

**McGILL UNIVERSITY AND AFFILIATED RESEARCH INSTITUTES
ANIMAL POLICY & WELFARE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

**PEDAGOGICAL MERIT REVIEW POLICY FOR TEACHING
AND TRAINING PROTOCOLS USING LIVE ANIMALS**

1. Introduction:

The Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) and the Animal Policy & Welfare Oversight Committee (APWOC) require that all proposed use of live animals in teaching and training undergo pedagogical merit review in addition to ethical animal care and use review. For the purpose of this policy, animals refer to non-human vertebrates and cephalopods. Since animals used for educational purposes are not being used to discover, prove or develop new ideas or techniques, but rather to demonstrate principles and facts which are already established, animals must only be used for teaching and training purposes when that use has been found by independent expert peer reviewers to have pedagogical merit, and when the educational goals of the course that rely on the use of animals cannot be effectively conveyed in alternative manner.

When applying the 3Rs (replacement, refinement, reduction) to the use of animals in teaching and training, efforts should focus first on finding a replacement alternative. When no replacement teaching alternative is available to meet in an effective manner the pedagogical or training objectives, justification is required to use animals. The level and type of training for the students (undergraduate / graduate / postgraduate; specialized / non-specialized) are important factors. In collaboration with veterinary staff, all students are required to obtain appropriate animal user training prior to any work with live animals.

Note: Painful experiments or multiple invasive procedures on an individual animal, conducted solely for the instruction of students in the classroom, or for the demonstration of established scientific knowledge, cannot be justified.

2. Scope of the policy:

Subject to the following exemption, all animal-based teaching and training at McGill University and Affiliated Research Institutes shall be reviewed by two independent referees with knowledge of pedagogy and alternatives to animal-based teaching and who do not sit on the Facility Animal Care Committee (FACC). The review shall determine if animal-based teaching or training is essential to meeting learning objectives and outcomes. Decisions shall be documented and sent to the relevant FACC.

Proposals will be reviewed on a need basis, as a new teaching or training protocol is submitted, or at the time of a full review.

A decision is made by consensus of the two reviewers. If consensus cannot be reached after reasonable exchange, a third reviewer will receive the file and a majority decision will be rendered.

This review shall be performed prior to, or in parallel with, the FACC review, but the protocol will not be approved until and unless a favorable pedagogical merit review has been adjudicated.

2.1 Exemption

- a. Individual students trained for specific research projects covered by their Principal Investigator's approved animal use protocol are exempt from pedagogical merit review, as research protocols are covered by the [CCAC policy on scientific merit and ethical review of animal-based research](#).

3. Criteria

As stipulated by the CCAC, for each assessment of animal-based teaching/training, the pedagogical merit review process will consider key aspects such as:

- a. whether the learning objectives are clear and specify the involvement of animals;
- b. in the case of teaching technical skills, whether the learning objectives specify the proportion of the objective that must be achieved and/or how well the technique/procedure must be performed (accuracy, speed, quality);
- c. in the case of illustrating scientific principles, whether the learning objectives sufficiently justify the use of live animals, compared to alternatives;
- d. whether the composition, learning level and needs of the student group(s) are compatible with the goals and objectives of the animal-based teaching/training;
- e. whether the timing of the inclusion of animals in the teaching/training is suitable for the projected timing of the expected outcome(s);
- f. any feedback from student assessments and course or session evaluations regarding the benefit of the animal-based teaching/training;
- g. whether the review of the obstacles and opportunities for implementing 3Rs by the animal-based teaching/training instructors is sufficiently thorough.

4. Jurisdiction and process

4.1 Responsibility for the review process

The Animal Compliance Office, on behalf of the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation), will administer the pedagogical review process.

Reviewers will be chosen from a list of potential referees, who do not sit on the Facility Animal Care Committees, updated on an ongoing basis. Reviewers will be recruited by

field of expertise, for their knowledge of pedagogy and alternatives to animal-based teaching, as well as subject matter expertise.

The pedagogical merit review will remain valid until the Animal Use Protocol undergoes its next Full Review. If there are substantive changes to the use of animals in the approved course or training, the FACC may stipulate that a new proposal be submitted for de novo pedagogical merit review prior to the Full Review.

Enough time must be allotted to the review process to allow non-animal alternatives to be implemented should that be necessary. Thus, proposals for teaching courses involving animals should be submitted at least 4 months in advance of the course start date.

A veterinarian, at arms-length from the FACC evaluating the protocol, will be available for consultation by the reviewers upon request.

4.2 Procedures

The Animal Compliance Office maintains a tracking of upcoming full reviews of teaching and training protocols and provides the appropriate forms and instructions to Principal Instructors. FACC Administrators will advise the Animal Compliance Office of newly submitted Teaching and Training protocols.

Principal Instructors are asked to provide the following information to the Animal Compliance Office 4 months before the beginning of the course or course section where the use of live animals is projected:

- a. a copy of the completed Pedagogical Merit Review Form, including details of the research that was performed for non-animal alternatives;
- b. a copy of the proposed course's lab manual, syllabus or course materials, if available.

For ongoing courses, the Animal Compliance Office will provide reviewers with copies of the annual student feedback of animal use in the course.

The Animal Compliance Office will inform the relevant FACC of the outcome of the pedagogical merit review. It will also inform the PI and the head of the Academic Unit offering the course, in order to inform the Unit's curriculum committee on the relevance of animal use and assist with future course development.

4.3 Student Feedback

The Animal Compliance Office annually administers a formal questionnaire to students in courses that utilize animals. This is done to obtain feedback on the value and

learning experience of the use of animals in the course. This feedback is given to the pedagogical merit reviewers in support of their renewal review.

The student feedback is not an evaluation of the instructor or course, only of the importance of using live animals in meeting course objectives.

A depersonalized summary of the student feedback will be shared with the Principal Instructor and the head of the Academic Unit offering the course, in order to inform the Unit's curriculum committee on the relevance of animal use and assist with future course development.

5. Administration

Administrative support, including correspondence with the course instructor regarding submission of documents for pedagogical merit review, communication of documents to the committee, archiving of the documentation for each submission, communication of the committee decision to the FACC and administration of student questionnaires, is provided by the Animal Compliance Office.

Approved by APWOC on Nov 17, 2021