

University Procedures:

Animal Ethics Committee Procedures

1. These Procedures are made pursuant to the Terms of Reference – Animal Ethics Committee
2. The Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) is responsible for determining that staff and students are experienced and competent in the use of animals for scientific purposes, and in caring for and handling animals of the kind to be used or supplied. The AEC must ensure that the use of animals is justified, provides for the welfare of those animals and incorporates the principles of replacement, reduction and refinement.
3. **Appointment of Chairperson and election of Deputy Chairperson**
 - The Chair should be a person holding a senior position in the University, level D or E. This person is to be named on the ECU internal webpages.
 - **Appointment of a new Chair** (where the current Chair no longer seeks reappointment) the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) DVCR will adopt a process to identify a new Chair in consultation with the out-going Chair. The recommendation of the DVCR will be tabled at RHDC for discussion and ratification. The Chair is appointed for three years, with one further 3-year extension, and will be subject to DVCR annual performance review. Under exceptional circumstances, and subject to formal approval from the DVCR or VC, a Chair may be appointed for a third 3-year term.
 - **Reappointment of the current Chair:** The (DVCR) will adopt a process to identify a Chair taking account of AEC recommendations. The recommendation of the DVCR will be tabled at RHDC for discussion and ratification. The Chair of the AEC must always be an ECU staff member.
 - **Appointment of Deputy Chair:** The AEC shall elect from amongst its ECU membership a Deputy Chair.
4. **Composition of the Committee**

At least one person from each of the following Categories, who will remain anonymous:

 - **Category A** - A person with qualifications in veterinary science and with experience with the profile of ECU animal uses in research.
 - **Category B** - A suitably qualified person with substantial recent experience in the use of animals in scientific or teaching activities.
 - **Category C** - A person with demonstrable commitment to, and established experience in, furthering the welfare of animals, and who is not employed by or otherwise associated with the institution, and who is not involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.
 - **Category D** - A person who is both independent of the institution 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

The AEC Executive will comprise the Chairperson and at least one member from category C or D.

5. Terms of office

- A. Members of the AEC are appointed as indicated below:
- The Chairperson of the AEC will not represent the institution as a member of the senior management of the University (known as the University Executive).
 - Full members will be appointed for a term of three years and are eligible for reappointment as per the Terms of Reference.
 - Where a member is appointed to fill a casual vacancy (casual member) that appointment shall expire at the time when the previous member's term would have expired. The casual member shall then be eligible for appointment for the following term.
 - Members will receive a formal notice of appointment in writing from the DVCR, as Chair of RHDC. Members are required to formally acknowledge their acceptance of the appointment in writing.
 - ECU provides indemnity for all appointed AEC members in respect of any liability that may arise during the professional conduct of their duties as members.
 - Members who are absent from three successive meetings of the AEC without the approval of the Chair will cease to be members and will be notified in writing of this outcome by the Chair RHDC.
 - Members of the AEC who seek to resign or take a leave of absence for an extended period are required to provide written notice to the Chair and the Chair will provide approval.
 - The appointment of any AEC member, or the AEC Chair, may be terminated in writing by RHDC, if the relevant body decides that:
 - it is necessary for the proper and effective functioning of the AEC; or
 - the person has failed to carry out their duties as an AEC member; or
 - the person is not a fit and proper person to serve on an AEC.

The Animal Welfare Officer is a non-voting member of the AEC.

- B. Aligning with the Code, members of the AEC Executive may be delegated to approve minor amendments to approved projects or activities, for ratification at the next AEC meeting. However, they may not approve new applications.

6. Meeting and responsibilities

Each member is responsible for deciding whether, in their judgement, an application submitted to the AEC meets the requirements of the Code, the Act and is ethically acceptable.

All paper copies of any protocols and/or AEC proceedings and correspondence are to be disposed of through a confidential recycling bin. It is the responsibility of members to delete electronic records of proceedings and correspondence on a regular basis.

Each member will be provided with an induction and orientation to the functions of the AEC by the Chair with the administrative support of the Research Ethics Team as required. Each member will also be offered the opportunity to be mentored by a current AEC member.

The RET is responsible for provision of administrative support, attends as Executive Officer in support of the Chair including meeting organisation, agenda compilation, minutes, reviewer feedback, to the AEC.

The AEC will meet each month or as required, with the exception of January, and will publish the dates of its meetings and submission closing dates for applications on the ECU research ethics website and/or SharePoint site.

As required by the Code, at least one member from each of the membership categories A, B, C and D must be present at meetings to establish a quorum for the conduct of a meeting and must be present throughout the meeting. Categories C and D together must represent at least one-third of those members present.

Each member is responsible for:

- disclosing to the AEC any conflict of interest that may affect their review of a research proposal;
- ensuring the confidentiality of information received in the exercise of the member's duties is maintained at all times;
- maintaining a working knowledge of the Code and the Act and consulting other guidelines relevant to the review of research proposals;
- preparing for, and attending, AEC meetings or, if unavailable, providing written opinions on the ethical acceptability of the research applications; and
- undertaking continuing education in animal research ethics once every three years in accordance with the Code and the Act.

By accepting their letter of appointment, members acknowledge in writing that they will comply with the Code, the Act, Terms of Reference, ECU's values, Staff Code of Conduct and the approved confidentiality practices.

The AEC Chair:

- must not be accountable for other ECU functions that could impair the AEC's capacity to fulfil obligations under the Code and the Act and carry out the functions set out in the Terms of Reference.
- ensures that AEC decisions are informed by an exchange of views from members, whether in full attendance or through the receipt of feedback and consideration from members who cannot be present.
- achieves the above by:
 - actively engaging all members.
 - eliciting their views; and
 - communicating their responses to other members.
- ensures decisions are made by consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached after reasonable effort to resolve differences, the AEC should explore with the applicant(s) ways of modifying the project or activity that may lead to consensus. If consensus is still not achieved, the AEC should only proceed to a majority decision after members have

been allowed a period of time to review their positions, followed by further discussion;
and

- guides the manner in which the AEC communicates with investigators and the decisions about inviting investigators to attend AEC meetings.

The Deputy Chair provides support to the Chair in the performance of, and fulfilling, the responsibilities of the Chair whenever the Chair cannot attend meetings or perform any other function.

In the event the Chair and Deputy-Chair are unavailable to attend a meeting the Committee may appoint a committee member to Chair the meeting in their absence.