

UNIVERSITY ANIMAL CARE COMMITTEE

Policy on Peer Review for Scientific Merit

The *CCAC Policy Statement for Senior Administrators Responsible for Animal Care and Use Programs (2008)* states that it is the institution's responsibility to have in place a mechanism to ensure that proposed animal use for research is independently peer-reviewed for its scientific merit before it is given final approval by the animal care committee (ACC).

Research proposing the use of live vertebrate animals must indicate whether the project as described in the animal use protocol (AUP) has been peer reviewed for scientific merit. Successful scientific merit is not necessarily contingent on a grant that was successful in competition; therefore, evidence of scientific merit may be submitted even if the award was not granted. Evidence of results demonstrating a non-funded but highly ranked application must be provided (e.g.: CIHR Project Grant score >3.5). Additional evidence to clarify the outcome could be requested.

Additional evidence to clarify the outcome could be requested. Where an independent peer review has not been undertaken, arrangements for arm's length peer review must be made and the review successfully completed before the AUP is approved by the University Animal Care Committee (UACC).

For the purposes of this policy, an independent peer review is defined as the review of the research proposal by two or more reviewers, who have the technical expertise to assess the science of the protocol and are at arm's length from the research team. The peer reviewers will assess the proposal and offer a recommendation as to whether the proposal has adequate scientific merit to justify the use of animals. Reviewers will not consider the degree of compliance of the research methods with Queen's UACC policies.

To assure that peer review is at arm's length from the Principal Investigator (PI) and the UACC, the following terms and conditions for peer reviewers are required:

- Peer reviewers must be external to the research team and laboratory in which the protocol will be undertaken and must not be directly involved in the protocol design or implementation.
- Reviewers should have appropriate experience and/or knowledge in the relevant field, discipline or sub-discipline to adequately review protocol content.
- Reviewers should not have published with the lead investigator in the past 6 years.
- Reviewers should not have been a research supervisor or graduate student of the lead investigator or any of the co-applicants, within the past six years.
- Reviewers should not be in any other potential conflict of interest (e.g., personal, financial).
- Recommendations for reviewers may be submitted for addition to the general reviewer pool.

A peer-review is considered complete when at least two reviews are in agreement.

Revision History:

| Date | New Version |
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| 07/12/2010 | Policy Created and Approved |
| 01/23/2013 | Triennial Review; Revised to clarify that peer-review must be complete before protocol approval (not necessarily review) |
| 05/29/2018 | Triennial Review |
| 12/16/2019 | Revised post CCAC assessment to clarify reviewers could be supplied by PI but would be added to general pool from which reviewers are selected; Reviewer form revised to capture latest CCAC template |
| 02/16/2020 | Revised to address CCAC definition of arm's length review; UACC Coordinator can manage scientific merit review process but VPR staff select reviewers |
| 04/20/2023 | Triennial Review; Clarified option to demonstrate non-funded but highly ranked grant application as scientific merit; Removed procedural text now found in SOP; New Format |