

Introduction

A high standard of animal welfare is essential to sustain excellence in research that depends upon the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. Additional to this, the highest standards of Animal Welfare are consistent with the Perkins Values of Respect, Innovation, Passion and Collaboration.

The use of animals for scientific purposes is governed in Western Australia by State legislation, the *Animal Welfare Act 2002* and the *Animal Welfare (Scientific Purposes) Regulations 2003*, as well as *The Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* (“The Code”), produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

The Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research (“the Perkins”) holds a *Licence to Use Animals for Scientific Purposes*, issued by the Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD). The Perkins Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) has oversight of the facilities listed on this scientific licence.

This scientific licence covers the Perkins North (Nedlands) and Perkins South (Murdoch) buildings in their entirety. This includes the Perkins Bioresources Facilities, the Australian Cancer Research Foundation (ACRF) Cancer Imaging Facility (CIF), CMCA@Perkins, the Health Department of Western Australia (NMHS and SMHS), the University of Western Australia, the Lion’s Eye Institute, and other tenants’ research facilities housed within the Perkins buildings.

The role of the Perkins AEC is to ensure that the use of animals is justified, to provide for the welfare of those animals, and to ensure that the principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (the 3Rs) are incorporated. The AEC is responsible for applying a uniform and high standard of animal welfare and ethics.

The Governing Principles of the Code apply at all times:

1.1 Respect for animals must underpin all decisions involving the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. This respect is demonstrated by:

- (i) using animals only when it is justified*
- (ii) supporting the wellbeing of the animals involved*
- (iii) avoiding or minimising harm, including pain and distress, to those animals*
- (iv) applying high standards of scientific integrity*
- (v) applying Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (the 3Rs) at all stages of animal care and use:*
 - (a) the Replacement of animals with other methods*
 - (b) the Reduction in the number of animals used*
 - (c) the Refinement of techniques used to minimise the adverse impact on animals*
- (vi) knowing and accepting one's responsibilities.*

1.2 The care and use of animals for scientific purposes must be subject to ethical review.

1.3 A judgement as to whether a proposed use of animals is ethically acceptable must be based on information that demonstrates the principles in Clause 1.1, and must balance whether the potential effects on the wellbeing of the animals involved is justified by the potential benefits.

1.4 The obligation to respect animals, and the responsibilities associated with this obligation, apply throughout the animal's lifetime, including acquisition, transport, breeding, housing, husbandry, use of the animal in a project, and provisions for the animal at the conclusion of their use.

Responsibilities for ethical review, approval and monitoring of animal care and use

The responsibilities of the AEC are defined in the Code.

The AEC must:

- i. review applications for projects and approve only those projects that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code;
- ii. review applications for activities associated with the care and management of animals in the Perkins 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;
- iii. conduct follow-up review of approved projects and activities, and allow the continuation of approval for only those projects and activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Code;
- iv. monitor the care and use of animals, including housing conditions, practices and procedures involved in the care of animals in the Perkins facilities;
- v. take appropriate actions regarding unexpected adverse events;
- vi. take appropriate actions regarding non-compliance;
- vii. approve guidelines for the care and use of animals on behalf of the Perkins;
- viii. provide advice and recommendations to the Perkins; and
- ix. report on its operations to the Perkins.

Institutional Accountability

The AEC is accountable to the Director of the Perkins.

Mechanisms of reporting

The AEC will provide an annual report to the Board of the Perkins, including details on:

- (i) the number and types of projects and activities assessed, and approved or rejected
- (ii) the physical facilities for the care and use of animals by the institution
- (iii) actions that have supported the educational and training needs of AEC members and people involved in the care and use of animals
- (iv) administrative or other difficulties experienced; and
- (v) any matters that may affect the Institute's ability to maintain compliance with the Code and, if appropriate, suitable recommendations.

Composition of the AEC

The Chairperson of the Perkins AEC is appointed by the Director of the Perkins and will either hold a senior position within the institution, or if an external appointee, shall be given the necessary support and authority by the institution to carry out the role. The Chairperson is an additional appointment to Categories A to D members (outlined below), except in the exceptional circumstance that a category member is a late apology. The Chairperson is responsible for impartially guiding the operation of the AEC, resolving conflicts of interest related to the business of the AEC, and representing the AEC in any negotiations with the institution's management.

In accordance with the Code, the AEC shall comprise at least one person from each of four categories of membership outlined below. The Perkins AEC shall strive to appoint at least two members to each of the four categories, to ensure that quorum is always achieved should a member be unavailable to attend a meeting.

Category A member: *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 member: *a suitably qualified person with substantial recent experience in the use of animals for scientific purposes relevant to the institution and the business of the AEC. This must include possession of a higher degree in research or equivalent experience. If the business of the AEC relates to the use of animals for teaching only, a teacher with substantial and recent experience may be appointed.*

Category C member: *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. Veterinarians with specific animal welfare interest and experience may meet the requirement of this category. While not representing an animal welfare organisation, the person should, where possible, be selected on the basis of active membership of, and endorsement by, such an organisation.*

Category D member: *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, either in their employment or beyond their undergraduate education. Category D members should be viewed by the wider community as bringing a completely independent view to the AEC, and must not fit the requirements of any other category.*

The Bioresources Manager or their representative shall also attend AEC meetings. While not a voting member, their input with regards to the care of animals within the Perkins' facilities will be highly valued at meetings.

The Animal Welfare Officer shall also attend AEC meetings. While not a voting member, their input with regards to the welfare of animals within the Perkins' facilities will be highly valued at meetings.

The AEC Executive Officer shall also attend meetings as committee secretary. The AEC Executive Officer is a non-voting member of the committee.

The AEC may invite persons with specific expertise to provide advice, as required.

An Acting Chairperson may be appointed from the AEC membership, to act for the Chairperson in their absence.

Quorum

At least one member from each of the membership categories A, B, C and D must be present at meetings to establish quorum for the conduct of a meeting, and must be present when decisions are made. Categories C and D together must represent at least one-third of those voting members present.

Appointment, reappointment and retirement of members

The Director of the Perkins is responsible for appointing the Chairperson of the AEC.

The Chairperson shall be appointed for an initial period of 12 months, which may be extended with the joint agreement of both parties. The appointment will be for two years.

The Chairperson must acknowledge in writing their acceptance of these Terms of Reference of the AEC and requirements for confidentiality.

The Chairperson shall interview proposed new AEC members to ensure their suitability to serve on the AEC, and that the person fills the criteria for their category and to reveal any biases which could be detrimental to the workings of the committee. The Chairperson shall then make their recommendations to the Director, who will formally appoint (or re-appoint) the Membership of the AEC.

All members of the AEC must acknowledge in writing their acceptance of these Terms of Reference of the AEC and requirements for confidentiality, as outlined below.

New members shall be appointed for an initial period of 12 months, which may be extended with the joint agreement of both parties. Subsequent terms of appointment will be for three years. There is no limit on the number of terms of appointment that a member may serve, provided that both parties are in agreement.

Appointment of the Chairperson or other Member may be terminated by the Director of the Perkins by sending a letter of termination.

Resources

The Perkins will ensure that members receive adequate access to the resources required to perform their role, including educational materials and training opportunities.

Confidentiality

Members must maintain confidentiality regarding the content of applications and the deliberations of the AEC, in accordance with the Perkins' confidentiality agreement and will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement to this effect.

External Expertise may be sought at the discretion of the Committee's Chair or by consensus of the Committee, and members are welcome to ask for such expertise should the committee not be able to address questions, concerns, or uncertainties through the capability of its members.

Members are always welcome to discuss any matter with the Chairperson before bringing it to the committee, if they wish to. The Chairperson may grant approval for a member to seek certain advice from an external party if deemed appropriate. Note that the written consent of the Perkins is required prior to seeking such external advice when confidential material is involved. This acts as a safeguard for both the member and the Institute.

These terms of reference are to be read in conjunction with the AEC Operating Procedures, as amended from time to time.

Version and revision information

Approved by: Prof Peter Leedman

Title: Director

Maintained by: Cathy Pope

Title: Ethics Executive Officer

Review date: August 2023

Original issue: 2014

Current version: 5.0 (August 2021)