

Guideline for the Conduct of Ethical Research and Teaching Involving Animals

ECU has a responsibility to ensure that all research and teaching activities involving the use of animals are performed ethically and with integrity. This document outlines the requirements for the ethical conduct of research and teaching involving animals at ECU and provides guidance for staff and students in considering the many ethical issues involved in the use of animals for research and teaching purposes.

Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
Animal*	<p>Any live non-human vertebrate (that is, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, encompassing domestic animals, purpose-bred animals, livestock, wildlife) and cephalopods.</p> <p>* This definition is from the Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (2013) (the Code). People who use invertebrate animals (other than cephalopods) for research and teaching are required to notify the Animal Ethics Committee if it is likely that vertebrate animals may be caught accidentally.</p>
Animal welfare	An animal’s quality of life, which encompasses the diverse ways an animal may perceive and respond to their circumstances, ranging from a positive state of wellbeing to a negative state of distress.
Animal Ethics Committee (AEC)	A committee constituted in accordance with the terms of reference and membership laid down in the Code.
Animal Welfare Officer	An officer with veterinary or other appropriate qualifications, who is authorised by the institution to ensure that activities proceed in compliance with the Code and the decisions of the AEC.
Investigator or teacher	Any person who uses animals for research or teaching.
Chief Investigator	An investigator or teacher named in an ethics application who has ultimate responsibility for all aspects of an approved research project or teaching activity involving the use of animals.
Research	The creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings. This could include synthesis, collation, evaluation and analysis of previous Research to the extent that it is new and creative and/or that it informs policy and professional practice.

3Rs

The 3Rs are three principles that underpin a systematic framework to achieve the goal of humane experimental techniques. The principles are: **Replacement** of animals with other methods; **Reduction** in the number of animals used; and **Refinement** of techniques used to minimise any adverse impact on animals.

1. Governing Principles

- 1.1 People who use animals for research and teaching have an obligation to treat animals with respect and to consider their welfare as an essential factor when planning and conducting research projects or teaching activities.
- 1.2 When animals are used for research or for teaching, it is essential that the use is justified and that the welfare of those animals is properly considered and protected. Those using animals have a primary responsibility to observe the ethical, professional and legal principles involved. Research with animals should be carefully designed to ensure the scientific merit of the research.
- 1.3 The University has a responsibility to the community to ensure that research and teaching activities are performed in an ethical manner. Investigators and teachers using animals for research and teaching must comply with the requirements of the WA Animal Welfare Act (2002) and the Code.
- 1.4 The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018 indicates that dissemination of research findings is an important part of the research process, passing on the benefits to other researchers, professional practitioners and the wider community. Dissemination of findings may also avoid further animals being used for the same research.

2. Animal Ethics Committee (AEC)

- 2.1 The ECU Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) was established by University Council in 1991 and reports to Academic Board. Responsibilities of the AEC include:
 - a. administration of guidelines;
 - b. the application of policy;
 - c. consideration of applications for ethics approval;
 - d. monitoring of approved research projects and teaching activities;
 - e. advising the University on animal welfare and ethics issues;
 - f. provision of assistance to staff and students in the consideration of ethical issues involved in the use of animals for research and teaching; and
 - g. enhancing the University community's understanding of the importance of ethical research and teaching practice.
- 2.2 The AEC operates according to the Code. The terms of reference of the AEC are available from the [Ethics Review Committee's website](#).
- 2.3 AEC membership shall be in compliance with the Code. Members of the AEC are appointed by the Academic Board.

3. Applying for ethics approval

- 3.1 Investigators and teachers must submit a written application to an AEC for all animal research projects or teaching activities. The process for applying for ethics approval from the ECU AEC is available from the [ECU ethics website](#).
- 3.2 Applications must take into account the expected value of the knowledge to be gained, the justification for the project, and all ethical and animal welfare aspects taking into consideration the 3Rs.

3.3 Research projects or teaching activities using animals may be performed only after a decision has been made that they are justified, weighing the predicted research or educational value of the project or activity against the potential effects on the welfare of the animals.

4 Approval of applications

4.1 The Code requires that a research project or teaching activity involving the use of animals obtains ethics approval by a constituted Animal Ethics Committee before it commences.

4.2 ECU researchers involved in research activities which have undergone ethical review and approval by another institution's animal ethics committee are required to submit the project for reciprocal ethics approval.

4.3 Researchers will be formally notified by the AEC when their ethics application has been approved. All applications are approved with standard conditions of approval however, some projects may have further specific approval conditions which will be outlined in the approval email.

5 Responsibilities of investigators and teachers

5.1 Investigators and teachers have personal responsibility for all matters related to the welfare of the animals they use. This responsibility extends over all facets of the care and use of animals in projects or teaching activities approved by the AEC. Responsibility begins when the animal is allocated to the approved project or teaching activity and ends with the fate of the animal at the completion of the project or teaching activity.

5.2 Investigators and teachers must ensure that the level of supervision of personnel involved in the care and management of the animals takes into account the levels of competence of each person and the responsibilities that they are given.

5.3 Any proposed amendment to an approved research project must be submitted for review and approval by the AEC prior to implementing the changes.

5.4 The Code further outlines the responsibilities of investigators and teachers.

5.5 Requirements for the management of research data are provided in the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)*. Investigators should also refer to the [ECU's research data management requirements](#).

5.6 The [Animal Welfare Act](#) indicates that any investigator at a field site must have a copy of the ECU Licence to Use Animals for Scientific Purposes with them at the field site.

6 Emergencies and unexpected adverse events

6.1 Investigators and teachers must ensure that satisfactory arrangements are made for contacting them and other responsible persons in the event of emergencies.

6.2 Unexpected animal death and/or illness must be investigated and where possible an autopsy should be performed when animals die unexpectedly or are euthanised due to unforeseen circumstances. Any adverse outcomes, unexpected death of animals or welfare issues must be immediately reported to the AEC using the [adverse event form](#).

7 Reporting and Monitoring

7.1 Investigators and teachers must ensure that accurate records of the use of animals are maintained. This will enable the AEC to verify that the welfare of animals has been monitored.

7.2 Investigators and teachers must inform the AEC when a project or teaching activity is completed or discontinued.

- 7.3 All approved research projects and teaching activities are subject to monitoring conditions. This includes completion of an annual report (for projects and activities longer than one year), an annual statistical report and a final report at the completion of the project or teaching activity.
- 7.4 Monitoring may include inspections of animals and facilities by the AEC or by the Animal Welfare Officer, or supervision of procedures by the Animal Welfare Officer.

8. Concerns and complaints

- 8.1 Enquiries, concerns or complaints should be made initially to the Research Ethics Team. The [Australian Code of the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018](#) further outlines a framework for dealing with allegations of research misconduct. Investigators should also refer to the Conducting Research with Integrity Policy.

9 Related Documents

Other documents which are relevant to the operation of this guideline are as follows:

- [Conducting Research with Integrity Policy](#)
- [Research Misconduct Guidelines](#)
- [Research Data Management Guidelines](#)
- [WA Animal Welfare Act \(2002\)](#)
- [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th edition 2013 \(Updated 2021\)](#)
- [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018](#)

Contact Information

For queries relating to this document please contact: research.ethics@ecu.edu.au