACEC could grant approval for four years rather than three years. Under current legislation, however, approval is formally allowed for only one year, but the State Government allows the ACECs to give approval for three years subject to annual review. Approvals beyond three years without a full renewal application are not permitted.

A7: External Funding
If you have applied for external funding or already have external funding for your project, one copy of the grant application (excluding budget pages) must be attached to your ethics application. Such submissions will be held by the Committee in strict confidence. All procedures described in your ethics application should accurately reflect the procedures used in your laboratory. The Committee recognises that, for previously funded projects, some procedures may have changed. If so, describe how they differ from those described in the grant application.

Committee members do not see the grant application. Accordingly, the grant application cannot be a substitute for an appropriate description of the project in the ACEC application. The Committee will not accept extracts from grant applications as part of the protocol. The details of the protocol must "stand alone" and not refer to other documents. Details must be provided in such a fashion that they can be understood by all members of the Committee.

B1: Aims of the Project
This section is crucial in assessing the scientific merit and the necessity of animal use. The level of details should fall between broad generalities, e.g. "this project will delineate the mechanisms of neural conduction as they pertain to Alzheimer’s disease" and an exposition of the intricacies of the project’s empirical and theoretical background.

B4: Sequence of Events
The Committees often have considerable difficulty in discerning the sequence of events that occurs to the animals, particularly when there are different groups of animals receiving different treatments. Accordingly, please list the procedures in sequence. Flow charts and other diagrams are very helpful to the Committee. If there are several groups of animals that receive different combinations of treatments, please list them in tabular form and include the number of animals in each group.

C4: Number of Animals
The number of animals should be adequate to achieve reliable results, either in terms of sufficient statistical power or in terms of replication across experiments. The ACEC recognises that some projects require many animals. Where a large number of animals is required, the applicant should take special care in C5 in showing how the number of animals relates
to the number of experimental and control conditions.

**C7: Animal Supplier**

Animals may only be obtained from the Biological Resources Centre (BRC) with an ACEC approval number. Animals must not be obtained from an external source unless the Supplier is a Registered Animal Supplier. If a registered supplier is not available, the ACEC Executive Member must be advised, and suitable arrangements will be made.

**C8: Free-Living Animals**

If a project involves the use of "Free-Living Animals" as defined by the Animal Research Act 1985, please complete form FLA1, available from the Grants Management Office/ethics webpage.

**J2. Re-use of Animals**

There is no direct prohibition against using animals that have been used in previous research. However, the NSW Animal Research Act and its Regulation require that proposals for re-use of animals be closely scrutinised. Re-use will be authorised when it reduces the number of animals bred for research and when the previous research was relatively innocuous, e.g. reward training, behavioural observation, and drawing of blood samples.

**Section N: Validations**

Please ensure all investigators and Head of School validate an application. If the Head of School is an investigator in the project, a validation is required by a senior academic not involved in the project.