

# Animal Ethics Committee

## Complaints Procedure

Date of effect	30 November 2018
Documents replaced by these procedures	Nil

### **A. Introduction**

#### **Purpose**

The [Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 8<sup>th</sup> edition 2013](#) (the Code), requires the following:

2.2.29 Institutions must have procedures for dealing with complaints and non-compliance with the Code, complaints related to the AEC process, and irreconcilable differences between the AEC and an investigator

5.1 Institutions must have procedures for addressing complaints and non-compliance relating to the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, including:

- (i) complaints concerning the care and use of animals by the institution, including conscientious objection in the case of teaching activities
- (ii) complaints concerning the AEC process of review of an application or report, including resolution of disagreements between AEC members, between the AEC and investigators, and between the AEC and the institution
- (iii) complaints concerning the process for independent external review
- (iv) non-compliance with the Code by any party or person involved in the care and use of animals including investigators, animal carers, the AEC, governance officials, and external parties subject to agreements described in Clauses 2.6.3 and 2.6.6. Non-compliance may also involve breaches of relevant state or territory legislation, and institutions should have procedures for advising regulatory authorities (see Clause 5.12).

This document is to outline the procedures for handling complaints regarding animal welfare, the conduct of animal research as well as decisions, behaviour, beliefs, or procedures of the Animal Ethics Committee (AEC). Complaints made by staff and/or students will not jeopardize their employment or entitlements.

The ultimate goal in the consideration of concerns is to ensure the welfare of animals.

#### **Scope**

All members of the University community including all staff, adjuncts and students.

All serving members of the AEC at the University of Canberra.

Independent people who are not associated with research and members of the public.

## **Legislation**

This Complaints Procedure is governed by, but not limited to, *The ACT Animal Welfare Act* (1992), the *NSW Animal Research Act* and the University's *Responsible Conduct of Research Policy*. It is also governed by the University's *Code of Professional Ethics for Staff* and the [\*Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes\* 8<sup>th</sup> edition](#) (2013).

## **B. Principles**

The University expects that all research is to be undertaken in accordance with 'the Code'. In cases where concerns are raised regarding particular parts of 'the Code', a course of action, detailed in these procedures, will be followed for handling such complaints received.

## **C. Relevant information**

### **Context**

This document will detail a mechanism for responding to complaints received by the Secretary and/or the AEC, and detail a set of procedures to follow with regard to dealing with the complaint.

### **Responsibilities**

Responsibilities for implementing these procedures are set out below:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
- Director, Research Services Office
- AEC
- Secretariat of the AEC

### **Other related documents**

Documents related to these procedures include:

- The ACT Animal Welfare Act (1992)
- NSW Animal Research Act
- Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 8<sup>th</sup> edition 2013
- Responsible Conduct of Research Policy at the University of Canberra
- Code of Professional Ethics for Staff at the University of Canberra

### **Definitions**

The following definitions are relevant to this document:

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Complaint	Any dispute received in writing by the Secretariat of the AEC
Action	The way the complaint will be handled, including what will occur as a result of investigating the complaint made.
Complainant	The individual who lodges the complaint
Respondent	The individual who is the target of the complaint
Adviser in Research Integrity	Senior staff members appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) to provide advice to staff and students on matters of research conduct

## **Details & Procedures**

All complaints will be treated seriously, expeditiously and sensitively. They will follow procedural fairness and maintain confidentiality.

Throughout the complaints process, the complainant and the respondent will receive appropriate information, support and guidance in resolving the issue at hand.

- » *Complaint to be sent in writing to the Secretariat of the AEC.*
- » *Secretariat informs the Director of Research Services Office and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).*
- » *Action is determined through consultation with the above parties. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) reserves the right to determine who will investigate the complaint and, if necessary, ask appropriately qualified AEC members to assist with the investigation of the complaint.*
- » *The reviewing panel will comprise appropriately qualified persons and may include external members. The reviewing panel is only permitted to investigate the specific complaint and cannot take complaints relating to other issues into account.*
- » *A summary of the findings of the investigation is drafted by the Chair of the Investigation Panel and submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) for review. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) then advises the AEC about the outcome of the investigation and any recommended actions. A summary of the report is also made available to the complainant and respondent.*
- » *The people associated with the complaint, including the complainant and the respondent, are notified of the action to be taken.*
- » *If requested by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), the AEC then reviews current practices surrounding complaints to determine the appropriateness of revisiting standard operating procedures for animal welfare in light of issues raised.*
- » *If resolution of the complaint is not possible, then the Vice-Chancellor is notified and asked to make a determination. Complainants may also appeal to the Australian Capital Territory Ombudsman and / or Australian Capital Territory courts should the complaint not be resolved.*

## **How to Lodge**

Prior to lodging a complaint, the complainant is strongly encouraged to seek advice from one of the University's [Advisers in Research Integrity](#).

A complaint must be received in writing, detailing the specific concerns or issues, and be addressed to the Secretariat of the Animal Ethics Committee.

Secretariat of Animal Ethics Committee  
 University of Canberra  
 Canberra ACT 2601  
[animaethicscommittee@canberra.edu.au](mailto:animaethicscommittee@canberra.edu.au)