

Animal Welfare Complaints Procedure

Section 1 - Summary

(1) The purpose of this procedure is to ensure appropriate investigation of and response to any complaints received about a VU AEC approved project or animal use and or welfare at Victoria University (VU).

(2) This is required to ensure compliance with the [Code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th edition 2013](#) (referred to as "the Code"), specifically sections 5.4 and 5.5 which relate to complaints, and other legislation and regulation as relevant.

Section 2 - Accountability

Accountable/ Responsible Officer	Role
Accountable Officer	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research
Responsible Officer	Animal Welfare Officer

Section 3 - Scope

(3) This Procedure applies to:

- a. VU staff or students (wherever located) who undertake research, teaching or artistic work using animals.
- b. VU staff or students (wherever located) who undertake research, teaching or artistic work using animal tissue, whether extracted from a living or dead animal.
- c. All persons who identify an issue of concern relating to the care and treatment of animals used at VU for research teaching or artistic work and wish to make a complaint.

Section 4 - Definitions

(4) Nil.

Section 5 - Policy/Regulation

(5) [Animal Welfare Policy](#)

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
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Animal Welfare Officer (AWO)	May receive the complaint. May review the complaint and determine if it is of a serious nature. Will be involved in the investigation of the complaint.
Complainant	Provides a statement in writing of the nature of the complaint, giving as many details as possible. Co-operates with the investigation process as required.
Animal Ethics Committee (AEC)	Considers all complaints brought to its attention. Authorises immediate cessation of activities pending investigation if the allegation is considered to be of a serious nature. Arranges for investigation of complaints. Determines whether the complaint has merit. Orders the appropriate remedial action. Refers the matter to a research misconduct process if appropriate.
AEC Chair	May receive the complaint. May review the complaint and determine if it is of a serious nature.
Chief Investigator	Takes overarching responsibility for the AEC approved project. Co-operates fully with complaint investigation. Implements any required process changes.
AEC Ethics Officer	Provides administrative support to the AEC.
Director, Portfolio of the Vice Chancellor	Reviews a decision of the AEC in a complaint matter if a question is raised about the AEC process.
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research (SPPL Holder)	Considers reviews against AEC determinations. Receives complaints from investigators dissatisfied with AEC.
College Dean	Co-operates with the AEC in the investigation of a complaint. Receives complaints redirected by the AEC when unrelated to activities defined under "the Code".

Part B - General

(6) Any person concerned about the management of an AEC approved project or animal welfare may make a complaint.

(7) A student may elect at any time to notify a teacher of a conscientious objection to participating in teaching involving the use of animals. Such a notification must be communicated to the AEC by the teacher in writing.

(8) Investigators dissatisfied with the AEC may lodge a complaint to the Director of the Office for Research.

(9) A complaint should be made directly to the animal welfare officer, the chair of the AEC, the Director of the Office for Research or the AEC ethics officer.

(10) The complaint must be in writing and should include as much detail as possible, such as the date and nature of the event resulting in the complaint.

(11) To avoid confusion and misinformation the complaint must not be made via a third party, and must not be made anonymously

(12) The complaint may be lodged in confidence to one of the above persons.

(13) Any complaint received concerning the treatment of animals must be fully investigated as soon as is reasonably practicable and if necessary corrective action taken.

(14) If the complaint relates to work at an external organization the AEC of that external institution (external AEC) must be informed of the complaint.

(15) It is the responsibility of the AEC with oversight of the project or animals under the scientific premises license to investigate the complaint. The VU AEC Chair will advise the external AEC of the complaint in writing and request a report of the outcome of any review of the complaint for the information of the VU AEC.

(16) If the external AEC determines that research or other misconduct has occurred this will be referred to the VU License holder for appropriate action.

Part C - AEC Action

(17) Relevant documentation from the AEC will provide contact details for the animal ethics officer and a statement that complaints should be lodged with the Office for Research via:

- a. the Animal Welfare Officer (AWO);
- b. the Chair of the AEC;
- c. the Director of the Office for Research; or
- d. the AEC ethics officer.

(18) All complaints will be referred to the AEC via the AEC Chair.

(19) Upon receiving a written complaint the AEC chair and / or the AWO will review the complaint and determine if it is of a serious nature — if determined to be serious the AEC chair and / or AWO may require all work relating to animal use related to the project or matter named in the complaint be discontinued until a full investigation has occurred.

(20) The AEC will consider the complaint in light of the approved application to the AEC or other relevant documentation.

(21) The AEC will require from the person(s) identified in the complaint a response to the complaint in order to determine the nature of the complaint and decide:

- a. If the complaint relates to a potential adverse event the AEC will initiate the Adverse Events Procedure (Animal Ethics Procedure 04.01);
- b. If the complaint relates to a potential non-compliant event the AEC will initiate the VU Animal use Non-compliant Events Procedure;
- c. If the complaint is not related to the requirements of "the Code" the AEC will refer the complaint to the relevant College Dean (or equivalent) or dismiss the complaint

(22) In the case that the complaint is made concerning the AEC process, the Director of the Office for Research will take a lead role in assessing the complaint and will arrange for a person external to the AEC to investigate the complaint and determine if review of the AEC process is necessary.

Part D - Recommendations

(23) The investigation by the AEC will determine if the complaint is:

- a. Upheld — and what actions or AEC approved procedures and processes are to be followed.
- b. Dismissed.

(24) Complaints relating to the AEC process of review must comply with the relevant section of "the Code". The person external to the AEC conducting this review will be the Director, Portfolio of the Vice Chancellor.

Part E - Communication and Review

(25) The AEC will ensure that all parties, including the complainant, are aware of the process and are informed of its progress and outcomes.

(26) In the event that the complaint was lodged in confidence, and therefore direct communication with the person making the complaint is not possible, the person to whom the complaint was originally lodged should ensure communication of the outcome of the complaint back to this person.

(27) The right of review will be extended to all parties to a complaint.

(28) An intention to review must be made in writing to the AEC ethics officer and must be made within one month of the outcome of the complaint being finalised.

(29) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research (SPPL Holder) will consider the review and determine if any further action is required.

Section 7 - Guidelines

(30) Nil

Status and Details

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Effective Date	19th June 2018
Review Date	7th June 2021
Approval Authority	Vice-President (Research)
Approval Date	7th June 2018
Expiry Date	23rd November 2021
Accountable Officer	Andrew Hill Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Impact Andrew.Hill@vu.edu.au
Responsible Officer	Steven Holloway Animal Welfare Officer
Enquiries Contact	Steven Holloway Animal Welfare Officer <hr/> Graduate Research School