

University of South Australia Animal Ethics Committee

Terms of Reference

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| Type | AEC Operation |
| Document ID | AEC-1 |
| Title | Terms of Reference |
| Date Effective: | December 2023 |
| Date Reviewed: | December 2023 |
| Next Review Date: | December 2025 |
| Document Owner | Animal Ethics Officers |
| Version | 3 |
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| Purpose | The purpose of this document is to outline the scope, membership, roles and responsibilities, functions and operation of the UniSA AEC. |

1. Scope

The University of South Australia (UniSA) Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) was established by the University under the authority of the Vice Chancellor.

The UniSA AEC is governed by the South Australian Animal Welfare Act 1985 (hereafter referred to as the 'Act') and the Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 2013 (hereafter referred to as the 'Code') and that of any states/territories where UniSA is licenced to undertake animal based research.

The purpose of the UniSA AEC is to review project proposals involving animals and promote the responsibilities of investigators and the institution to ensure undertaken research is compliant with relevant legislation.

2. Membership

- 2.1. Membership is comprised in accordance with the Code and the Act. The UniSA Research Office, in close consultation with the Chair, monitors the membership of the UniSA AEC to ensure it meets the requirements.
- 2.2. The AEC may invite a non-voting member to attend an AEC meeting to advise specific aspects of relevant projects or may have particular skills and background of value to the AEC.
- 2.3. The members of the AEC will be appointed or re-appointed by the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Research and Enterprise upon recommendation by the Deputy Director, Ethics, Compliance and Infrastructure.
- 2.4. The term of office of appointed members is two years. Incumbents may be re-appointed. The term of office of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson is three years. Incumbents may be re-appointed. The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the AEC should hold a senior position within the institution.
- 2.5. Before appointment, all members of the AEC must acknowledge in writing their acceptance of the terms of reference of the AEC and the UniSA's Confidentiality Policy. Members and attendees must maintain confidentiality at all times regarding the deliberations of the AEC.

- 2.6. The Category C and D membership are provided with an honorarium of \$120 per meeting they support.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. AEC Members

AEC Members are responsible for reviewing meeting agenda items, regularly attending AEC meetings, actively engaging in Committee discussions, communicating with the Secretariat, and declaring conflicts of interest. Further, members may be requested to attend additional out of session meetings, facility inspections and training.

3.2. Chairperson

The Chairperson is responsible for steering the Committee meetings, ensuring all members are heard, summarising discussions and AEC deliberations. The Chairperson's responsibilities extend to addressing concerns of members and grievances of stakeholders, reporting to the institution, and addressing AEC matters outside of meetings, providing oversight and direction to the institution on behalf of the AEC.

3.3. Ethics Officers (Secretariat)

The Ethics Officers provide administrative support to the AEC, act as the first point of contact for enquiries regarding animal related research or teaching and communicate with applicants, regulatory bodies, management, animal facility staff and veterinarians, and other stakeholders on behalf of the AEC.

3.4. University Veterinarians

University Veterinarians are appointed by the institution to ensure activities involving the use of animals proceed in compliance with the Code and decisions of the AEC and Executive Committee.

The AEC Executive may be established to review minor modifications to approved projects, where the change is not likely to cause additional harm, pain or distress to the animals, and does not deviate from the original aims of the approved project.

The Executive must include a Chair and category C or D member. Other members may be requested as delegated by the AEC, Chair, or Executive Officers.

The AEC may decide a new application can be approved subject to minor changes and may delegate the review of these changes to the AEC Executive. The AEC Executive must not approve new applications, or changes to applications outside the request of the AEC.

All decisions and recommendations of the Executive must be ratified at the next meeting of the AEC.

4. Functions

The UniSA AEC:

- 4.1. reviews applications for all proposed research and teaching activities and approve only those activities that conform to the requirements of the Code.
- 4.2. monitors all research and teaching activities that involve the care and use of animals.
- 4.3. supports and promotes the education, training and competency of all personnel involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.
- 4.4. approves Institutional guidelines for assessing and ensuring the competency of people involved in the care and use of animals.

- 4.5. takes appropriate actions regarding unexpected adverse events, non-compliance, or other matters involving the care of animals.
- 4.6. records and maintains documentation for all approved projects throughout the life of the project, and archives in accordance with university procedures.
- 4.7. reports annually on the activities and operation of the AEC to the institution and regulatory bodies as required.
- 4.8. provides advice to the institution on any matters that relate to or may affect the welfare of animals used for research and teaching.
- 4.9. undertakes all duties and responsibilities as specified by the Code.

5. Operation

The UniSA AEC:

- 5.1. is convened in compliance with the quorum requirements of the Code and the Act to review and discuss business relating to the use of animals for scientific purposes.
- 5.2. consists of a Chair and one member present from each category. A balance of membership must be maintained whereby Category C and D members must represent no less than one third of all members present.
If a member must leave the room for any reason, including a conflict of interest with an item being discussed, quorum and membership balance must be re-established before continuing.
- 5.3. seeks declaration of conflicts of interests of members. The person should remove themselves from the meeting during the deliberation of relevant items and the decision-making process. If a conflict is declared and the AEC does not believe there is an actual conflict of interest, the AEC may decide the person is not required to leave the meeting.
- 5.4. aims to reach consensus for all decisions to the greatest extent possible, based on a fair, thorough, and inclusive process of discussion and deliberation. Where consensus cannot be reached after reasonable efforts to resolves differences, the AEC should consult the applicants for ways of modifying the project that will lead to consensus.
- 5.5. maintains minutes and records of meetings. Meetings may be held in person, via teleconference or a combination of both. At least one meeting per year must be held in person.
- 5.6. completes an inspection of the UniSA animal facilities annually. Inspections should include a Category C or D member and should include a report to the AEC detailing any significant findings. Relevant details from this inspection may also be communicated to the institution in its annual AEC report.

Document Version History:

| Version | Notes |
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| 2 | December 2023: 2017 Terms of Reference is revised in line with the 2020 External Review recommendations. |
| 3 | Document control table included at beginning of the document |
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