

University Animal Care Committee Standard Operating Procedure		
Document No: 1.12	Subject: Scientific Merit	
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Location: Queen's University

Purpose: The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to describe the procedures surrounding peer-review for scientific merit of animal use protocols.

- 1. Introduction and Definitions:** To justify animal use, the UACC must be satisfied that a project has scientific merit.

Abbreviations: University Animal Care Committee **UACC**, Principal Investigator **PI**, Animal Use Protocol **AUP**, Canadian Council on Animal Care **CCAC**

2. Procedures:

AUPs must indicate whether the project has been peer-reviewed for scientific merit. Where the applicant confirms that 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 protocol is approved. The UACC may request additional supporting evidence to confirm that an independent peer-review was sufficient to meet the required standards.

A reviewer pool will be maintained by the UACC Coordinator with suitable reviewers from this pool being selected by staff within the Office of the Vice-Principal Research. The UACC Coordinator will approach the selected reviewers to provide written assessment of the proposed research within a timely fashion.

A scientific merit proposal form (with adequate detail to establish both scientific merit of the research as well as justification of the use of animals) is provided by the PI and is sent for review, along with a reviewer comment form.

The reviewer form includes a statement requesting declaration of the relationship between the reviewer and the PI to ensure an arm's-length review. In addition, the reviewer must declare whether they are qualified to review the proposal.

Reviewer comments and recommendations are maintained on file by the UACC Coordinator, and the proposal is either rejected or accepted. If only two of three reviews are received and in agreement, the recommendation will stand. A third review is required where two reviews offer differing recommendations. As a minimum, one reviewer must be external to the UACC.

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

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adequately justified or explained. Reviews are documented and must contain sufficient information to support reviewer conclusions.

Notes:

[Scientific Merit Proposal Form](#)

[Scientific Merit Reviewer Form](#)

References:

SOP Revision History:

Date	New Version
Sept 2023	SOP Created & Approved
Feb 2025	Reference and link to Proposal Form added