

Animal Research Competency Guidelines

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) Animal based research is subject to Federal and State regulatory obligations. The [Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 8th edition \(2013\)](#) (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.

Section 2 - Intent

(2) Clause 2.1.2 of [the Code](#) requires that institutions ensure that all people involved in the care and use of animals:

- a. understand their responsibilities and the requirements of [the Code](#); and
- b. have the necessary skills and knowledge, and have access to appropriate educational programs and resources.

(3) These Guidelines outline how the University of Newcastle (University) will assess and ensure the competence of people involved in the care and use of animals at the University.

Section 3 - Audience

(4) These guidelines must be read and complied with by all personnel involved in research animal care and use, including Chief Investigators, investigators (teachers and Researchers, including students), animal care staff, veterinary staff and the Animal Care and Ethics Committee (ACEC).

Section 4 - Related Documents

(5) This document should be read in conjunction with:

- a. [Animal Research Regulatory Manual](#);
- b. [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#);
- c. [Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 8th edition \(2013\)](#);
- d. [Animal Research Act 1985 No 123](#); and
- e. [Animal Research Regulation 2010 \(NSW\)](#).

Section 5 - Document specific definition

(6) Competent, as defined in [the Code](#), means the consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required regarding the care and use of animals. It embodies the ability to transfer and apply knowledge and skill to new situations and environments.

Section 6 - Competence

(7) Clause 1.29 (i) of [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.

(8) The mechanisms that the University uses to ensure and assess competency differ across roles and are outlined below.

Animal Based Researchers and Teachers

(9) The University and the ACEC recognise that animal research involves a broad range of duties and 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.

Competency Requirements

(10) All persons listed on animal research projects will:

- a. complete modules 1 and 2 of the University's [Code and Animal Research Ethics \(CARE\)](#) training course upon joining an animal ethics protocol and once every three years thereafter;
- b. receive instruction in a scientific discipline relevant to the experimental work being undertaken; and
- c. have satisfied the ACEC 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/s.

(11) Persons carrying out animal research 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 be in place until competency is attained.

Assessing Competency

(12) Assessment of competency must occur prior to completion of an ethics application that lists investigators for a particular project. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), approved by the ACEC, must be used to determine competency in a particular procedure where an SOP for that procedure exists.

(13) In submitting an ethics application to the ACEC, the Chief Investigator will notify the ACEC whether the identified Investigators are competent for the procedures to be carried out in the project, or whether supervision will be required. When supervision is required the Chief Investigator will nominate a person who is competent in the procedure to be the supervisor.

(14) In the Annual Progress Report/Renewal application to the ACEC, the Chief Investigator will notify the ACEC of any investigators who have reached competence in a particular procedure.

(15) The ACEC may require an assessment of competency in routine or specific 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).

Chief Investigators

(16) In accordance with [the Code](#) (clause 2.4.5), Chief Investigators must:

- a. ensure that procedures and resources are in place so that all people involved in the care and use of animals in their project/s can meet their responsibilities, including their education, training and supervision, as appropriate; and
- b. be competent with respect to the wellbeing of animals used in their project/s.

Animal Care Staff

(17) [The Code](#) (clause 2.5.2) requires that, within the scope of their responsibilities, animal carers and veterinary staff must ensure that their duties are performed competently.

(18) In accordance with [the Code](#) (clause 2.5.14), the Associate Director, Research Infrastructure is responsible for the overall management of research animal breeding and holding facilities at the University and is appointed on the basis of appropriate animal care or veterinary qualifications, or experience.

(19) The Associate Director, Research Infrastructure will ensure that:

- a. the practices and procedures for the care and management of animals are based on current best practice;
- b. animal wellbeing is monitored by competent animal care staff, knowledgeable about animal behaviour and signs of pain and distress for the species at all stages and sites of animal care and use; and
- c. routine monitoring by animal care staff occurs frequently enough that sick or injured animals are promptly detected and identified, and appropriate action is taken.

(20) The Associate Director, Research Infrastructure 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 for the procedures they perform in the following circumstances:

- a. on an annual basis when reporting on projects to the ACEC; and
- b. when new staff are added to a project.

(21) 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.

Veterinary Staff

(22) The Animal Welfare Officer:

- a. provides oversight of the care, husbandry and health of animals, and the biosecurity of facilities;
- b. is appointed on the basis of appropriate veterinary qualifications, eligible for registration as a veterinarian in New South Wales; and
- c. has extensive practical experience and familiarity with animal research.

(23) The Animal Welfare Officer is expected to comply with the requirement for demonstrated continuing professional education to maintain registration.

Animal Care and Ethics Committee

(24) Where the composition of the ACEC meets the requirements of [the Code](#), the ACEC is therefore considered competent in undertaking ethical review and providing fair, consistent and timely review of applications and reports related to the care and use of animals.

(25) The University provides an induction for new ACEC members which includes legislative and committee documentation, makes available appropriate periodicals via the University Library access, and will endeavor to

support the attendance of ACEC members at appropriate seminars, conferences and workshops.

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.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

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

"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.