

La Trobe University Animal Ethics Committee

Terms of Reference

February 2024

The primary purpose of the La Trobe University Animal Ethics Committee (LTU AEC) is to ensure that all use and care of animals for scientific purposes by La Trobe University (LTU) staff, researchers and students is ethically acceptable and conducted in accordance with the [Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 8th Edition 2013 \(updated 2021\)](#) (the Animal Code), the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (the Animal Code), relevant legislation and LTU policy through these Terms of Reference.

Scope of Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of the LTU AEC is to ensure, on behalf of LTU, that all activities relating to the care and use of animals are conducted in compliance with the Animal Code (section 2.3 Code).

The LTU AEC also has prescribed functions under the Victorian [Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986](#) (POCTA) and [Regulations 2019](#) including the requirement to act in accordance with the Australian Code of Practice, in relation to any scientific procedure or program of scientific procedures carried out under the licence, when:

- making any recommendation and approvals as to the use of animals in the procedure or program; or
- supervising the carrying out of the procedure or program; or
- performing any other function in relation to the procedure or program.

Under Section 2.3.2 of the Animal Code, the LTU AEC must:

- Review applications for projects and approve only those projects that are ethically acceptable as defined by section 1.3 of the Animal Code and conform to the requirements of the Animal Code.
- Review applications for activities associated with the care and management of animals in facilities, including procedures applicable to breeding programs integral to the maintenance of an animal line, and approve only those activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Animal Code.
- Conduct follow-up review of approved projects and activities (section 9.10) and allow the continuation of approval for only those projects and activities that are ethically acceptable and conform to the requirements of the Animal Code.
- Monitor the care and use of animals, including housing conditions, practices and procedures involved in the care of animals in facilities.
- Take appropriate actions regarding unexpected adverse events.
- Take appropriate actions regarding non-compliance.
- Approve guidelines for the care and use of animals on behalf of the institution.
- Provide advice and recommendations to the institution.
- Report on its operations to the institution.

A detailed set of committee governance and operation procedures as prescribed by the Animal Code are available from the Ethics, Integrity and Biosafety Team (EIB).

Institutional Accountability

The LTU AEC is the institutional animal ethics committee for all LTU campuses, national and international.

The LTU AEC reports to the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Industry Engagement) (SDVCRIE) through the Research and Graduate Studies Committee (RGSC) and the Licence Nominee.

Mechanisms of Reporting

Internal and External Reporting

The LTU AEC Chair will meet annually with the SVDCRIE and AWW Licence Nominee.

The LTU AEC will produce an annual report for the RGSC and relevant regulatory authorities in accordance with their requirements.

These reports will advise on:

- numbers and types of projects and activities assessed and approved or not approved;
- the physical facilities for the care and use of animals;
- actions that have supported the educational and training needs of LTU AEC members and people involved in the care and use of animals;
- administrative or other difficulties experienced;
- any matters that may affect the LTU AEC's ability to maintain compliance with the Australian code;
- any matters that relate to LTU's ability to maintain compliance with the Australian code; and
- appropriate recommendations to address matters of non-compliance and measures for effective/remedial change.

Animal Welfare Victoria Reporting

Reporting responsibilities for all holders of Scientific Procedures Premises Licences (SPPL), Scientific Procedures Fieldwork Licences (SPFL) and Specified Animals Breeding Licences (SABL) are governed by the POCTA regulations.

The institution shall submit to Animal Welfare Victoria the relevant forms for licence applications, variations, renewals, and notifications.

The institution is responsible for reporting on: SPPL, SPFL or SABL:

- Annual animal usage;
- Alterations to LTU AEC membership;
- Additions / deletions of animal facilities or laboratories to Licenses;
- Change to the nominated person or their contact details;
- Fieldwork to be conducted under the institutions SPFL the utilizes and interstate AEC.

The institution is responsible for applying for:

- Permission to conduct scientific procedures, or a series of scientific procedures involving death as an endpoint;
- Additional licences.

Animal Welfare Victoria conducts audits of licenses and AECs to assess compliance with the relevant legislation and Codes of Practice. The audit protocol is found on Animal Welfare Victoria webpage.

Membership

The LTU AEC will have a minimum of six (6) members with a core membership of four members from categories outlined in the Animal Code (2.2.4). Membership includes:

- **Chairperson:** The Chairperson should hold a senior position in the University and will normally be independent of the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (the Animal Code 2.2.2-3). If the Chairperson is an external appointee, they will be given the necessary support and authority to carry out the role. The Chairperson is appointed by the SDVCRIE. The Chairperson will be appointed in addition to Category A, B, C and D members.
- **Category A:** A veterinarian - A person with qualifications in veterinary science that is recognised as veterinary surgeon in Australia, with relevant experience and knowledge (or the ability to acquire such)
- **Category B:** A researcher - A suitably qualified person with substantial and recent experience in the use of animals in scientific purposes relevant to LTU and the business of the LTU AEC. This must include possession of a higher degree in research or equivalent experience.
- **Category C:** Animal welfarist - A person with a demonstrable commitment to and established experience in furthering the welfare of animals, who is not employed or otherwise associated with the institution and who is not currently 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 based on active membership of, and endorsement by, such an organisation.
- **Category D:** A person not employed by or otherwise associated with 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 LTU AEC and must not fit the requirements of any other Category.
- The Institution will appoint to the LTU AEC a person responsible for the routine care of animals within the institution.

The EIB will appoint a Deputy or Acting Chair from the LTU AEC membership. This person will act as the Chairperson in their absence.

In addition to the members defined as above, the Senior Coordinator Research Ethics and Biosafety will be a member of the AEC in an advisory capacity (non-voting, ex-officio member).

LTU may appoint multiple representatives to each membership category to ensure appropriate representation at each LTU AEC meeting.

The Committee is empowered to solicit independent external advice from time to time on scientific, statistical, welfare or other matters, as required. The Committee may invite any person to attend a meeting, to either provide specific expertise/advice, or act as an observer. The Committee must be satisfied that such persons have no conflicts of interest in relation to the projects under consideration.

All non-Ethics Integrity and Biosafety team persons attending the committee meetings must have a fully executed Deed of Confidentiality in place prior to attending a meeting.

The approved membership categories are published but the members of the LTU AEC shall remain confidential, and their names are not published.

Quorum

To be quorate the AEC meeting must be attended by:

- The Chairperson (or Deputy Chair in their absence)
- At least one of each membership category (Category A, B, C & D)
- Categories C and D together representing at least one-third of the voting (Categories A-D) Committee membership.

Review of Terms of Reference

The LTU AEC Terms of Reference will be reviewed every three years or as necessary in response to changes in legislation, La Trobe policy or upon the request of the LTU AEC. The La Trobe Research and Graduate School Committee is responsible for approving these Terms of Reference. The LTU AEC will be consulted when revising these Terms of Reference.

The LTU AEC Terms of Reference were last approved on 7 October 2019.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Guidelines & Legislation

- [Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 8th Edition 2013 \(updated 2021\)](#)
- [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018](#)

La Trobe University Policies and Procedures

- [Research Animal Ethics Procedure](#)
- [Conflict of Interest Policy](#)
- [Research Data Management Policy](#)
- [Research Governance Policy](#)
- [Research Integrity Policy](#)
- [Research Misconduct Procedure](#)