

Policy Title: Conduct of Ethical Research and Teaching Involving Animals

Policy Owner: Director, Office of Research and Innovation

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1. INTENT

This document outlines the policy and procedures for the ethical conduct of research and teaching involving animals at Edith Cowan University. It provides guidance for staff and students in considering the many ethical issues involved in the use of animals for research and teaching.

2. ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, affiliated researchers and students involved in research and research-related activities at ECU.

3. DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
“Animal”* means	any live non-human vertebrate (that is, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, encompassing domestic animals, purpose-bred animals, livestock, wildlife) and cephalopods.
“Animal welfare” means	an animal’s quality of life, which encompasses the diverse ways an animal may perceive and respond to their circumstances, ranging from a positive state of wellbeing to a negative state of distress.
“Animal Ethics Committee (AEC)” means	a committee constituted in accordance with the terms of reference and membership laid down in the Code.
“Investigator or teacher” means	any person who uses animals for research or teaching.
“Chief Investigator” means	an investigator or teacher named in an ethics application who has ultimate responsibility for all

	aspects of an approved research project or teaching activity involving the use of animals.
“Research” means	the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it leads to new and creative outcomes.
“3Rs”	The 3Rs are three principles that underpin a systematic framework to achieve the goal of humane experimental techniques. The principles are: Replacement of animals with other methods; Reduction in the number of animals used; and Refinement of techniques used to minimise the adverse impact on animals.

* This definition is from the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (2013)* (the Code). People who use invertebrate animals (other than cephalopods) for research and teaching are required to notify the Animal Ethics Committee if it is likely that vertebrate animals may be caught accidentally.

4. POLICY CONTENT

- 4.1 People who use animals for research and teaching have an obligation to treat animals with respect and to consider their welfare as an essential factor when planning and conducting research projects or teaching activities.
- 4.2 When animals are used for research or for teaching, it is essential that the use is justified and that the welfare of those animals is properly considered and protected. Those using animals have a primary responsibility to observe the ethical, professional and legal principles involved. Research with animals should be carefully designed to ensure the scientific merit of the research.
- 4.3 The University has a responsibility to the community to ensure that research and teaching activities are performed in an ethical manner. Investigators and teachers using animals for research and teaching must comply with the requirements of the WA Animal Welfare Act (2002) and the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (2013)*.
- 4.5 The *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018*) indicates that dissemination of research findings is an important part of the research process, passing on the benefits to other researchers, professional practitioners and the wider community. Dissemination of findings may also avoid further animals being used for the same research.
- 4.6 Animal Ethics Committee (AEC)

The Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) was established by University Council in 1991 and reports to Academic Board. Responsibilities of the AEC include:

- administration of guidelines
- the application of policy

- consideration of applications for ethics approval
- monitoring of approved research projects and teaching activities
- advising the University on animal welfare and ethics issues
- provision of assistance to staff and students in the consideration of ethical issues involved in the use of animals for research and teaching
- enhancing the University community's understanding of the importance of ethical research and teaching practice.

The Animal Ethics Committee operates according to the Code. The terms of reference of the AEC are available from the ethics website:

<https://intranet.ecu.edu.au/research/research-ethics/ethics-committees>.

AEC membership shall be in compliance with the Code. Members of the AEC are appointed by the Academic Board. The AEC includes members in each of the following categories:

- A Chair, who holds a senior position within ECU
- 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 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, either in their employment or beyond their undergraduate education.
- A person responsible for the routine care of animals within ECU.

4.7 Applying for ethics approval

Investigators and teachers must submit a written application to an AEC for all animal research projects or teaching activities. The process for applying for ethics approval from the ECU AEC is available from the ethics website:

<https://intranet.ecu.edu.au/research/research-ethics/animal-ethics-applications/applying-for-ethics-approval>.

Applications must take into account the expected value of the knowledge to be gained, the justification for the project, and all ethical and animal welfare aspects taking into consideration the 3Rs.

Research projects or teaching activities using animals may be performed only after a decision has been made that they are justified, weighing the predicted research or educational value of the project or activity against the potential effects on the welfare of the animals.

4.8 Approval of applications

The Code requires that a research project or teaching activity involving the use of animals obtains ethics approval by a properly constituted Animal Ethics Committee before it commences. Research projects or teaching activities must not commence until written approval has been obtained from the AEC.

4.9 Responsibilities of investigators and teachers

Investigators and teachers have personal responsibility for all matters related to the welfare of the animals they use. This responsibility extends over all facets of the care and use of animals in projects or teaching activities approved by the AEC. Responsibility begins when the animal is allocated to the approved project or teaching activity, and ends with the fate of the animal at the completion of the project or teaching activity.

Investigators and teachers must ensure that the level of supervision of personnel involved in the care and management of the animals takes into account the levels of competence of each person and the responsibilities that they are given.

The Code further outlines the responsibilities of investigators and teachers.

Requirements for the management of research data are provided in the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)*. Investigators should also refer to the ECU policy on research data management.

4.10 Emergencies and unexpected adverse events

Investigators and teachers must ensure that satisfactory arrangements are made for contacting them and other responsible persons in the event of emergencies.

Unexpected animal death and/or illness must be investigated and where possible an autopsy should be performed when animals die unexpectedly or are euthanased due to unforeseen circumstances. Any adverse outcomes, unexpected death of animals or welfare issues must be immediately reported to the AEC *using the adverse event form..*

4.11 Reporting and Monitoring

Investigators and teachers must ensure that accurate records of the use of animals are maintained. This will enable the AEC to verify that the welfare of animals has been monitored.

Investigators and teachers must inform the AEC when a project or teaching activity is completed or discontinued.

All approved research projects and teaching activities are subject to monitoring conditions. This includes completion of an annual report (for projects and activities longer than one year), an annual statistical report and a final report at the completion of the project or teaching activity.

Monitoring may include inspections of animals and facilities by the AEC or by the Animal Welfare Officer, or supervision of procedures by the Animal Welfare Officer.

4.12 Concerns and complaints

Enquiries, concerns or complaints should be made initially to the Research Ethics Team. The *Australian Code of the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)* further outlines a framework for dealing with allegations of research misconduct. Investigators should also refer to the ECU policies on responsible research conduct and research misconduct.

5. ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In relation to this policy, the following positions are responsible for the following

Policy Owner

The Policy Owner being the Director, Office of Research and Innovation, has overall responsibility for the content of this policy and its operation in ECU.

Staff/students

Staff/students are required to comply with the content of this policy and to seek guidance in the event of uncertainty as to its application.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Other documents which are relevant to the operation of this policy are as follows:

Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2018#block-views-block-file-attachments-content-block-1>

WA Animal Welfare Act (2002)

<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/animalwelfare/animal-welfare-act-2002>

Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th edition (2013)

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/australian-code-care-and-use-animals-scientific-purposes-8th-edition-2013>

Responsible Research Conduct

<http://policysearch.ecu.edu.au/WebDrawer.PolicySearch/Record/607/file/document>

Research Misconduct

<http://policysearch.ecu.edu.au/WebDrawer.PolicySearch/Record/605/file/document>

Research Data Management

<http://policysearch.ecu.edu.au/WebDrawer.PolicySearch/Record/603/file/document>

7. CONTACT INFORMATION

For queries relating to this document please contact:

Policy Owner	Director, Office of Research and Innovation
All Enquiries Contact:	Senior Research Ethics Advisor
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8. APPROVAL HISTORY

Policy approved by:	Vice-Chancellor
Date policy first approved:	April 1999
Date last modified:	12 April 2019
Revision history:	<p>11 December 2007 (AB105/07)</p> <p>20 November 2015 – reviewed in light of academic organisational restructure, updated to new policy template and updated Code details. Approved by the revised Policy Owner.</p> <p>12 April 2019 – minor update to align with changes made to the National Code. Approved by the Policy Owner.</p>
Next revision due:	Late in 2019 (after the outcome of the Research Review)
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