



TERMS OF REFERENCE

PEDAGOGICAL MERIT REVIEW COMMITTEE

Introduction:

The Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) and the University of Toronto's Animal Care Committees require that all proposed use of animals in teaching undergo pedagogical merit review prior to ethical review. Since animals used for educational purposes are not being used to discover, prove or develop new ideas or techniques, but rather to demonstrate principles and facts which are already well-known, animals must only be used for teaching purposes when that use has been found by the independent, expert peers on the pedagogical merit review committee to have pedagogical merit, and when the educational goals of the course that rely on the use of animals cannot be conveyed in any alternative manner.

When applying the 3Rs (replacement, refinement, reduction) to the use of animals in teaching, efforts should focus first on finding a replacement alternative. When no replacement teaching alternative is available, justification is required to use animals. The level and type of training for the students (graduate/postgraduate, specialized/non-specialized) are important factors. In collaboration with veterinary staff, all students are required to obtain appropriate animal user training prior to any work with live animals.

Note: Painful experiments or multiple invasive procedures on an individual animal, conducted solely for the instruction of students in the classroom, or for the demonstration of established scientific knowledge, cannot be justified.

Purpose of the committee:

To ensure all animal-based teaching at the University of Toronto has been reviewed for pedagogical merit at arm's length from LACCs and that the 3Rs have been considered, particularly replacement alternatives. Any proposed use of animals in teaching must be strongly justified, and all available non-animal alternatives must be clearly and defensibly ruled out.

Scope:

The pedagogical merit review committee will robustly review all proposed teaching protocols involving animals. This review shall be performed prior to ethics review, and any proposed use of animals in teaching that the committee judges can be replaced by the use of non-animal alternatives shall not be eligible for subsequent ethics review. The committee shall meet to review and discuss proposals on an as-needed basis.

Individual student research projects otherwise covered by a PI's existing ethics approval are exempt from this review process, as are formal animal user training programs administered by veterinary staff.

The pedagogical merit review shall remain valid as long as the Animal Use Protocol remains valid, to a maximum of four years. Minor changes in the use of animals in the teaching protocol within that four year time frame must be submitted to the committee as an amendment. If there are substantive changes to the use of

animals in the approved project, a new teaching proposal must be submitted to the committee for re-review.

Enough time must be allotted to the review process to allow non-animal alternatives to be implemented should that be necessary. Thus, proposals for teaching courses involving animals should be submitted at least 6 months in advance of the course start date.

Authority and reporting structure:

Committee members are appointed by the Vice-President, Research and Innovation, and the committee reports their findings through the Animal Ethics and Compliance Program (AECPP), which then communicates the findings to the LACC and the course instructor.

Composition:

The pedagogical merit review committee shall have the following composition:

- 1) at least three University of Toronto faculty members who are not currently members of an LACC, with experience in the use of animals in teaching;
- 2) at least three University of Toronto faculty members who have not taught courses involving live animal use;
- 3) at least two University of Toronto veterinarians as non-voting, advisory members;
- 4) at least one expert in science pedagogy who is a University faculty member not involved in the use of animals in research in any capacity.

Ideally there should be at least one member from UTM, one member from UTSC, one member from the Faculty of Arts and Science, and two members from The Faculties of Medicine and/or Pharmacy and/or Engineering. The Chair of the committee should be appointed by the Vice-President, Research and Innovation and should be chosen from among the committee members.

Terms of Office:

Up to 8 years.

Responsibility:

The committee ensures that all proposed animal-based teaching at the University has undergone pedagogical merit review, with the exclusions of formal animal user training courses and individual faculty-supervised student research projects. Projects will only be approved for pedagogical merit when non-animal alternatives have been investigated and found to be inadequate to address the teaching goals.

The committee advises the appropriate LACC that a teaching proposal involving animals has been deemed to have/not have pedagogical merit.

The committee annually administers a formal questionnaire to students in courses that utilize animals to obtain feedback on the value and learning experience of the course. This feedback is reviewed during subsequent pedagogical merit reviews.

Procedures:

In order to evaluate the merits of the proposed use of animals in teaching, course instructors are asked to provide the following information to the committee members:

1. a copy of the completed Pedagogical Merit Review Form, including details of the search(es) that were performed for non-animal alternatives;
2. a copy of the proposed course's lab manual or course materials, if available.

For ongoing courses, the committee will already have copies of the annual student evaluations of the course.

Each member individually completes the pedagogical merit evaluation form and submits the form to the Chair, who then convenes a meeting of the whole committee to discuss the proposal. Discussions of any issues identified by reviewers are carried out at that meeting, and a decision is made by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached after reasonable discussion, a vote may be taken. Quorum for a decision is at least four voting members of the committee, including the Chair.

Administration:

Administrative support, including correspondence with the course instructor regarding submission of documents for pedagogical merit review, communication of documents to the committee, archiving of the documentation for each submission, communication of the committee decision to the LACC and administration of student questionnaires, is provided by the AECP staff.

Approved – May, 2015