

NIPISSING UNIVERSITY

Policy Category:	Research
Policy Number:	5.5.2018.B (Research #NU-RES-2011.03)
Policy Name:	Terms of Reference – Animal Care Committee
Responsible Department:	Provost and VPAR; Office of Research and Graduate Studies
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Approval Authority:	Board of Governors
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Scope: Compliance with University policy extends to all members of the University community who use animals in science.

Purpose

Nipissing University has a responsibility to ensure that effective control is exercised in the ethical care and use of animals in science. All animals (live, non-human vertebrates) are protected by the Province of Ontario under the Animals for Research Act (1990). In addition to this provincial legislation, the National Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) require adherence to the policies and guidelines of the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC).

The Animal Care Committee (ACC) is responsible directly to the Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Research. Its purpose is to fulfill the legal and ethical responsibilities concerning the care of animals at the University and, specifically to review and regulate all animal use. These Terms of Reference are implemented by the Nipissing University ACC, and its operation is governed by these Terms of Reference.

The ACC provides ethical review and approval for all peer reviewed (refer to NU-RES-2012.17 Policy on the Peer Review Process for Research and Teaching Involving Animals) research or teaching projects involving the use of living vertebrate animals in order to ensure that current appropriate ethical guidelines are met and acceptable procedures are followed.

The ACC has jurisdiction over all research involving animal use undertaken by faculty, including visiting and part-time researchers, as well as all use of animals (live, non-human vertebrates) for teaching and/or student purposes.

Membership

ACC members are appointed by the Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Research for terms of no less than two (2) years and no more than four (4) years, renewable only up to a maximum of eight (8)

consecutive years of service. This does not apply to the ACC members who must be part of the ACC because of their role within the institution to satisfy the composition requirements (i.e.: ex-officio members, the ACC Coordinator, Consulting Veterinarian, hereinafter called the Veterinarian).

The ACC will ensure that all members and animal users have the opportunity to become familiar with institutional requirements, the CCAC guidelines and policy statements, as well as federal, provincial or municipal statutes that may apply, as well as institutional requirements.

Animal Care Committee composition must include:

1. a veterinarian with experience/training with regard to the species being used and the experiments being conducted;
2. one (1) faculty representative from each department involved in animal ethics and care in science;
3. one (1) faculty member whose normal activities, past or present, do not depend on or involve animal ethics and care in science;
4. at least one (1) community representative who has no affiliation with the institution and who has not been involved in animal ethics and care in science;
5. one (1) Animal Care Technician from each department who is actively involved in the animal ethics and care in science within the institution;
6. one (1) student representative from each department who is actively involved in the animal ethics and care in science within the institution appointed by the Department Chair;
7. the Manager of Environmental Health and Safety or designate;
8. the ACC Coordinator who is responsible for the administration of animal care related activities and provides administrative support to the ACC;
9. the Dean, Graduate Studies and Research, ex officio/non-voting, or designate who is a representative of senior administration.

The Chair shall be elected from the membership of the ACC for a three-year (3) term renewable once. It is important that the Chair does not have any conflict of interest or appearance of conflict of interest in his/her role, and therefore should not:

- be involved in a large proportion of protocols within the institution;
- be involved in the management of the institutional animal facilities;
- be a health or veterinary personnel member charged with ensuring compliance with CCAC guidelines.

In order to avoid any conflicts of interest that could be faced by the Chair, a Vice-Chair shall be elected and shall be chosen from the membership of the ACC.

AUTHORITY

The ACC and the Veterinarian have the authority, on behalf of the Provost and Vice President, Academic and Research, to enforce the CCAC guidelines (required for compliance and awarding of grants) and the regulations of the Province of Ontario (required for maintaining an animal facility) and if necessary to:

- a. reject, propose modifications to, or terminate any proposed or on-going research that does not meet the required standards;

- b. stop any objectionable procedures that appear to involve unnecessary pain or distress being experienced by the animal;
- c. terminate immediately any use of animals that deviates from an approved protocol;
- d. humanely euthanize an animal if pain and distress caused to the animal cannot be alleviated;
- e. order the closure of the animal care facility if CCAC standards or Provincial regulations are not met and/or if the well being of the animals housed in the facility is endangered.

The Chair and the Veterinarian must have access at all times to all areas where animals are being housed or used.

The Veterinarian has the authority to treat, remove from a study or euthanize, if necessary, any animal according to the Veterinarian's professional judgment. A written report will be completed by the Veterinarian and provided to the animal user and to the ACC following any such event.

The Veterinarian and animal care staff must work in a collegial manner with animal users and attempt to correct deficiencies collaboratively.

Post Approval Monitoring (PAM):

The PAM Program consists of scheduled visits to assist animal users in remaining compliant with approved Animal Utilization Protocols (AUP) and institutional and CCAC standards. The main goals of the PAM program are to ensure procedural animal care compliance, to identify and promote 'best practices' with respect to animal care, to ensure that animal users are comfortable handling animals and carrying out procedures successfully and that they are able to do so in appropriate conditions, and to ensure that endpoints are applied to approved AUPs to avoid unnecessary distress to the animals. PAM visits will be conducted by a subcommittee that is comprised of three rotating ACC members: one health expert, one scientist and one non-animal user. This monitoring aims to prevent and/or quickly and properly address unanticipated distress. Refer to NU-RES.2011.13 Policy on Post Approval Monitoring (PAM)

Breaches of Compliance:

The ACC is the body responsible for determining breaches of compliance or threats to the health and safety of personnel and animals, and will work to correct any deviations from approved AUPs and SOPs. Breaches of compliance that cannot be corrected by the ACC working with the concerned animal users and Veterinarian/animal care staff will be referred to the Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Research.

Persistent breaches of compliance, or threats to the health and safety of personnel or animals will be reported to the Chair who must promptly address the issues through communication with the animal user(s), through meetings and site visits, and eventually through communications with the Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Research, as necessary.

Appeal of ACC Decisions:

Appeals of an unfavorable decision may be made through the following procedure:

1. the principal investigator/author of the AUP may request to attend a meeting of the ACC to discuss the ruling. The discussion may result in clarifications acceptable to the ACC in which case a change in the status of the protocol may result;
2. if the results of the above meeting are still unfavorable, the principal investigator/author of the AUP may choose to further appeal the decision;
3. appeals will be directed to the Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Research. The Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Research will resolve the appeal within thirty (30) days by ensuring a separate, fair and impartial process which may include expertise from appropriate institutions;
4. the CCAC may be called upon for information but appeals cannot be directed to the CCAC.

RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the ACC to:

1. Ensure that adequate administrative procedures are in place to ensure proper and humane treatment of all vertebrate animals used for research and teaching. Humane treatment will include the provision of appropriate space and facilities as defined by the CCAC guidelines.
2. Ensure that no research and/or teaching program (including field studies) involving vertebrate animals be commenced without prior ACC approval of an AUP.
3. Ensure that no vertebrate animal be acquired or used without prior approval of an AUP.
4. Ensure that no vertebrate animals be held for display or breeding purposes, or for eventual use in research or teaching projects, without prior ACC approval of an AUP, except where current CCAC guidelines provide for exemptions. The ACC must also be made aware of any other vertebrate-animal-based activities, including commercial or recreational activities, within the institution, and will work with the persons responsible for these activities to ensure that animal ethics and care is undertaken according to appropriate procedures.
5. Require that all users of vertebrate animals complete an AUP form in the online system (Romeo), and ensure that the information therein is clearly presented in a form that all members of the ACC can readily understand (supplemental information can be found in the CCAC guidelines on: Animal Use Protocol Review, 1997 and NU-RES-2011.07: Animal Utilization Protocols – Procedure for Review and Approval). To facilitate the work of both protocol authors and ACC members, appropriate Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) should be referred to as much as possible. Approved AUPs and SOPs must be readily available in the areas where work with vertebrate animals is taking place.
6. The ACC may delegate, in urgent situations, the responsibility of interim approval to the ACC Executive Team, which is comprised of the Veterinarian, one community representative and the Chair. Such interim approvals will be used infrequently, and the interim review process, including exchanges between the ACC Executive Team and the protocol authors, must be documented and must then be subject to discussion and final approval at a full meeting of the committee.
7. Ensure that animal users update their protocols with any amendments or modifications they intend to make, and approve any modifications to a protocol in the online system (Romeo) before they are implemented. There are two (2) amendments – minor and major. In accordance with requirements:

- Minor amendment: includes adding a small number of animals - less than 10% more study animals (less than 20% for fish), animal users added or removed.
 - Major amendment: a new protocol must be submitted for any major amendment. Major amendments include an increase of more than 10% of the approved number of animals required (20% increase for fish), a change of species, a change in category of invasiveness, use of more invasive or more frequent procedures, significant changes in the use of anesthetics/analgesics and/or use of entirely new procedures.,
8. Ensure that animal users report any unanticipated problems or complications and the steps taken to address the problem(s).
 9. Review all protocols annually within a year of commencement of the project. A new protocol is required after three (3) consecutive renewals.
 10. Ensure appropriate care of animals in all stages of their lives and in all experimental situations.
 11. Ensure that Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are revised when necessary, and reviewed every three (3) years.
 12. Ensure adequate animal care and management of the animal facilities.
 13. Ensure that animal users, animal care personnel and the Veterinarian receive training and qualifications in their field according to the CCAC guidelines on: Training of personnel working with animals in science (2015);
 14. Ensure that a Crisis Management Plan for animal housing facilities is operational. Specifically the ACC shall work with senior administration and the various employee groups to develop and approve procedures related to proper care of animals housed within University facilities when planned or unforeseen events occur, such as scheduled building closures, power outages (short and prolonged), work stoppages, fires, natural disasters, large chemical spills and other similar crises. The Crisis Management Plan will include a communications plan for addressing public and media inquiries on concerns related to animal use.
 15. Submit by the 1st of October an annual report to the Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Research who will in turn present the report to the Board of Governors. The report will include the number of AUPs reviewed, a generic description of animal-care issues/concerns that have been addressed in the past year and, if necessary, recommendations concerning changes to policies or to procedures involved with animal care.

MEETINGS

The ACC will meet a minimum of four (4) times a year and more frequently if necessary to fulfill the Terms of Reference and be satisfied that all animal use within their jurisdiction is in compliance with institutional, municipal, federal and provincial regulations, and CCAC guidelines.

Face-to-face meetings are essential for adequate discussion of AUPs and for continued education of the ACC members. ACC meetings will take place no later than two (2) weeks after submission of AUPs.

Regular attendance by ACC members at meetings is important, and frequent unexplained absences will be construed as a notice of resignation. The ACC will operate by consensus. A quorum will consist of 50% of the members, and must always include the Veterinarian and one (1) community representative.

The full ACC will have the opportunity to visit all animal care facilities and areas in which animals are used at least once per academic year, in order to better understand the work being conducted within the institution, to meet with those working in the animal care facilities and animal use areas and discuss their needs, to monitor animal-based work according to approved AUPs and SOPs, to assess any weaknesses in the facilities and to forward any recommendations or commendations to the Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Research. All visits to the animal care facilities will be documented through minutes or written reports.

Minutes of all meetings will be prepared and maintained by the ACC Coordinator. In order to assist internal and external audits or research monitoring, and to facilitate reconsideration or appeals, the minutes will clearly document the ACC decisions and any dissents, and the reasons for them.

The proceedings and deliberations of the ACC are strictly confidential.

GENERAL

The Animal Care Committee will:

- a. regularly review (at least every three (3) years):
 - i) the Terms of Reference to comply with new CCAC guidelines or policies and to address changing needs within the institution, the scientific community, the animal welfare community and society as a whole.
 - ii) the security of the animals and the animal care facilities.
 - iii) SOPs and institutional animal ethics and care policies.
 - iv) policies and procedures for monitoring animal care and experimental procedures within the institution.
- b. maintain liaison with the CCAC Secretariat, and inform the Secretariat of:
 - i) any changes to the research program, to the Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Research, to the Chair of the ACC, or to the Veterinarian or senior animal care personnel;
 - ii) submit complete and accurate annual animal usage on the CCAC Animal Use Data Form (AUDF) by March 31 of the following year, and also in pre-assessment documents;
- c. submit complete and accurate annual animal usage to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) by February 28 of the following year.
- d. sponsor seminars or workshops on the use of animals in science and the ethics of animals in experimentation, and encourage as many animal users, students, ACC members and other interested parties to attend.

Related Policies & Documents

CCAC Policy Statement on: Ethics of Animal Investigation

CCAC guidelines on: Animal Use Protocol Review

CCAC policy statement on: Scientific Merit and Ethics Review of Animal-based Research Projects

CCAC guidelines on: Training of personnel working with animals in science (2015)

Crisis Management Plan for the Animal Care Facilities

NU-RES-2011.07 – Animal Utilization Protocols – Procedure for Review and Approval

NU-RES.2011.13 – Policy on Post Approval Monitoring (PAM)

NU-RES-2012.17 – **Policy on the Scientific Merit and Pedagogical Peer Review Process**

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