



Animal Ethics Committee Terms of Reference

1. Definitions

[Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes](#) 2013 (**The Code**)

The Code encompasses all aspects of the care and use of animals when the aim is to acquire, develop or demonstrate knowledge or techniques in any area of science – for example, medicine, biology, agriculture, veterinary and other animal sciences, industry and teaching. It includes the use of animals in research, teaching associated with an educational outcome in science, field trials, product testing, diagnosis, the production of biological products and environmental studies.

[Animal Welfare Act](#) 1992 (**The Act**)

The Animal Welfare Act (ACT) regulates offences related to animal cruelty and sets standards of care for using or breeding animals for research and teaching. It provides enforcement powers to monitor and protect animals from cruelty or welfare offences. The Act establishes a list of offences and sets a code of practice, requiring specific authorisations and licences for research, teaching, and breeding.

[Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018](#)

The Code establishes a framework for responsible research conduct that provides a foundation for high-quality research, credibility and community trust in the research endeavour.

2. Acronyms

DVC-RI	Deputy Vice Chancellor - Research and Innovation
AEC	Animal Ethics Committee
REO	Research Ethics Office
TCH	The Canberra Hospital

3. Purpose Statement

The University has established an AEC to ensure that all approved activities involving the care and use of animals for scientific purposes comply with the Code. The Code states “Institutions involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes that establish an AEC, must ensure that the terms of reference for the AEC are publicly available” (Section 2.2.18 of the Code).

3.1 Scope of Responsibility

The responsibilities of the University are to ensure:

- University animal licences with relevant jurisdictions are maintained
- Monitoring and notifications requirements for each jurisdiction are met
- Records of protocols, amendments and minutes from all AEC activities are maintained
- A written report that meets the requirements of clause 2.3.29 of the Code is submitted annually on its activities to University Executive

- e. Alleged non-compliance and grievances, are reviewed and escalated where required following ANU policies and procedures (including referral to the DVC-RI and the associated external regulatory agencies, as required)
- f. AEC operations are reviewed annually with the DVC-RI and the Chair of the Committee (Section 2.1.9 of the Code)
- g. Animal facilities are inspected at least annually and prior to the use of new facilities.
- h. An independent external review is conducted at least every four years to assess University compliance (Section 6 of the Code)
- i. Committee members and Chair(s) have access to induction, education and training to support their needs
- j. Adequate secretariat support is provided to the AEC
- k. The following records are maintained:
 - i. Committee meetings
 - ii. Committee membership
 - iii. Protocols, amendments and researcher reports
 - iv. Facility inspections
 - v. Notifications, reports and licence renewals to relevant licencing offices
- l. Availability and access to veterinary advice for the management and oversight of a program of veterinary care, quality management and project design to safeguard animal wellbeing (2.1.5 iv)

The AEC is responsible for:

- a. Reviewing and approving projects to ensure ethical acceptability and compliance with the Code
- b. Reviewing annual reports of all approved projects
- c. Monitoring breeding, supply, housing, care, and use of animals
- d. Authorising emergency treatment or euthanasia of animals
- e. Inspecting facilities at least annually
- f. Reviewing institutional policies affecting animal welfare
- g. Reviewing and endorsing reporting to regulators and the University
- h. Reviewing and providing recommendations on complaints and non-compliance
- i. Overseeing training and competency requirements for researchers and members
- j. Operates in accordance with its operating procedures
- k. Operates within the requirements of the ACT Animal Welfare Act 1992 and equivalent legislation of other jurisdictions where the University is licenced to undertake animal-based research

3.2 Objectives and Functions

The objectives of the committee are to:

- a. Facilitate ethically acceptable research through efficient and thorough review processes developed in accordance with the Code
- b. Minimise the risk of harm to animals arising from research by considering and applying the 3R's¹ in order to facilitate best practice at all stages of animal care and use
- c. Consider the rehoming of research animals as placed forward by the University. (Section 3.4.2 and 3.4.3 of the Code.)
- d. Ensure the follow-up review of approved protocols and activities is conducted

The functions of the committee are to:

¹ The 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) are accepted internationally as critical components of the ethical, humane and responsible care and use of animals for scientific purposes:
<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/research-policy/ethics/animal-ethics/3rs>

- a. Review applications, procedures, amendments, policies and guidelines for activities associated with the care and use of animals and approve only those activities that are ethically acceptable as (Sections 2.1.5, 2.3.2, and 2.3.26 of the Code)
- b. Approve and monitor all research and teaching activities undertaken by ANU staff and students that involve the care and use of animals. (Section 2.3 of the Code)
- c. Only allow the continuation of approval for those protocols and activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code
- d. Provide guidance to researchers by approving guidelines for the care and use of animals on behalf of the institution
- e. Provide advice and recommendations to the institution on the care and use of animals in compliance with the Code and the ACT Animal Welfare Act
- f. Review applications for activities associated with the care and management of animals in facilities, including procedures applicable to breeding programs integral to the maintenance of an animal line, and approve only those activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code
- g. Conduct follow-up review of approved protocols and activities and allow the continuation of approval for only those protocols and activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code
- h. Monitor the care and use of animals, including housing conditions, practices and procedures involved in the care of animals in facilities
- i. Review and approve annual, final and UAE reports
- j. Take appropriate actions regarding unexpected adverse events
- k. Review and approve procedures for authorising the humane killing or emergency treatment of any research animal. (Sections 2.1.7, 2.5.6, 3.3.45, 3.4.1 and 4.7 of the Code).
- l. Take appropriate action regarding complaints and/or non-compliance (Sections 2.3.2vi, 2.2.20, 2.3.18 and 2.3.25 of the Code)
- m. Support the REO in the preparation of a report on its operations to the University

3.3 Responsibilities of the Chairperson

The responsibilities of the Chair are to:

- a. Impartially guide the operation of the AEC, supported by the Ethics Office, managing any differences of opinion within the AEC and conflicts of interest related to the business of the AEC
- b. Ensure that the AEC operates in accordance with the principles and requirements of the Animal Code, all relevant legislation, guidelines, University policies and AEC procedures.
- c. Ensure the AEC meeting considers AEC business as required to fulfil the AEC's responsibilities
- d. Advise the DVC-RI on the levels of resources required by the AEC
- e. Represent the AEC in negotiations with the University while maintaining confidentiality
- f. Oversee all requirements of the AEC to report and review its operation as outlined in the Animal Code
- g. Provide final approval of projects that have been conditionally approved by the AEC, where such delegation has been granted by the AEC, pending a satisfactory response from the investigator regarding the conditions of approval

3.4 Responsibilities of members

Each member is responsible for deciding whether, in their own judgement, an ethics project application or other matter under consideration by the AEC is ethically acceptable and meets the requirements of the Animal Code and any other relevant legislation and guidelines. To fulfil this responsibility, members should:

- a. Be familiar with the Animal Code and other legislation and guidelines relevant to the business of the AEC; and
- b. Provide opinions on the ethical acceptability of ethics project applications and other matters under consideration by the AEC

- c. During their appointment to the AEC, and before any deliberations by the AEC, members must declare any interest that could influence the objectivity of their decision making

4. Organisational Structure and Accountability

4.1 Establishment and Structure

The AEC operates to review applications for proposed work by ANU staff and or students involving the care and use of animals for scientific purposes within its scope of responsibility. The AEC is constituted to meet the requirements of the Code. It is supported by the REO within the Research and Innovation portfolio.

4.2 Accountability

The AEC is accountable to the DVC-RI. The AEC reports to the University executive at least annually. This report will meet the reporting licencing requirements of the relevant States and Territories.

As the ANU is a registered licence holder for the use or breeding of animals for the purpose of research and/or teaching in the ACT, NSW, VIC, QLD, SA, TAS & WA, this report is sent to the ACT & States.

The Chair of the AEC will meet with the DVC-RI at least twice a year.

5. Membership

5.1 Mandatory Membership ²

Chair – Institutions must appoint a chairperson of the AEC. Institutions should consider appointing a chairperson who holds a senior position in the institution who is independent of the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

Category A—a person with qualifications in veterinary science that are recognised for registration as a veterinary surgeon in Australia, and with experience relevant to the institution’s activities or the ability to acquire relevant knowledge.

Category B—a suitably qualified person with substantial and recent experience in the use of animals for scientific purposes relevant to the institution and the business of the AEC.

Category C—a person with demonstrable commitment to, and established experience in, furthering the welfare of animals, who is not employed by or otherwise associated with the institution, and who is not currently involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

Category D—a person not employed by or otherwise associated with the institution and who has never been involved in the use of animals in scientific or teaching activities and must not fit the requirements of any other category.

5.2 Other Membership

Animal Care— Where possible, the University will appoint at least one person responsible for the routine care of animals within the institution (2.2.5). This member will be a formal and active member of the AEC as ‘Category E with all rights and responsibilities of other membership categories .

Special members — The University may appoint additional members with skills and background of value to the AEC.

² Composition of an animal ethics committee is mandated by the Code including expanded definitions (Section 2.2)

Advisors — Where possible, the University will appoint non-voting members that can advise the AEC on specific aspects of animal-based research. Advisors may include ANU Veterinarians and experts in fields such as alternatives to the use of animals, statistics, and wildlife studies.

Deputy Chair - The University may appoint a Deputy Chair to act as Chair when the Chair is not available or where a conflict of interest is identified.

External experts - The AEC may additionally seek advice from external experts to help in considering a research proposal. Experts are bound by the same confidentiality requirements as the AEC members. Any interests they may have should be disclosed and any conflicts of interest identified and managed appropriately.

Observers - Any invited observers will not be considered members, though they may be potential members, and cannot be involved in deliberations or decision making. They will still be bound by the same confidentiality and disclosure of interest requirements as AEC members.

5.3 Executive Committee

The Executive Committee (AEC Executive) includes the Chair and at least one member from Category C or D (section 2.2.23 of the Code). Functions delegated to the AEC Executive, include but are not limited to responses to ethics project applications and amendments that have been conditionally approved by the AEC; the addition/removal of associated investigators on AEC approved projects; minor amendments to approved projects or activities; and, in exceptional circumstances, other matters where animal welfare will not be compromised.

All decisions by the Executive are reviewed and ratified by the AEC at the next meeting.

5.4 Balance of membership

The University will maintain at least two members per mandatory category with at least one third of the membership being Category C and D, to ensure the AEC membership meets the Code's requirements.

5.5 Appointment of members and Chairs

Committee members are appointed by the DVC-RI for a period of up to three years, with the option of appointment renewal, if deemed suitable by the Chair. Membership may be terminated by the DVC-RI at any time during the period of appointment. Any such decision will be advised in writing where possible. Trial periods and shorter membership appointments may also be agreed upon between the Member and the Chair, if necessary.

Chair and paid Deputy Chair appointments will be made by the DVC-RI.

Chairs and Members will be provided with a formal notice of appointment that specifies:

- a. their responsibilities related to membership, including participation, training, confidentiality and disclosure of interests
- b. the category of membership that they will represent
- c. their term of appointment
- d. any remuneration or other benefits with which they will be provided, and
- e. that they are assured legal protection for any liabilities that may arise during the bona fide conduct of their duties as reviewers of research.

Members will be required to

- a. Sign a confidentiality agreement
- b. Declare any conflicts of interest and manage conflicts of interest in accordance with the Code, AEC Operating Procedures and University Policies. (Sections 2.2.21 and 2.3.12 of the Code).
- c. Undertake all duties and responsibilities as specified in the Code and operate in accordance with the AEC Operating Procedures. (Sections 2.2.13 to 2.1.17)
- d. Undertake induction and training for membership role (Section 2.2.12 of the Code).

5.6 Remuneration

Chairs will receive a responsibility loading that is applied in accordance with the [Procedure: Academic staff loadings and allowances](#). Members of academic staff may be recognised by their local area in their workload allocation and service indicators for academic promotion.

External members (volunteer members with no paid affiliation with the university) may, if resources permit, receive an honorarium payment at the end of a calendar year. If offered, the amount is determined by available resources and the number of external members. External member honoraria are discretionary, nominal, and not guaranteed to occur.

5.7 Liability and Coverage

During bona fide deliberations as a Member/Chair of the Committee, members are covered by University insurance policies.

6. Meetings

6.1 Frequency

The AEC will meet every five weeks, where required, between January and December (inclusive). Meetings will be conducted in accordance with the Committee operating procedures. Additional meetings may be called for urgent business.

6.2 Conduct of Meetings

Meetings are to be conducted in accordance with the operating procedures (sections 2.2.25 and 2.2.26 of the Code).

6.3 Quorum

For a meeting to be considered quorate, at least one member from each mandatory membership category must be present. Attendance of members and their membership categories are formally recorded in the Minutes of each meeting. Categories C and D must be at least 1/3 of those present.

Quorum for out of session deliberations by the AEC Executive is the Chair and at least one member from Category C or D.

AEC facility inspections should include at least one member from Category C or D.

Version	Date	Author	Approved By	Date
1.0	19 August 2016	REO, Research Services Division (RSD)	DVC-RI	27 August 2016
2.0	12 March 2020	REO, RSD	DVC-RI	20 March 2020
3.0	31 March 2021	REO, RSD	DVC-RI	28 April 2021
4.0	10 November 2021 (Update AEC name)	REO, RSD	DVC-RI	29 Nov 2022
5.0	27 July 2023	REO, Research Services & Innovation (RIS)	DVC-RI	10 August 2023
6.0	January 2026	REO, Research Services	DVC-RI	22 January 2026