



## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE

#### **Introduction:**

The use of animals for research demands that the research meet high standards of scientific integrity and review. The Canadian Council on Animal Care and the University of Toronto Animal Care Committee require that all animal research protocols undergo peer review of scientific merit prior to approval of the use of animals. Animals must only be used for research that has been found by independent, expert peers to have scientific merit. Most research at the University of Toronto is funded by granting agencies that employ a process of well-defined peer review to ensure that high standards of scientific review are achieved (e.g. CIHR, NSERC). A smaller component involves research funded by contracts or grants from agencies or individuals who, while not employing peer review, help support the extension of previously peer-reviewed research into a new, related area. An even smaller component of research involves funding from agencies, individuals or other sources not employing peer review for studies that are not an extension of peer-reviewed research.

#### **Purpose:**

To ensure all animal-based research at the University of Toronto has been reviewed for scientific merit at arm's length from LACCs, either through an external granting agency that employs an acceptable system of peer review, or by members of the University Peer Review Committee and/or reviewers external to the University.

#### **Scope:**

The University Peer Review Committee will review all protocols involving animal-based research with the following exceptions:

1. The funding agency from which funding is secured employs an accepted peer review process;
2. The proposed project is deemed to be an extension of, or supplementary to, a peer reviewed project (maximum of 2 years allowed beyond the expiry date of a peer-reviewed grant), subject to LACC approval;
3. Animals are used solely for teaching or diagnostic purposes (teaching projects require separate pedagogical merit review);
4. Pilot study (5 - 10 animals), subject to LACC approval.

#### **Authority and reporting structure:**

Committee members are appointed by the Vice-President, Research and Innovation, and the committee

reports their findings through the Research Oversight and Compliance Office (ROCO), which then communicates the findings to the LACC and the Principal Investigator.

**Composition:**

University of Toronto faculty members who use animals, with representation from all animal facilities. Ideally there should be one member from UTM, one member from UTSC, one member from CSB, one member from Psychology, one member from Dentistry, and two members from Medicine and/or Pharmacy and/or Engineering. The Chair of the committee should be appointed by the Vice-President, Research and should be chosen from among the committee members.

**Terms of Office:**

Up to 4 years

**Responsibility:**

To ensure that all animal-based research has undergone scientific merit review.

To advise the appropriate LACC that a protocol has been deemed to have scientific merit.

To return a protocol or other submission to a Principal Investigator in situations where scientific merit has not been evident.

**Procedures:**

All committee members are provided with a copy of the animal use protocol that describes the project that is undergoing peer review, along with a copy of a detailed and referenced scientific summary of the project. Each reviewer considers the following aspects of each protocol reviewed: objectives, hypotheses, methodological approach, and potential contribution(s) of the study to scientific knowledge. Each reviewer then communicates their evaluation as to whether the protocol has scientific merit to the Committee Chair. Discussion of issues arising during an evaluation are carried out between the Committee members via e-mail or telephone. An evaluation from at least four members of the Committee, including the Chair, is required in order to reach a decision for any given protocol.

Any protocol that has been deemed by the ACC to not have been adequately peer reviewed and is deemed to be outside the level of expertise of all members of the University of Toronto Peer Review Committee will be sent to external reviewers for peer review.

**Administration:**

Administrative support (correspondence with the Principal Investigator regarding submission of documents for peer review, communication of protocol peer review documents to the Committee, archiving of the University Peer Review Committee review documentation for each protocol, communication of the University Peer Review Committee decision to the LACC) provided by the Research Ethics Coordinator (Animal, Courses and QA Projects).

**Approved – September 2014**