Policies & Procedures of the Queen’s University
Animal Care Committee

1. Procedures for the Use of Animals

1.1) All research and teaching at Queen's University involving animals that are housed in University facilities, on private farms, collected in the wild, or held in facilities other than those of the University (institutions not necessarily assessed by the Canadian Council on Animal Care) requires the prior approval of the University Animal Care Committee (UACC).

1.2) At Queen's University an approved Animal Use Protocol (AUP) must cover the use of all animals in research, teaching or testing. The UACC is responsible for overseeing the work carried out by all members of Queen’s University who use animals for research, teaching or testing.

   a) Therefore, a Queen’s researcher who wishes to carry out animal-based work within a host institution’s facilities must first submit an animal use protocol to the UACC. The host institution’s ACC must also approve the protocol before commencement. Researchers from other institutions who apply to use the Queen’s University Biological Station (QUBS) or another Queen’s animal care facility must provide the UACC with copies of their approved protocols (by home institution) for UACC approval. All home approved protocols will be reviewed by the UACC Subcommittee for approval.

   b) New Animal Use Protocols (AUPs) should be submitted to the UACC Coordinator at least two months in advance of the anticipated start date of the project or course. Because the UACC can request clarification of any missing or incorrect information, submitting an incomplete application can add a month or more to the approval process. Please be advised that research funding cannot be released until all applicable approvals are in place.

1.3) In order to achieve the objective of ensuring that the use of vertebrate animals at Queen’s University meets or exceeds the standards of animal welfare established by the Animals for Research Act (Ontario), and the Canadian Council on Animal Care, the UACC has chosen to review all Queen's University sanctioned activities involving live animals whether they are to occur on Queen's property or otherwise. In order to facilitate this process, the UACC requires advance notice of any proposed events. Although a full animal use protocol may not be required, general information (as specified in the UACC Policy on Activities Involving Live Animals) will need to be provided for review and final approval by the UACC Subcommittee prior to any activities taking place.

1.4) Renewals are to be submitted within the one year approval period. Renewal submissions must describe all new changes to the protocol since the previous approval. To facilitate the process, renewals should be submitted at least 1 months before their renewal date.

1.5) Investigators must apply and be approved for any modification to a current protocol prior to implementing any changes by completing a protocol amendment.

1.6) All protocol submissions (new, renewals and amendments) must be submitted in Topaz Elements. Investigators are encouraged to consult the UACC Coordinator or the University Veterinarian with any questions they may have before submitting a protocol for review.

2. Procedures of the Animal Care Committee

2.1) The UACC shall meet monthly. Additional meetings may be held at the call of the Chair.

2.2) The UACC shall require that all animal use at Queen’s University for teaching, testing, or research by University personnel or University affiliated research members, complete and submit to the UACC an animal use protocol, which will be maintained within the Topaz Elements database. All Queen’s University sanctioned activities involving live animals, whether they are to occur on Queen’s property or otherwise also need to receive UACC approval prior to taking place.

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2.3) Protocols are reviewed prior to the scheduled UACC meeting and discussed by all members at the meeting where decisions are reached by consensus.

2.4) The UACC shall inspect all University animal facilities at any time, and shall do so at least once a year to evaluate facilities where animals are housed and/or used and to encourage open communication with the UACC. All members of the UACC are encouraged to participate in at least one facility visit(s) on an annual basis. Following every facility tour, a formal report is generated for UACC review and distribution to the facility manager and all relevant staff/users. Responses to recommendations or comments are required and followed up on. The senior administrator responsible for animal care receives a copy of all reports.

2.5) The UACC shall conduct annual laboratory tours to assess all areas where animals are used. The tours are conducted to assess compliance with the CCAC Guidelines, Animals for Research Act and UACC Policies, to better understand the in vivo work being done, to meet with those performing the in vivo work, and to encourage open communication between researchers and the UACC. Memorandums to the individual PI’s and all lab personnel present at the time of the tour will be created by the UACC Coordinator for electronic distribution. The University Veterinarian will be included in all correspondence. When follow up is required, PI’s will be provided with a deadline and the UACC Coordinator will track responses accordingly, updating the UACC as needed.

2.6) The UACC shall establish procedures for post-approval monitoring of animal use protocols, and define the roles and responsibilities of the members of the animal care and use program in the monitoring process.

To facilitate university compliance as dictated by the Animals for Research Act (ARA), Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) guidelines and policies, and Queen’s University policies and standard operating procedures, a Quality Assurance Program (QAP) has been implemented. This program provides support to the research community while ensuring the protection of animal subjects by confirming accurate and consistent UACC approved protocol performance of animal based research in a collegial and unobtrusive manner. The QAP Coordinator works under the guidance of the University Veterinarian/Director, Animal Care Services and according to the needs and intentions of the UACC.

2.6a) The QAP Coordinator serves as the eyes and ears of the UACC, without voting privileges, but with obligations to advocate on behalf of the UACC when interacting with researchers and research associates. The QAP Coordinator observes animal use activity, prepares accurate reports of observations made, provides recommendations for maintaining compliance, assists (if required) in the preparation of correct amendment applications to keep laboratory activities compliant with approved protocols, and (if required) provide training for non-compliant activities.

The QAP Coordinator in conjunction with the UACC is responsible for determining and working to correct breaches of compliance with approved animal use protocols and SOP’s. The QAP Coordinator will work with the concerned animal users, the UACC, Veterinarian, animal care staff and the institution’s senior administration to correct all breaches of compliance. All members of the animal care and use program will be informed about sanctions that will be taken by the administration in the event of serious breaches of compliance.

Where there are persistent breaches of compliance or threats to the health and safety of personnel or animals, these will be reported back to the UACC. The UACC will promptly address these issues through communications with the animal user(s), meetings and site visits, and eventually communications with the Senior Administrator as necessary.

2.7) The UACC delegates the Veterinarian(s) the authority to treat, remove from a study or euthanize, if necessary, an animal according to the Veterinarian’s professional judgment. The Veterinarian will attempt to contact the animal user whose animal is in poor condition before beginning any treatment that has not previously been agreed upon, but the Veterinarian has the authority to proceed with any necessary emergency measures, whether or not the animal user is available. A written report will be sent by the Veterinarian to the animal user and to the UACC following any such event. The Veterinarian and UACC may also choose to delegate certain responsibilities to one or more senior animal care staff member(s).


3.1) Each investigator shall submit all Animal Use Protocols (AUPs) to the Coordinator of the UACC using the electronic protocol management system Topaz Elements. Once submitted, all protocol submissions including renewals and

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amendments receive a review to detect preliminary concerns. New submission protocols and full resubmission protocols may also undergo a veterinary pre-review. Any comments and/or questions, resulting from the preliminary reviews are corresponded to the investigator. This feedback should be incorporated into a resubmission of the protocol. If there are no suggested revisions, the submission will be assigned to UACC review accordingly. Incomplete applications or those received past the deadline may be deferred to the next monthly meeting.

3.2) The Coordinator of the UACC shall assign a primary and secondary reviewer to each new protocol (level B-E); full resubmission protocol (level B-E) and level E protocol renewal. These reviewers will be responsible for reviewing and leading the discussion of the protocol at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the UACC. All remaining members of the UACC (apart from those where a conflict of interest is present) will be assigned the protocol as committee reviewers, meaning they have access to view and comment on the protocol but are not required to do so.

3.3) Level A new and full resubmission protocols are reviewed and approved by the University Animal Care Subcommittee, consisting of the Chair, the Veterinarian and a community member. Level A renewals are reviewed and approved by the UACC Coordinator. The CCAC does not require that an animal use protocol be maintained for level A work, however the UACC has found it beneficial to maintain records for level A protocols where invertebrate animals are housed in facilities on campus. Researchers unsure of their need to submit an animal use protocol should contact the UACC Coordinator.

3.4) Level B-D protocol renewals are reviewed by the University Animal Care Subcommittee, consisting of the Chair, the Veterinarian and a community member. All remaining members of the UACC (apart from those where a conflict of interest is present) will be assigned the protocol as committee reviewers, meaning they have access to view and comment on the protocol but are not required to do so. The UACC reviews for approval, all actions of the Subcommittee by way of the subcommittee reviews report which is submitted to the monthly meeting. This report covers renewals, pilot progress reports, collaborative reviews, protocol revisions and amendments. To ensure transparency for level D protocol renewals, the report provides a comment summary as sent to the PI (regardless of the review outcome). The Subcommittee reserves the right to defer any renewal submission to the UACC should the proposed changes warrant further review.

Renewals are to be submitted before the protocol is due for renewal (within the one year period). Electronic reminders are sent out monthly for at least 3 months prior to the renewal date. Renewal submissions must describe all new changes to the protocol since the previous approval as well as provide a progress report on the outcome of the last approval period. This includes complications encountered relative to animal health and welfare and how they were resolved as well as the adequacy of the humane/study endpoints.

3.5) After the Committee members have completed their assessments, they shall discuss the proposal at a full UACC meeting and, taking account of the members’ evaluations, either a approve, b request clarifications/revisions from the investigator before the protocol may be reviewed and approved by the subcommittee, or c decline the proposal, requiring it be revised and resubmitted to the next full meeting of the UACC for review.

If the members of the Committee reviewing the proposal so indicate, they shall be given an opportunity to see any clarifications/revisions that may be provided by the investigator. Reviewers shall also have access to the investigator’s grant application(s) and/or other appropriate documents in order to satisfy themselves concerning the nature of the experimental procedures to be utilized. The UACC may contact the investigator to collect further information on behalf of any reviewer.

3.6) Once a protocol has been approved, the investigator will receive a notification email stating so. If the protocol has not been approved the investigator will receive email notification explaining the conditions upon which the protocol will/may gain approval status. The office of the UACC maintains the Topaz Elements database of current and historical protocols. UACC Committee members, facility managers, animal care staff, and Office of Research Services (ORS) staff will have ‘view only’ access to all current and historical protocols as needed.

3.7) A one year approval period is granted with the possibility for three consecutive yearly renewals (4 years total). Prior to the expiry of the one year approval period, the investigator is sent at least three reminder emails stating that the project will require renewal should the investigator wish to continue the research. A full resubmission protocol is required after the full 4 year approval period. Allowing active protocols to expire, when animals work is continuing is considered a breach of compliance.

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3.8) During the course of the project, changes to the approved protocol may be requested by submitting an amendment. There are three categories of amendments:

a. Administrative amendments are straightforward changes to the protocol which do not affect animal use or welfare. They are to be reviewed and approved by the UACC Coordinator (with consultation of the UACC Chair and University Veterinarian as required). Administrative amendments are usually assessed within 2-3 days of submission. (i.e.: changes to personnel; changes to funding information; title change etc.)

b. Minor amendments are changes to the protocol which may affect animal use or welfare, but do not increase the category of invasiveness. At the discretion of the UACC Chair and the University Veterinarian, or delegates, modifications may be referred to the full UACC for review, which will add further time to the review process. Minor amendments are usually assessed within 4-5 days of submission. (i.e.: increase in animal numbers; change in anesthetic agent used or in use of analgesic agents; change in method of euthanasia; change in procedure in a live animal, where the effects on the animal are equivalent.)

c. Major amendments are changes which affect animal use or welfare, including but not limited to those increasing the original category of invasiveness. (i.e.: addition of new animal species; addition of animal strains known to have specific housing / care requirements or health concerns; change from non-survival to survival surgery.) The UACC meets once per month, therefore major amendments can only be processed on a monthly basis. Substantial modifications may result in a request to submit a completely new Animal Use Protocol.

The UACC reserves the right to determine whether a change is too significant to approve as an amendment and must be submitted as a new protocol. All protocol amendments are reported to the full University Animal Care Committee for comment at the monthly meeting in the Subcommittee reviews report.

3.9) To justify animal use, the Queen’s University Animal Care Committee must be satisfied that a project has scientific merit. If the project will not be peer reviewed by an external agency before it begins, the Principal Investigator is asked for the names of 3 reviewers, not affiliated with the project in any way (external to the research team and laboratory in which the protocol will be undertaken, and not directly involved in the protocol design or implementation), who could peer-review the proposal before the protocol can be approved. As a minimum, one reviewer must be external to the Committee. In addition, regardless of the funding source, peer review for scientific merit may be sought for any protocol where, in the judgement of the UACC, the specifics of animal use have not been adequately justified or explained. Principal Investigators are asked to provide additional information necessary for the reviewers to assess scientific merit (one page scientific overview similar to that from a grant). The reviews are documented and must contain sufficient information to support the reviewers’ conclusion(s).

4. Pilot Projects

The UACC encourages the use of pilot studies with few animals when new approaches, methods, or products are being tried. Animal users must report on the results of pilot studies, regardless of whether they wish to pursue the study immediately or not, in order to preserve important data on various approaches to animal based studies, whether they work well or not.

Submitting a pilot project for approval entails the same directions as submitting a new protocol for approval. When completing the protocol it must be labelled as a pilot project, rather than a new application, or full resubmission protocol. At renewal time, regardless of whether the study is to continue, a pilot progress report must be completed. If the study is to continue a full resubmission must be submitted or a pilot extension request can be made. Extensions are only available if nothing is changing within the application and little or no progress was made during the initial 1 year period.

5. Interim Approval

In the event that interim approval (approval prior to the next meeting of the UACC) is required, the investigator should submit the required protocol or protocol renewal following the regular process however communicating approval needs
to the UACC including clear justification for this request. The UACC delegates the responsibility of interim approvals to the Subcommittee. Interim approvals are subject to discussion and final approval at a full meeting of the UACC.

6. Appeal Mechanism

In the event that the UACC rejects a submitted protocol for either ethical or scientific reasons and the Investigator does not accept the decision, the following process will apply:

6.1) The investigator may request that the UACC reconsider its decision. This could include the submission of a revised protocol following feedback from the UACC via the Chair. Reconsideration may involve the investigator meeting with the UACC so that they may thoroughly review and understand the details of the protocol. The UACC may seek scientific opinions from individuals who are not members of the UACC.

6.2) If this does not provide a satisfactory solution to the investigator, then the investigator may appeal to the Senior Administrator responsible for the animal care and use program (the Vice-Principal, Research). The VP (Research) will then work with both the UACC and the protocol author to endeavour to find a satisfactory solution.

7. Conflict of Interest

It is the responsibility of the institution and the UACC to ensure that the use of animals within the institution and by its members reflects the standards of the society within which that institution exists. Therefore, every effort will be made to have diversity on the UACC and to avoid conflicts of interest in order to keep decisions balanced and fair. This is true for each category of member on the UACC.

Conflict of interest is defined as a situation in which a person or organization is involved in multiple interests (financial, emotional, or otherwise), one of which could possibly corrupt the motivation of the individual or organization.

If at any point during the protocol review process a conflict of interest arises, the protocol reviewer is asked to declare the conflict to the UACC Coordinator and if necessary they can be removed from the assignment (reviewers who do not feel comfortable reviewing a protocol for any reason will be accommodated). If a conflict of interest becomes apparent during a UACC meeting, affected individuals are asked to declare the conflict. The UACC strives for transparency and all final decisions are reached by consensus.

8. Confidentiality

All Committee members must respect the confidentiality of UACC matters and the privacy of the proposed work and intellectual property that they are reviewing. The UACC, institution and animal users must work together to ensure that the UACC has all the information necessary to conduct an appropriate ethical review of the proposed projects, while ensuring that confidentiality is maintained. All Committee members will sign a confidentiality agreement.