

**Overarching Principle and Intent**

Western Sydney University complies with the Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (2013) and the New South Wales Animal Research Act (1985) and its regulations. Other policies, guidelines and codes that are complied with include those published by the Animal Research Review Panel (ARRP), NHMRC and the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR).

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Use of animals for research and teaching purposes**

**1. What is the Animal Care and Ethics Committee (ACEC)?**

The Animal Care and Ethics Committee (ACEC) is a Committee established by the University in accordance with NSW legislation. The membership consists of the following categories:

• **Category A:** Registered Veterinarians

• **Category B:** Researchers experienced with the use of animals for scientific or teaching purposes

• **Category C:** Those who are members of or are nominated by an animal welfare organisation

• **Category D:** Independent members who are not associated with animal-based research, and not associated with the institution except under defined circumstances.

The composition of the Animal Care Ethics Committees (ACEC) provides an avenue for public participation in the regulation of animal research. Committees consider and evaluate requests to use animals for research or teaching activities including:

* the justification for the research,
* its likely impact on the animals, and
* procedures for preventing or alleviating pain and distress.

The ACEC has the power to stop non-approved activities and may withdraw approvals for on-going work. It requires that adequate care is provided.

The ACEC provides guidance and support to researchers on matters relevant to animal welfare. It provides advice to the University on plans and policies that may affect animal welfare.

**2. What are the activities involving animals that require ACEC approval?**

All staff and students who will be conducting research or a teaching activity that involve the use of live animals (see below) must apply for Animal Care and Ethics Committee (ACEC) approval. This includes the use of animals in research, teaching, field trials, product testing, diagnosis, the production of biological products and environmental studies.

Observational studies also require approval (but not a review by the ACEC). The Observational Field Research Study Application form should be completed and forwarded to the Animal Ethics Officer for review.

**Note 1: Observational animal research** is when there is **no** direct animal interaction. If animal handling, trapping, spotlighting or environmental enrichment or any other activity that has the potential to interfere with normal behaviour of the animals is involved, an ACEC application is required.

**Note 2: An animal** is defined as any live vertebrate (other than a human being) and includes mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and cephalopods.

**3. Why do I need approval from the Animal Care and Ethics Committee (ACEC)?**

The [NSW Animal Research Act (1985)](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ara1985134/) and the [Animal Research Regulation (2010)](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_reg/arr2005225) stipulate that approval must be obtained from the institutional Animal Care and Ethics Committee (ACEC) before animals are used for research or teaching.

This legislation was introduced to protect the welfare of animals, by ensuring that their use in research and teaching is always humane, considerate, responsible and justified.

NSW legislation incorporates the [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, 8th Edition (2013).](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/ea28_code_care_use_animals_130728.pdf)

**4. Where can I get an application form?**

All forms for the ACEC can be downloaded from the [Forms Page](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/researchers/forms).

**5. How do I fill in the application form?**

Consult the [Information for Applicants](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/research_ethics_and_integrity/animal) and [Application Checklist](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/research_ethics_and_integrity/animal) for help and if you still have questions, please contact the Animal Ethics Officer, animalethics@westernsydney.edu.au.

Allow sufficient time for completion and review of your application. Completion of the application form will probably take longer than you think.

Answer all questions as thoroughly as possible. Applications should be typed and all questions answered. If a question is not relevant, please write '*Not Applicable*', rather than leaving it blank.

**6. What can I do to improve my application?**

Some common problems can be avoided by referring to [Tips for Improving the Quality of Your Application.](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/research_ethics_and_integrity/animal) Remember to use plain English, justify your use of animals and your choice of species.

**7. When should I lodge my application?**

The submission deadline for applications is two (2) weeks prior to the scheduled meeting. Refer to [ACEC meeting dates](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/research_ethics_and_integrity/animal) for further details.

**All electronic documents are to be received by Research Services by the Submission Deadline for the next meeting**. The application must have all the required signatures (research team members and the Dean or Institute Head) otherwise it cannot proceed.

**Forward Planning -** Applications should be completed and forwarded to the ACEC well before you plan to start your project. More complex applications may require more time to consider and approve, so consider this in your planning.

**8. Am I able to submit a late application?**

The short answer is no. When application submissions have closed ([ACEC meeting dates](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/research_ethics_and_integrity/animal)), applications are prepared for the Committee members well in advance of the meeting so that Committee members can consider each application carefully.

If your application is submitted after the submission deadline, it will not be considered until the following meeting.

**9. What happens after I submit my application?**

**Acknowledgement of receipt** - You will receive an email acknowledgement of receipt of your application.

**10. Researchers attending the Committee meeting**

Chief Investigators (CI) may attend Committee meetings to discuss their application and to answer any questions. Other members of the research team are also encouraged to participate. If face-to-face attendance is not possible, teleconferencing is also an option. Contact the Animal Ethics Officer (animalethics@westernsydney.edu.au or 4736 0884).

**11. How will I know what has happened to my application?**

Within 5-7 working days of the ACEC meeting, you will receive written notification of the ACEC’s deliberation.

**12. What is an animal research authority (ARA)?**

The Animal Research Act 1985 requires that every person undertaking animal research must be the holder of an Animal Research Authority. It is an offence under the Act to carry out research without such an authority.

Animal Research Authorities are issued for specific projects at the time the project is approved by the ACEC. These authorities can only be issued for a 12 month period, and will need to be renewed annually during the life of any approved project that runs for more than 12 months.

The Animal Research Authority contains the following information:

• the location of the land on which the research is to be carried out

• a description of both the type of animal research and the approved research project

• the Animal Care and Ethics Care Committee that has approved the project

• any conditions on the Authority

• the identification of the person who issued the Authority

• the identification of the person to whom the Authority was issued

• the date on which the Authority was issued

**13. How long is my project approved for?**

Under the legislation, the maximum approval for a project is **three (3) years**. An ARA can only be issued for a maximum of one year. So if your project is approved for 3 years, a Progress Report will be required after one year. If your Progress Report is approved by the ACEC, another ARA will be issued. After another year a second Progress Report will be required and need to be approved by the ACEC before another ARA is issued. At the end of the final year a Final Report is required by the ACEC.



**14. Can I extend my project beyond 3 years?**

No. If your project needs to continue beyond three (3) years, a new application will need to be submitted.

**15. My project was approved for less than 3 years, can I have an extension of time?**

Yes. You will need to submit an Amendment Request Form.

**Note:** The maximum extension that will be granted is one year beyond the previously approved expiry date.

**16. What if I require an amendment?**

Discuss the amendment with the Animal Ethics Officer or the Animal Welfare Officer. Some amendments will require a revised application, others will only require an [Amendment Request Form](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/researchers/forms). Both requests will be considered by the ACEC.

Refer to the [Amendment Guidelines](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/research_ethics_and_integrity/animal) for further information.

**17. Where do I get my animals from?**

**Licensed Animal Supplier** - Under the legislation, animals must only be purchased from a licensed supplier. The University of Western Sydney is a licensed animal supplier.

If the animals you require are not bred by the Animal Facility (Campbelltown) they may be obtained by the Animal Services Unit from an external licensed animal supplier and supplied to your project.

**Exceptions** - Some animals are classified as 'Exempt Animals' under the legislation (livestock and free-living native and exotic animals), i.e. they may be obtained from a source other than a NSW licensed animal supplier. For example, sheep or cattle may be obtained from for teaching purposes.

Free-living animal species may be captured only after obtaining an appropriate [National Parks and Wildlife Service licence](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/wildlifelicences/sciedconlicences.htm).

**18. What are my responsibilities during the conduct of the project?**

The Chief Investigator is ultimately responsible for the welfare of every animal allocated to an approved project. Nevertheless, all persons involved with the use of animals must accept responsibility for those animals at all times.

**Use of animals on a project -** Animals allocated under a particular ACEC approved project must not be used for any purpose other than the procedures stated in the approved application.

**Responsibility for the animals** - As a researcher working with animals on an approved project, you are responsible for the welfare of the animals you use. Your responsibilities extend to all aspects of the care and use of the animal during this time. The Chief Investigator is ultimately responsible for the welfare of every animal allocated to an approved project. Your responsibilities begin from the moment an animal is allocated to the project, to the time of disposal of the animal.

**Monitoring of animal welfare** - The ACEC expects that the research team will be responsible for the appropriate monitoring of the health and welfare of their animals depending on their circumstances. For instance, the type and frequency of monitoring required after surgery will be different from that required before surgery.

**Records** - The legislation requires you to keep records of the animals that you use and the details of any procedures conducted on the animals. All records associated with the monitoring of animal well-being must accompany the individual animal or group of animals at all times.

Specific monitoring checklists must be used for the monitoring of animals following the conduct of procedures.

**Identification of animals** - All animals must be identified at all times, e.g. cage cards, identification tags and collars or microchips. The identification must be linked to the name of the Chief Investigator and the ACEC Approval Number.

**19. How do I report an unexpected or adverse event involving animals?**

If there is an unexpected or adverse event involving animals:

a) the Chief Investigator is to be contacted and prompt and appropriate action taken to halt, remediate or mitigate the impact of the event on the animals.

b) advise the ACEC of any unexpected or adverse effects which impact on the welfare of the animals as soon as possible after the event and within 24 hours. This is done by completing an [Adverse Event Form](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/researchers/forms).

Examples of unexpected or adverse effects that may occur include:

• Death of an animal or group of animals that was not expected (e.g. during surgical procedures, during anaesthesia, following a procedure or treatment, during day-to-day husbandry).

• Adverse events following a procedure or treatment that was not expected. Examples of clinical signs that may develop include, but are not restricted to, diarrhoea, vomiting, respiratory difficulty, collapse, abdominal swelling, rapid weight loss.

• A level of pain or distress that was not predicted during the planning of the project or activity.

• Adverse effects in a larger number of animals than predicted during the planning of the project or activity, based on the number of animals actually used, not the number approved for the study

• A power failure, inclement weather, emergency situations or other factors external to the project or activity that have a negative impact on the welfare of the animals.

**20. What is an investigator?**

Any people who are going to be interacting with animals will need to be named as **Investigators** on the ACEC application form. The Code defines an “**Investigator** as any person who uses animals for scientific purposes”.

**Note:** Interaction does not apply to routine animal husbandry, namely, the practices or procedures performed in relation to the care and management of animals with the primary purpose of maintaining their health and wellbeing. (Refer Code Definitions).

**21. What are the guidelines surrounding the use of tissues from cadavers or tissue sharing?**

The use of tissue from euthanased animals by a researcher is a legitimate mechanism for reducing the number of animals required for research/teaching purposes. Thus this practice is encouraged. Prior animal ethics approval is not required for this practice provided that:

• The animal is killed as part of another legitimate process (e.g. part of another currently approved protocol, part of normal husbandry procedures of an animal facility, or in the abattoir), **AND**

• The animal is not bred specifically for the researcher, **AND**

• The animal is killed **ONLY** by a person authorised to do so (e.g. under a current Animal Research Authority, because of the nature of their employment etc.), **AND**

• The researcher has no input into the treatment or handling of the animal prior to its euthanasia or death, **AND**

• The tissue is collected **AFTER** death of the animal is confirmed. The researcher may be present when the animal is killed and may remove tissues from the animal, OR the animal tissue is removed by the person authorised to euthanase the animal and passed onto the researcher, OR the whole carcass may be passed onto the researcher.

**22. More information and contacts**

For further information contact either the Animal Ethics Officer:

Email: AnimalEthics@westernsydney.edu.au

Tel: 47360884

or the Animal Welfare Officer

Mob:

**Suggestions?**

If you have any suggestions as to how this page may be improved, your input would be appreciated. Please contact the Animal Ethics Officer.

**Animal research ethics guidance documents available from REDI**

* ACEC Frequently Asked Questions
* ACEC Amendment Guidelines
* ACEC Species, Purpose and Procedure Descriptions
* Alternatives to Using Animals
* Tips for Improving the Quality of Your ACEC Application

Animal Research Ethics Team Contact: AnimalEthics@westernsydney.edu.au

**Guidance on Data Storage and Retention Questions in the NEAF**