

# Animal Research Competency Guidelines

## Section 1 - Introduction

(1) Animal based research is subject to various regulatory frameworks in national and state jurisdictions. The [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes \(2013\)](#) (The Code) encompasses all aspects of the care and use of animals for teaching and research purposes and includes specific responsibilities in relation to competency. The Code requires that the University develop guidelines describing how the competence of people involved in the care and use of animals will be assessed and ensured. The following Guidelines describe the mechanisms used at the University of Newcastle to determine that those involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes are competent in the procedures that they carry out.

## Section 2 - Intent

(2) The Code requires that institutions

- a. Ensure that all people involved in the care and use of animals understand their responsibilities: and
- b. Provide adequate resources for appropriate education, training and assessment of competence of investigators, and certification of such competence to the satisfaction of the Animal Care and Ethics Committee (ACEC).

(3) The intention of these Guidelines is to ensure that those involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes are competent as described in the [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes \(2013\)](#) and the Guidelines should be read in conjunction with this document

## Section 3 - Competence

(4) The Code states that people who care for and use animals must ensure that procedures are performed competently, and

- a. be competent for the procedure they perform, or
- b. be under the direct supervision of a person who is competent to perform the procedure.

(5) All personnel involved in research animal care and use must comply with this requirement including investigators, animal care staff, veterinary staff and members of the ACEC. The mechanisms for development and assessment of competency differ for each group and are outlined below.

### Animal based teachers and researchers

(6) The University and ACEC recognise that animal research involves a broad range of procedures, some simple and some very complex, and that investigators competent in a particular procedure are the best personnel to supervise, train and assess competency in others for that procedure.

(7) Persons carrying out experiments on animals shall have received instruction in a scientific discipline relevant to the experimental work being undertaken. They shall also have satisfied the University that they have attained a level of

training sufficient for carrying out their tasks. Training may be formal or based on past or present knowledge using the same or a similar species or procedure. People who are considered yet to be competent are to be under the direct supervision of a person who is competent and a monitoring strategy will need to be in place until competency is attained.

(8) The University provides a training program that provides a foundation to develop competency in animal research procedures and recommends that all inexperienced researchers undertake the relevant parts of this training program.

(9) The University and ACEC encourage the use of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that clearly describe how an animal research procedure is performed competently. When approved by the ACEC such SOPs should be used as a standard to determine competency in a particular procedure.

(10) During completion of an application to the ACEC the Chief Investigator notifies the ACEC whether particular investigators are competent in the procedures to be carried out in the project, or require supervision. When supervision is required the Chief Investigator nominates a person competent in the procedure to be the supervisor.

(11) Chief Investigators will be competent with respect to assessing the wellbeing of animals used in a project and will ensure that animal wellbeing is monitored by an adequate number of competent people.

(12) In the Annual Progress Report/Renewal Application to the ACEC for a particular project, the Chief Investigator notifies the ACEC if investigators have reached competence in a particular procedure.

(13) The University will maintain details of investigators competence in particular procedures in a format accessible to investigators and members of the ACEC.

(14) The ACEC may include assessment of competency in routine or specific monitoring activities. Such an assessment will be performed by a person or group nominated by the ACEC and holding suitable qualifications, against an agreed competency standard (which may be an ACEC approved SOP).

## **Animal care and veterinary staff**

(15) The person responsible for the overall management of research animal breeding and holding facilities (the 'facility manager') is appointed on the basis of appropriate animal care or veterinary qualifications or experience.

(16) The facility manager ensures that the practices and procedures for the care and management of animals are based on current best practice, and that animal wellbeing is monitored by competent people, knowledgeable about animal behaviour and signs of pain and distress for the species at all stages and sites of animal care and use and that monitoring occurs frequently enough that sick or injured animals are promptly detected and identified, and that appropriate action is taken.

(17) The facility manager provides details of the training and experience of animal care staff to the ACEC and information about how inexperienced staff will be supervised until competent in the procedures they perform.

(18) The University supports animal care staff in gaining formal animal care qualifications and accepts, as evidence of competency, completion of a suitable competency based animal care course.

(19) The person providing oversight of the program of veterinary care, including the care, husbandry and health of animals and biosecurity in a facility, is appointed on the basis of appropriate veterinary qualifications, eligible for registration in New South Wales, and extensive practical experience and familiarity with animal research. This person is expected to comply with the requirement for demonstrated continuing professional education to maintain registration. For animal care and veterinary staff, the attainment or demonstration of competency may be recorded as part of the Performance Review and Development (PRD) process.

## **Animal Care and Ethics Committee (ACEC)**

(20) Where the composition of the ACEC is as required by the Code, the Committee will be considered competent in undertaking ethical review and will provide fair, consistent and timely review of applications and reports related to the care and use of animals.

(21) The University provides an induction for new ACEC members which includes legislative and committee documentation, makes available appropriate periodicals and supports the attendance of ACEC members at appropriate seminars, conferences and workshops.

## **Section 4 - Roles and Responsibilities**

(22) for animal based teachers and researchers see Clauses 6 to 14

(23) for animal care and veterinary staff see Clauses 15 to 19

(24) for ACEC see Clauses 20 to 21

## Status and Details

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## Glossary Terms and Definitions

**"University"** - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

**"Course"** - When referring to a course offered by the University, a course is a set of learning activities or learning opportunities with defined, assessed and recorded learning outcomes. A course will be identified by an alphanumeric course code and course title. Course types include core courses, compulsory courses, directed courses, capstone courses and electives. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

**"Personnel"** - In relation to a party, any employee, officer, agent, contractor, sub-contractor, student or volunteer of that party.

**"Program"** - When referring to learning, a program is a sequence of approved learning, usually leading to an Award. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

**"Research"** - As defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, or any replacing Code or document.

**"Staff"** - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

**"Supervisor"** - Staff members with direct supervisory responsibility for other staff within the workplace (a Supervisor may also be member of Senior Management, with duties as an Officer as defined in the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, or any replacing legislation).