

SUBJECT: ANIMAL CARE AND USE POLICY

1. Purpose

The University of Northern British Columbia is a research intensive institution that supports the responsible use of animals in research for the purpose of obtaining knowledge of potential benefit to humans and animals. To this end, the University is committed to maintaining the highest standards in animal care and animal-based research and teaching, meeting or exceeding those outlined by the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) and in other guidelines published or endorsed by the CCAC. This policy is intended to govern the responsible use of animals in research and teaching under the auspices of the University within the framework of applicable standards and legislation.

The use of animals in research and teaching is a privilege. The University is responsible for ensuring that the use of animals in research projects and teaching are reviewed for scientific and pedagogical merit, respectively. Formal responsibility for ensuring the humane care and use of animals in research and teaching under the auspices of the University, is mandated by the CCAC to the University Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC). Prior to commencement of all such research and teaching activities at the University, the ACUC must review and approve the activities. A community representative that has not been involved in animal use for research, teaching or testing and who has no affiliation with the University, must be involved in the review process. Failure to obtain protocol approval means the proposed animal use cannot proceed. Furthermore, once approval has been granted, failure to adhere to conditions of the approved protocol can result in termination of research, loss of research rights, and other sanctions that the University deems necessary.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all research, teaching and research-related activity involving the care and use of animals conducted under the auspices of the University.

The ACUC's jurisdiction includes all non-human vertebrate animals, as well as cephalopods and some other higher invertebrates, in all University programs: instruction programs (undergraduate, graduate, extension, continuing education and others); University research projects including clinical trials; investigation involving the use of University facilities; and activities conducted in or at University facilities by organizations or individuals from outside the University. For animals in Canada, in the wild, or in facilities other than those of UNBC an animal use proposal must be filed and approved before the project is initiated. Scientists from this University conducting studies on animals in another jurisdiction must, as a minimum, comply with the requirements for animal care in that jurisdiction but should also endeavour, insofar as possible, to comply with the requirements for animal care at UNBC. Scientists visiting from other countries are required to comply with the Animal Care and Use Policy of this University.

Although this policy primarily covers vertebrate animals and higher invertebrates, it is recognized that some research projects conducted on other invertebrates may also impact species under ACUC jurisdiction. Wherever a proposal has the potential to impact such species, it must be submitted for review by the ACUC, outlining potential impacts such as incidental capture, confinement or the possible death of these species.

3. Authority

The care and use of animals in research and teaching is subject to relevant federal and provincial legislation and regulation. In addition, the University adheres to the voluntary control program of the Canadian Council on Animal Care and to the ethical and professional codes, guidelines and standards (as amended from time to time) of the CCAC, the Canadian Association for Laboratory Animal Science and the British Columbia Veterinary Medical Association. The University may also agree to abide by the requirements of other organizations, as a condition of carrying out certain research on a project-by-project basis, provided that these do not diminish the standards of care and conduct that would otherwise apply. These arrangements to which the University is subject ("applicable requirements") help shape and guide this policy.

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The Vice President Research is responsible for the implementation and administration of this policy and associated regulations. The Animal Care and Use Committee reports to the Vice President Research and is responsible for the day-to-day oversight of this policy.

4. Definitions

In this policy, unless a contrary intention appears, “animal(s)” means non-human living vertebrates and higher invertebrates as defined by the CCAC.

5. Context

5.1 Research Activities

Research activities involving the use of animals engage a great many of the organizational units of the University, and support for the proper care and use of animals is provided, either directly or indirectly, by many departments including, but not limited to, the following:

5.2 Vice President Research

The Vice President Research has executive responsibility for the implementation of the University’s animal care policy. The Vice President Research shall attempt to resolve objections from a project leader who cannot agree to alter his/her protocol so as to conform to the suggestions of the ACUC; from a minority of members of the ACUC who wish to register a dissent from the approval of a protocol given by the Committee; concerning animal care in any on-going project. Where an objection cannot be resolved, the provision for Appeals (see Article 9) shall be followed.

5.3 Faculty

Faculty are responsible for designing and carrying out their research and teaching in accordance with the applicable requirements. This includes integrating their activities with those of their colleagues and rationalizing their requirements in terms of the facilities and services. Faculty are also responsible for educating students as to the rationale for, and the application of, relevant requirements, and for ensuring that students working under their supervision respect and observe the relevant requirements. Faculty have a special responsibility to ensure work carried out under their general direction or supervision is properly reviewed and certified.

5.4 College Deans / Program Chairs

College Deans and Program Chairs have a general responsibility for the research and teaching carried out in their faculty, school or program, and for encouraging and ensuring compliance with applicable University policies and procedures. College Deans have the authority to terminate animal use which, in the Dean’s opinion, does not comply with University policies.

5.5 Animal Care and Use Committee

Along with the Vice President Research, the ACUC is responsible for ensuring University-wide understanding of, and compliance with, the applicable requirements. The Committee is also responsible for ensuring that animals used in research and teaching are humanely cared for and used in accordance with the applicable requirements. The Committee is responsible for ethical review and certification of research and teaching proposals and also for monitoring compliance with approved proposals. Subject to Provincial Freedom of Information legislation, the Committee will make information available. The Committee’s specific composition and detailed terms of reference (which must accord with the requirements of the Canadian Council on Animal Care and applicable legislation and regulations) are determined by the President on the recommendation of the Vice President Research. The Animal Care and Use Committee may propose changes to its composition and terms of reference in light of experience and workload.

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5.6 Director of Animal Care

The Director of Animal Care directs and administers the Northern Health Sciences Research Facility, ensuring efficient operations in accordance with both internal and external requirements. The Director of Animal Care is assisted by the manager and other staff of the Northern Health Sciences Research Facility and reports in relation to the administration of the facility to the Vice President Research.

6. General

6.1 The University will acquire and maintain only the number and type of animals that its facilities and resources can receive and accommodate in accordance with the applicable requirements. The certification of a protocol or the authorization of a research grant or contract application is no guarantee that the University will be able to acquire, house, and care for the laboratory animals if, at the time the work proceeds, the capacity of the University's facilities is otherwise fully utilized. In such circumstances, the research may have to be modified or rescheduled or funds may have to be allocated for any necessary expansion or modification of facilities.

6.2 Faculty, staff and students using animals for research and teaching purposes are expected to be thoroughly familiar with all applicable requirements.

6.3 Faculty with appropriate expertise are also expected to serve, as may reasonably be required, on the ACUC and contribute to policy advice, facilities planning and the review of protocols.

6.4 Failure to adhere to this policy for the use of animals is a serious offence, subject to penalties, including, but not limited to, the withdrawal of research privileges or dismissal.

7. Duties and Responsibilities of the ACUC

7.1 The ACUC reviews all proposals for compliance with the applicable ethical requirements and ensures that all research using animals has received an independent, peer review of scientific merit, and any teaching using animals has pedagogical merit, before any protocol is given final approval by the Committee. The Committee does not itself conduct the review of scientific or pedagogical merit; such reviews fall within the responsibilities of the University.

7.2 The ACUC monitors animal care and use, including all types of field studies, to ensure that the applicable requirements are met, that care is adequate at all stages, and that proper veterinary care is provided in case of sickness and injury. The ACUC and officers are responsible for monitoring compliance with the applicable requirements, making recommendations for improvements and initiating action on abuse within their jurisdiction.

7.3 The ACUC ensures the maintenance of an up-to-date record of proposals and inventory of animal use in an approved form.

7.4 The ACUC monitors compliance with University policy and procedures related to animal care approval.

7.5 The Committee maintains Terms of Reference, which accord with the requirements of the Canadian Council on Animal Care (as amended from time to time) and with applicable legislation and regulations.

8. Approval of Proposals

8.1 The University requires that all proposed use of animals in research and teaching under its auspices be reviewed by the ACUC. If the proposed use and proposal are in accordance with the applicable requirements, the proposal will be certified. Uncertified acquisition or use of animals is prohibited.

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8.2 Faculty and students proposing to use animals for research and teaching must submit to the ACUC a proposal for animal use in a form prescribed by the Committee.

8.3 Conflict of interest

Any member of the ACUC with a research or teaching interest in a protocol submitted for review must not participate in the review procedure. If the protocol is associated with work conducted by the Chair, then the alternate Chair (as appointed by the ACUC) will serve as Chair.

9. Appeals Process

9.1 Where an objection to the Vice President Research by a principal investigator or a dissenting minority of the ACUC cannot be resolved under Article 5.2, the Vice President Research shall convene an Appeals Committee.

9.2 Where an objection to the Vice President Research under Article 5.2 in respect of any ongoing research project cannot be resolved, the Vice President Research has discretion whether or not to convene an Appeals Committee to rule on the matter.

9.3 An Appeals Committee will be composed of three persons as follows:

- a. one person named by the principal investigator of the protocol being considered;
- b. one person named by the Vice President Research, who may be a member of the ACUC; and
- c. one person, who shall be Chair, agreed upon by the principal investigator and the Vice President Research or, failing such agreement, one person appointed by the President of the University.

9.4 By majority vote, an Appeals Committee may confirm or modify the decision of the ACUC and may impose its own conditions for approval of the project, or for its continuation. An Appeals Committee may halt an ongoing project. The decision of an Appeals Committee shall be final.

10. Emergency Management

In the context of its general institutional emergency plan, the University will implement an emergency management program for the UNBC animal facilities and for the animal care and use program. The ACUC has responsibility for reviewing all animal-related aspects of the emergency management program regularly and, where appropriate, modifying the program in consultation with the University Risk Management Department and the Vice President Research.