The use of animals for research demands that the research meet high standards of scientific integrity and review. This document outlines Vancouver Island University’s policy for peer review of scientific research involving animals.

The Canadian Council on Animal Care and the Vancouver Island University (VIU) Animal Care Committee (ACC) require that all research protocols involving animals undergo peer review for scientific merit prior to the use of any animals. The procedures for internal and external review at VIU (see below) should be followed unless one, or more, of the following exemptions apply:

1. The project’s funding agency employs a peer-review process that is acceptable to the VIU ACC (e.g., NSERC or CIHR).

**b**. A proposed project is deemed to be a minor extension of, modification of, or supplement to, a previously accepted peer-reviewed project.

**c**. Animals are used solely for the purpose of teaching.

**Exemption Granted**

If exemption “**a**” applies then Appendix A of the AUP Form will indicate the agency that has approved the scientific merit of the research and the currency of this vetting. If exemption “**b**” applies then the applicant must also describe in the section “Potential Benefits of the Research”, how the research project has been extended, modified or supplemented from the original proposal submitted to the granting agency and why these changes are scientifically justified.

**No Exemption Granted**

If none of the exemptions listed above apply, the faculty investigator is responsible for providing a research proposal to the Peer Review Committee (see note below). This may be in the format of the existing proposal that was submitted to the sponsor, or it may require additional information as requested specifically by the Peer Review Committee. The investigator will also provide the sponsor’s name, title of the project and animal care protocol title with the proposal, along with a list of prospective peer reviewers. For further details, see the internal and external peer review processes outlined below.

Research that is to be conducted as part of a student-research project will undergo internal review by the Peer Review Committee, whereas research that is to be conducted by a faculty member will be reviewed externally by peers.

**Note:** It is important that researchers (faculty and students) submit Animal Use Protocols (AUP) that require review of their scientific merit to the Peer Review Committee Chair in a timely fashion so that peer reviews can be conducted before the fall and spring ACC meetings, when AUP applications are reviewed. Therefore, all potential principal investigators should submit research proposals well in advance of proposed research activities involving animals, to allow for the completion of the peer review process, followed by the animal use review process. Upon receipt of a proposed research project, peer reviewers will be reminded by the Peer Review Committee Chair about the relevant dates for completion of their review(s).

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**Internal Peer Review**

In the case of student-based research projects, the Chair of the Peer Review Committee will identify two (2) VIU researchers to review the Animal Use Protocol as part of the internal review process. However, these reviewers must not collaborate on research with the investigator or have other conflicts-of-interest. The requirements for internal review will be presented to students during the course information sessions for their respective programs, e.g., BIOL 491 or FISH 491, to ensure they are aware of the appropriate requirements and procedures. Internal reviewers can be current members of the ACC. However, as a minimum, one reviewer must be a faculty member who is external to the VIU Animal Care Committee. The Animal Use Protocol will be forwarded to the reviewers who will then complete the five sections of the **peer review questionnaire** (see below). Peer reviews are returned to the Chair of the Peer Review Committee for collation and appropriate action, based on the suggestions made by the peer reviewers. The reviews will be documented and kept on file at the ACC office for future reference.

Upon completion of the internal review process, the Chair of the Peer Review Committee will notify the Chair of the ACC that the Animal Use Protocol application can then be considered by the committee. Should the research proposal be rejected on scientific merit by the reviewers, the student investigator may be asked by the Chair of the Peer Review Committee to clarify or appropriately modify the proposal for resubmission to the internal reviewers. Should the proposal be deemed to not have scientific merit, the ACC will be notified by the Chair of the Peer Review Committee that the protocol cannot be approved.

**External Peer Review**

All Vancouver Island University faculty members who are using animals for any research project, and for whom a peer-review exemption does not apply, will be required to submit their research proposals for external review of scientific merit. This review must occur prior to any Animal Use Protocol application review by the ACC. Typically, the Chair of the Peer Review Committee will identify two (2) “external” researchers to review the proposal. These people could include individuals suggested by the principal investigator, who may be either internal or external to VIU, however, they may not be people who collaborate on research with the investigator or have other conflicts-of-interest. Vancouver Island University faculty members may be suggested as potential reviewers by the investigator if they have the required expertise and do not have a conflict-of-interest. No member of the ACC may act as an external reviewer. Once the reviewers are selected, the remainder of the process is the same as that for internal peer reviews.

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***Applicant Information***

**Project Title**: Click here to enter text.

**Investigator**: Click here to enter text. **Department**: Click here to enter text.

***Reviewer Information***

**Name:** Click here to enter text. **Title:** Click here to enter text.

**Affiliation**: Click here to enter text.

**Date of Review:** Click here to enter a date.

**Signature of Reviewer** (if submitting hard copy of review):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Relationship Between Applicant and Reviewer**

Have you (the reviewer) worked or collaborated with the applicant in the past?

Yes  No

If yes, please provide a brief description of the projects on which you have worked together or collaborated.

Click here to enter text.

**Review of Scientific Merit**

***Does the project objective have scientific merit?*** (i.e. will the study, if successful, add to our knowledge?)

Yes  No  Unable to Evaluate

Please provide a rationale for your response: Click here to enter text.

***Given the study objectives, is the use of animals and species proposed justified?***  (i.e. are there alternatives to the use of animals, can a non-vertebrate or other less vulnerable species or population be used?)

Yes  No  Unable to Evaluate

Please provide a rationale for your response: Click here to enter text.

***Is the study design appropriate given the study objectives?***

Yes  No  Unable to Evaluate

Please provide a rationale for your response: Click here to enter text.

***Is the sample size reasonable and likely to provide results that can meet that study objective?***

Yes  No  Unable to Evaluate

Please provide a rationale for your response: Click here to enter text.

***Additional comments***: Click here to enter text.