

## Policy on Independent Scientific Merit and Pedagogical Peer Review of Animal Based Research, Teaching, and Testing Brandon University Animal Care Committee (BUACC)

Brandon University affirms that one of the most basic tenets of animal use for research and teaching is that animal use be undertaken only after careful examination of its potential value. The Brandon University Animal Care Committee (BUACC) adopts the following process for determining the merit of animal use protocols. This institutional policy is in accordance with the Canadian Council of Animal Care (CCAC) policy, which stresses the importance of independent peer review.

### Process for Assessing the Scientific Merit of Research Protocols:

1. When an Animal Use Protocol is associated with funding applications to national granting agencies with peer review processes (such as NSERC, CIHR), BUACC will accept the approval of the project by the funding agency as evidence of its scientific merit. When BUACC approval is required by such a funding agency prior to their review of the proposed project, BUACC approval will be provisional, pending notification that the project has been deemed scientifically meritorious.
2. When a proposal is associated with projects with little or no peer review (e.g. industry contacts, internally funded projects, self-funded projects, etc.), BUACC requires review of the proposal and meritorious ruling by two knowledgeable scientists. The procedure for this assessment is as follows:
  - a. A New Research/Teaching Animal Use Protocol Application is submitted to [buacc@brandonu.ca](mailto:buacc@brandonu.ca). This form is shared with the Vice-President (Research and Graduate Studies) or designate, who shall identify two scientists from the Brandon University Merit Reviewer Database with expertise in the type of research proposed and who are not collaborators in the proposed research. The BUACC Coordinator shall contact the selected individuals to conduct a review on the proposal regarding the objectives, hypotheses, methods and contributions of the proposed project within a reasonable time (a period of approximately two weeks).
  - b. The peer review form completed by the merit reviewer shall be forwarded to BUACC and to the Principal Investigator. The original form will be retained in the Research Office as part of the protocol file.
  - c. In the event that two reviews differ in the merit of the proposed research, the Principal Investigator may either address the issues raised in the review and work toward a meritorious ruling, or request a third review of the protocol. Should a third review be requested, the Vice-President (Research and Graduate Studies) or designate shall identify the third scientist from the Brandon University Merit Review Database with expertise in the type of research proposed and who is not a collaborator in the proposed research. The third review shall be forwarded to BUACC and the Principal Investigator.

### Process for Assessing Pedagogical Merit of Teaching Protocols:

1. All new animal-based teaching and training activities that require an animal protocol must undergo a pedagogical merit review every four years. These include teaching, training activities/programs for research, and testing team members (e.g. graduate students, principal investigators, technicians in

contract research), as well as non-degree/diploma/certificate credit courses (e.g. professional development or continuing education workshops) provided by faculty or other institutional personnel. This policy does not apply to activities that do not require a protocol, such as third-party animal-based activities conducted on campus (e.g. clubs using institutional facilities), or off-campus student practicums.

The procedure for this assessment is as follows:

- a. A New Research/Teaching Animal Use Protocol Application is submitted to [buacc@brandonu.ca](mailto:buacc@brandonu.ca). This form is shared with the Vice-President (Research and Graduate Studies) or designate, who shall identify two independent referees from the Brandon University Merit Reviewer Database with knowledge of pedagogy and replacement alternatives to animal-based teaching or training. Reviewers must not sit on the BUACC nor be involved with the course. There is no requirement for the same individual to possess knowledge in both areas as long as both areas are covered. The BUACC Coordinator shall contact the selected individuals to conduct a review on the proposal, within a reasonable time frame (a period of approximately two weeks) based on the following:
    - i. the learning objectives are clear and specify the involvement of animals;
    - ii. the learning objectives specify the proportion of the objective that must be achieved and/or how well the behaviour must be performed;
    - iii. the composition, learning level and needs of the student group(s) are compatible with the goals and objectives of the animal-based teaching/training ;
    - iv. the timing of the inclusion of animals in the teaching/training is suitable for the projected timing of the expected outcome(s);
    - v. feedback from student assessments and course or session evaluations regarding the benefit of the animal-based teaching/training;
    - vi. the review of the obstacles and opportunities for implementing Three Rs by the animal-based teaching/training instructors' is sufficiently thorough; and
    - vii. criteria proposed for assessing the completed animal-based teaching/training is suitable and will contribute to optimization of this use of animals for the benefit of future students.
  - b. Expedited Pedagogical Merit Review: When formal institutional training sessions for animal users are required, such as those included in standard operating procedure or syllabus-based programs, or those dictated by governing bodies (e.g., Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, provincial ministries of education, etc.), the expedited review process can be used. Ensuring curricular alignment (step 1) and that specific learning outcomes are essential for the students (step 2) has already been addressed by the prescribing organization; therefore, assessing if there are equivalent absolute or relative replacement alternatives (step 3) is the only remaining task. In this case, one reviewer with knowledge of replacement alternatives is sufficient.
2. The pedagogical review form completed by the reviewer(s) shall be forwarded to BUACC and to the Principal Investigator (Expedited Pedagogical Merit Review Form for expedited review as noted above). The original form will be retained in the Research Office as part of the protocol file.
  3. In the event that two reviews differ in the merit of the proposed teaching protocol, the Principal Investigator may either address the issues raised in the review and work toward a meritorious ruling, or request a third review of the protocol. Should a third review be requested, the Vice-President (Research and Graduate Studies) or designate shall identify the third independent referee from the Brandon

University Merit Review Database with expertise in that field and who is not a collaborator in the proposed protocol. The third review shall be forwarded to BUACC and the Principal Investigator.

### Brandon University Merit Reviewer Database:

The Brandon University Merit Reviewer Database shall be housed and maintained by the Office of the Vice-President (Research and Graduate Studies). The Brandon University Animal Care Committee (BUACC) shall be responsible for conducting a review of the database for updating purposes ensure relevancy and accuracy.

#### *Additional Resources:*

- *CCAC Policy Statement on: Scientific Merit and Ethical Review of Animal-based Research*
- *Frequently Asked Questions on the CCAC Policy Statement on: Scientific Merit and Ethical Review of Animal-based Research*
- *CCAC Policy: Pedagogical Merit of Live Animal-based Teaching and Training*
- *Frequently Asked Questions – CCAC Policy: Pedagogical Merit of Live Animal-based Teaching and Training*

*(Revised) Approved by Senate: March 15, 2016, December 18, 2018*

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