



Animal Research Ethics Committee Terms of Reference

The Animal Research Ethics Committee (AREC) is a Standing Committee of the Bionics Institute, reporting to the Bionics Institute Board of Directors, via the Institute Chief Executive Officer. The committee functions as the Animal Ethics Committee for the Scientific Procedures Premises Licenses (SPPLs) held by the Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA), the Department of Otolaryngology and the Bionics Institute (BI).

Membership

A chairperson independent of the care and use of animals will be appointed. The chairperson should either hold a senior position in the institution or, if an external appointee, be given a commitment by the institution to provide the necessary support and authority to carry out the role. It is recommended that the Chairperson is an additional appointment to Category A to D members.

Membership of the Committee will comprise at least one person from each of the four categories of membership:

- Category A a person with qualifications in veterinary science and with experience relevant to the activities of the institution. Veterinarians who lack this experience must familiarise themselves with the biology and clinical characteristics of the species of animals used;
- Category B a suitably qualified person with substantial recent experience in the use of animals in scientific or teaching activities. This will usually entail possession of a higher degree in research;
- Category C a person with demonstrable commitment to, and established experience in, furthering the welfare of animals, who is not employed by or otherwise associated with the institution, and who is not involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. Veterinarians with specific animal welfare interest and experience may meet the requirements of this Category. While not representing an animal welfare organisation, the person should, where possible, be selected on the basis of active membership of, and nomination by, such an organisation; and
- Category D a person who is both independent of the institution and who has never been involved in the use of animals in scientific or teaching activities, either in their employment or beyond their under-graduate education. Category D members should be viewed by the wider community as bringing a completely independent view to the AREC, and must not fit the requirements of any other Category.

In addition to the above members, the BI may appoint to the AREC a person responsible for the routine care of animals. Category B membership will include an employee of BI.

The Committee may co-opt additional members as it requires to ensure appropriate expertise is available (non voting).

Members are required to acknowledge in writing the Terms of Reference and comply with any requirements for confidentiality required by the Committee and the BI.

Appointment of Members

The BI shall appoint Committee members in a fair and transparent manner. Members shall be appointed initially for a one (1) year term, and then will be offered a term of three (3) years, or for the remainder of a three year term when an appointment commences during any three year period. Appointments shall allow for continuity, the development of expertise within the AREC, and the regular input of fresh ideas and approaches.

Members are appointed as individuals rather than in a representative capacity.

Prospective members of the AREC are recruited by direct approach, nomination or by advertisement. Prospective members are asked to provide a copy of their Curriculum Vitae to the selection committee. Members must agree to their name and profession being made available to the public, including being published on the BI website.

The chair of the committee shall be appointed by the BI Board. Other members of the committee shall be selected by an AREC executive committee, comprising at least one member from each category. The AREC executive shall include a BI staff member, nominated by the Chief Executive Officer of the BI. Members shall not be paid by the BI for attendance at meetings. Members will be reimbursed for legitimate expenses incurred in attending AREC meetings, such as parking expenses.

Members are to submit their resignation from the Committee, in writing to the Chairperson or REO, at least one meeting in advance unless the member is disqualified for non-attendance.

Members are requested to give at least 2 weeks notice prior to non-attendance at a meeting.

Conditions of Appointment

Members shall receive a formal notice of appointment. The letter of appointment shall include:

- a) the date of appointment
- b) length of tenure
- c) assurance that indemnity will be provided in respect of liabilities that may arise in the course of bona fide conduct of their duties as an AREC member; and the
- d) conditions of their appointment including:
 - i. Familiarising themselves with the Act and Code & other guidelines as provided
 - ii. Preparing for & attending scheduled meetings; or if unavailable, providing comments
 - iii. Attend continuing education or training in research ethics at least every 3 years
 - iv. An assurance of confidentiality on undertaking their appointment (all matters of which they become aware during the course of their work on the AREC will be kept confidential)
 - v. Declaration of any conflicts of interest, which exist at the time or may arise during their tenure on the AREC. These may be made to the Chair, AREC or at an AREC meeting if the conflict of interest relates to a specific research project.

Upon appointment, members are provided with the following documentation:

- a) Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 and amendments
- b) Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (8th Edition 2013)
- c) AREC Terms of Reference
- d) List of members' names and contact information for the REO
- e) Any other relevant information including web links to AREC processes, state & national guidelines and legislation.

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference of the Animal Research & Ethics Committee include those described in the Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (2013), prepared by the National Health and Medical Research Council and others. The relevant Act of Parliament and Regulations includes the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 1997 plus amendments.

In accordance with the above, the Committee is required:

- a) to approve guidelines for the care of animals that are bred, held and used for scientific purposes on behalf of the SPPL licence holders;
- b) to monitor all matters pertaining to the care and use of animals for scientific purposes for approved projects, breeding licences, delegations and fieldwork;
- c) to report to the BI Board of Directors, via the Institute Chief Executive Officer

- d) to monitor the acquisition, breeding, transport, production, housing, care, use and disposal of animals for scientific purposes within the Biological Research Centre;
- e) to examine and approve, approve subject to modification, or reject written proposals relevant to the use of animals for scientific purposes and approve only those studies for which animals are essential and which conform to the requirements of this Code, taking into consideration factors including ethics, the impact on the animals and anticipated scientific or educational values.
- f) to withdraw approval for the use of animals for scientific purposes in relation to a previously approved research project should significant concerns about the ethics, impact on the animals or scientific or educational values develop;
- g) to examine and comment on all institutional plans and policies that may affect the welfare of animals used for scientific purposes;
- h) to ensure that arrangements exist for the emergency treatment of animals.
- i) to maintain a register of approved research proposals in accordance with the requirements of the relevant code of practice;
- j) to ensure -
 - i. that adequate records are kept on the acquisition, breeding, health, care, use and disposal of animals and the condition of animals during experiments;
 - ii. that research staff are appropriately qualified to perform animal experiments and that relevant legislative and regulatory requirements are adhered to;
 - iii. that the use of animals is restricted to those investigations which conform to the relevant code of practice.

Method of Operation

Members of the committee shall declare any conflicts of interest at the start of each meeting. The relevant committee member with the conflict of interest shall not take any part in the decisions which touch that conflict.

Meetings must be as frequent as the volume of business demands, but normally scheduled not less than quarterly.

Minutes must be maintained which record decisions and all other aspects of the AREC's operation.

Formal inspection of animal houses under the control of the University of Melbourne may be conducted at any reasonable time. The Committee may delegate this responsibility to a sub-committee of at least three of its members comprising at least one Category A member, and one Category C or D member.

All members must have ready access to the animal house at any reasonable time. Such access may be arranged through the Chairperson of the Committee or the BRC Technician.

Any issues identified at such an inspection are to be reported to the Chair, AREC, who will give a report at the next AREC meeting.

The procedures and guidelines adopted by the Committee in discharging its responsibilities must be made known to all staff engaged in biomedical research.

In exercising its functions, the Committee shall have regard to the ethical principles and procedures for operating as described in the relevant code of practice.

In discharging its responsibilities, the Committee may take into account the advice of such experts as it chooses.

AREC Policies

Any changes to existing policies or development of new policies must be recommended by the AREC to the BI Executive for approval.

Operating Procedures

All new proposals must be considered and approved at meetings of the AREC. A quorum will be as stated in the Code.

Members are encouraged to participate in discussions at meeting.

The AREC endeavours to reach a decision on consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached after reasonable effort to resolve differences, the AREC will explore with the applicant ways of modifying the project or activity that may lead to consensus. If consensus is still not achieved, the AREC will only proceed to a majority decision after members have been allowed a period of time to review their positions, followed by further discussion. An AREC Executive Committee comprises the Chairperson and one member of each of Category A, B, C and D. Any decisions made by the Executive Committee must be unanimous and the decisions will be ratified at the next full meeting of the AREC Committee.

Experimentation must not start before written approval is given.

Researchers may appeal against a decision of the AREC and will have the opportunity to present their case to the AREC Committee in person.

The AREC Complaints Policy is followed in cases of a dispute.

Researchers are encouraged to attend the AREC meeting to support their project applications and to answer the questions of Committee members.

Experiments of long duration and the long term continuing use of individual animals will be reviewed at least annually by the AREC or more frequently if considered desirable.

The AREC will report at least once per year to the BI Board of Directors, via the Institute Chief Executive Officer, on its activities, on numbers and types of experiments approved, on the physical facilities for the care and use of animals within the institution, on any administrative or other difficulties being experienced and on any requirements for training staff.

An internal review of the AREC will be conducted between the external inspections. The internal review will be conducted at a mutually agreeable time. The purpose of the internal review is to ensure compliance with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and Regulations and that the welfare of animals used is given due consideration.

This will include examination of all records related to the project:

- to determine if the AREC is operating effectively according to the requirements of the Code
- examination of the investigator's workbooks to ensure compliance with the experimental protocol as approved by the AREC, including amendments, persons approved to work on project. Workbooks should have a date and AREC number relating to the work being carried out and who is performing each step. For each experiment it should be clear how many animals were issued and the date of issue and date of end of experiment.
- the records of animal care and use when animals have been allocated to a project must be maintained and provide information as required in the NHMRC Code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes(8th edition).
- inspection of animal holding facilities and animal holding areas

A report will be made to the Scientific premises nominated person, the licence holder and the Principal Investigator of the reviewed project.

Review

Last Reviewed: February 2018

Next Review: February 2020