



VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY

ANIMAL CARE COMMITTEE Policy ACC-015 - Scientific Merit Review

PURPOSE

1. The Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) and Vancouver Island University Animal Care Committee (ACC) require that all proposed use of animals in research undergo scientific merit review in addition to ethical animal care and use review. For the purpose of this policy, animals refer to non-human vertebrates and cephalopods. The Associate Vice-President, Scholarship, Research and Creative Activity (AVP SRCA), as the senior administrator responsible for animal care, is responsible for ensuring the scientific merit review process meets the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) standards.
2. The CCAC standards are outlined in the following documents:
 - CCAC policy statement on: *Scientific Merit and Ethical Review of Animal-Based Research*
 - CCAC FAQ: *Scientific and Ethical Review of Animal-Based Research*

SCOPE

3. This Policy applies to all VIU Persons.

REVIEW PROCESS

4. The AVP SRCA is responsible for determining if the proposed animal program or project has undergone an independent review for scientific merit by expert peers. For research programs or projects that have undergone an independent expert peer review process through a granting agency and/ or permit process, the principal investigator can apply for an [exemption to the VIU Scientific Merit Review](#). This exemption is only valid for the duration of the grant or permit. In the event the peer review process through a granting agency or permit process raised ethical/ practical issues in a proposal deemed to have scientific merit, the AVP SRCA will inform the ACC to review during the animal use protocol.
5. For programs or projects that have not undergone a scientific merit review by expert peers, the principal investigator must submit an [application for VIU Scientific Merit Review](#) Form as part of their Animal Use Protocol (AUP) in ROMEO. Prior to the ACC review, the

AVP SRCA will select at least two independent experts (both of whom are external to the ACC) to review the merit of using animals in the proposed project.

6. The AVP SRCA will select each reviewer based on the following criteria:
 - a. Must be a recognized expert in the field of question and must not meet any of the following criteria for a real or perceived conflict of interest:
 - i. is from the same immediate department as the applicant, and/ or interacts with the applicant in the course of their duties at the institution;
 - ii. has collaborated, published or been a co-applicant with the applicant, within the last five years;
 - iii. has been a student or supervisor of the applicant within the last ten years;
 - iv. is a close personal friend or relative of the applicant;
 - v. has had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the applicant;
 - vi. is in a position to gain or lose financially from the outcome of the application; or,
 - vii. for some other reason feels that they cannot provide an objective review of the application.
 - b. The expert reviewers will be required to complete the [VIU Scientific Merit Reviewer Form](#). The AVP SRCA will review the forms and make a review decision among the options below. The AVP SRCA will then inform the principal investigator and the ACC of the review decision and all reviewer comments.
 - i. Animal use in the research project has scientific merit: The principal investigator and ACC will be informed of the review decision/ reviewer comments and the animal use protocol will proceed to ACC review.
 - ii. Animal use in the research project has potential scientific merit: The principal investigator will be informed of the decision and must work with the AVP SRCA to address the reviewer concerns. If there are still reviewer concerns following the responses from the principal investigator, the AVP SRCA can reject the proposal or request review from another expert peer reviewer if there is a disagreement between reviewers.
 - iii. Animal use in the research project does not have scientific merit: The principal investigator will be informed of the decision and the reviewer comments. The animal use protocol will not proceed to ACC review. If the principal investigator does not agree with the review decision, they can submit an appeal to the AVP SRCA.



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**ANIMAL CARE COMMITTEE
Exemption for Scientific Merit Review**

Research project title:	<input type="text"/>		
Researcher(s):	<input type="text"/>		
List the agency that performed the scientific merit review	Comments:	<input type="text"/>	
Indicate the start and end date of the agency's approval	Dates:	<input type="text"/>	
For all funded projects, indicate the VIU ROME0 award file number.	ROME0 file number:	<input type="text"/>	
<i>Did the previous peer-review specifically consider the animal uses in the AUP you are submitting to the ACC?</i>	Comments:	<input type="text"/>	
Additional Comments: <input type="text"/>			



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**ANIMAL CARE COMMITTEE
Application for Scientific Merit Review**

Research project title:	<input type="text"/>
Researcher(s):	<input type="text"/>
Research Proposal	
<p>The research proposal must include the following elements: research objectives, hypotheses, potential contributions (i.e. to science, regulatory objectives, etc), and methodological approach of the study:</p> <input type="text"/>	



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**ANIMAL CARE COMMITTEE
Scientific Merit Peer Review Form**

Research project title:		
Researcher(s):		
Research Objectives		
a) Are the objectives clearly described ?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: _____
b) Are the objectives realistically achievable , given the methodology and experimental design?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: _____
c) Does the knowledge expected to be gained from this study have scientific importance ?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: _____
General comments on the study objectives: _____		

Appendix C:

Research Project Quality		
a) Do the proposed activities show evidence of good understanding of current scientific literature and knowledge of the issue?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>
b) Is the research hypothesis/hypotheses clearly formulated?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>
c) Is the experimental design and animal model appropriate to test the research hypothesis/hypotheses?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>
d) Are sufficient details provided in the methodology to evaluate the likelihood of successful reproducibility ?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>
e) Is the proposed statistical data analysis appropriate for the experimental design described?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>
f) Is the proposed project sufficiently original and does not duplicate previous research?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>
g) Has the proposed project considered any available refinements ?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p>Overall impression (summarize your impression of the quality of research proposal and make any recommendations that you believe would be appropriate):</p> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div>		

Final Decision on Scientific Merit

With regard to the scientific merit of the described research, how would you rate the proposed study:

- Excellent;** approve “as is”
- Good;** minor revisions suggested as per the recommendations above
- Fair;** major revisions required as per the recommendations above
- Poor;** should not be pursued

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest is a conflict between a person’s duties and responsibilities with regard to the review process, and that person’s private, professional, business or public interests.

There may be a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest when the external reviewer:

- would receive professional or personal benefit resulting from the funding opportunity or application being reviewed;
- has a professional or personal relationship with the applicant or co-applicant; or
- has a direct or indirect financial interest in a funding opportunity or application being reviewed.

A conflict of interest may be deemed to exist or perceived as such when the reviewer:

- is a relative or close friend, or has a personal relationship with the applicant(s);
- are from the same immediate department as the applicant, and/ or interacts with the applicant in the course of their duties at the institution;
- has collaborated, published or been a co-applicant with the applicant, within the last five years;
- has been a student or supervisor of the applicant within the last ten years;
- has had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the applicant;
- is in a position to gain or lose financially from the outcome of the application; or
- for any other reason feels that s/he cannot provide an objective review of the application.

If you believe you might be in a conflict of interest, please explain briefly:

Appendix C:

I certify that I have no real, perceived or potential conflict of interest in relation to this research proposal.

Reviewer name:

Signature:

Date of review:

