

Procedure title:

Functioning of the Animal Ethics committee

Purpose:

1. To describe the functioning of the Animal Ethics Committee

Scope:

1. The SOP is applied to oversee the functioning of the Animal Ethics Committee

References:

- 1.

Terminology / Abbreviations:

1. AEC : Animal Ethics Committee
2. SOP : Standard Operating Procedure
3. TOR : Terms of Reference
4. UP : University of Pretoria

Procedure:

1. The AEC is a subcommittee of the UP Senate Committee for Research Ethics and Integrity. The committee has the responsible that any research/teaching involving animals or animal samples is evaluated that the project meets current ethical standards.
2. The AEC of the UP will be constituted as per the TOR approved by the Senate committee for research ethics and integrity.
3. The committee shall meeting monthly for the discussion of submission, and where necessary responses of the researchers to question that may arise during review (SOP2).
4. **The AEC does not provide retrospective approval.** In cases that the committee picks up that a project has commenced without approval, this will be reported to the chair of the Faculty Ethics committee(s) to which the staff member and student belong.
5. The committee uses a consensus system to grant approvals. In case of non-consensus, the committee will take a vote to pass a decision by a majority decision. In cases of a tie, the chair has the deciding vote.
6. The committee recognises that members of the committee are academic staff members of the UP and will at times be involved with animal research projects.
 - 6.1 To avoid a conflict of interest, a member of the committee will have to recuse themselves in both phases of evaluation, for projects (Academic or contract) involving either themselves or students they supervise or are advising.
 - 6.2 For the members representing laboratory animal facilities, they may not comment on projects that they hold a contract for. They may however



comment on any student project they are assisting, but for which they are not listed as a researcher.

6.3 When the chair is involved in a research project, in addition to recusing himself/herself from the discussion of the project, the chairing of the meeting will default to a second member of the committee, who for that period will assume all responsibility and authority imparted on the chair.

7. If the committee feels it may not have the skills to evaluate a protocol under any circumstances (e.g. a project that involves an area of research that none of the members are familiar with, or the recusing of any members, results in the loss of skills, that may be needed to critically evaluate a protocol), the committee may get the assistance of an outside consulting expert. The expert may provide advice in writing or in person. If the person is invited to the meeting, the person will have no voting rights.

8. Following deliberation the committee will make one of the following decisions:

- **Approved**: This implies that the project was approved without any conditions. An “approve resolution” allows a project to start.
- **Approved with conditions**: This implies that the committee has in principle approved with the project, but has however placed stipulations on the project e.g. completion of phase and submission of a report before ascension to the next phase.
- **Conditional Approved**: The committee had minor concerns with the application that still require attention from the researcher e.g. minor missing information or proof of permits being attained. The committee through this decision allows the chair to approve the project when the missing information is received. On receipt of the required information, the project’s status will be converted to “Approved”. A conditional approved project cannot start until the missing information has been provided and that a certificate of approval issued. In cases where regulatory approval is dependent on ethics approval, the committee will issue a letter stating the protocol has been evaluated and that no ethical concerns were noted. The letter will however state that the project cannot start until the required ethical approval has been received.
- **Not Approved**: This status implies that the committee has evaluated the project and response and is not satisfied that a project follows principles of ethical compliance.
- **Deferred**: A project for which the committee has raised certain questions, and is awaiting a response from a researcher will be deferred until comment is received. Projects for which no response are received after three subsequent meetings of the committee, will be issued with a “Not Approved” decision.



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9. In urgent cases, the chair can approve a project out of the normal cycle of meetings of the committee, with the assistance of one other committee member.
10. On approval, the committee will issue a certificate. For Umbrella projects involving more than one student, the committee would require the global project to be approved, for the said certificate to be issued. However, the supervisor must inform the committee via a letter, which student are involved in the project. If necessary a student project approval certificate shall be issued as sub-approval.
11. In cases of dispute between a researcher and the committee the following will be process for dispute resolution:
 - 11.1 The researcher may write a formal dispute to the committee requested a review. The committee will consider the appeal and make a decision accordingly. In cases of this review being requested, the committee may when necessary invite outside review
 - 11.2 A researcher may also appeal to the Dean and eventually to the Senate Committee for Research Ethics and Integrity whose decision will be final.