



Code	QA500
Title	Animal Care Research Ethics Committee (ACREC) Policy
Policy Owner	VP Research & Innovation/Director of Research
Date	February 2024
Approved By	Academic Council

1. Purpose

Remit, composition and terms of reference for the Animal Care Research Ethics Committee (ACREC).

2. Description & Overview

There is general consensus in our society that, until satisfactory alternatives have been developed, the use of animals in research is necessary for medical and scientific progress. Animal research under certain constraints and conditions is facilitated by legislation.

The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) has been the competent authority responsible for the implementation of Directive 2010/63/EU and SI No 543 as amended on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes in Ireland. Establishment, Project and Individual authorisations applications are assessed by the HPRA and the resulting authorisations must be in place prior to the commencement of any research work involving animals. All scientific work involving animals must comply with the University of Galway's Code of Good Practice in Animal Research (QA501) and receive ethical approval before the project commences. Although, ethical evaluations prior to project authorisation application are not a formal requirement, they are actively encouraged by the HPRA. The University of Galway has established the Animal Care Research Ethics Committee (ACREC) that examines proposals to carry out research involving animals at the university to assess whether the research procedures proposed are scientifically justified and ethically acceptable according to best international principles and standards. An additional consideration for the research community of the University of Galway is that funding agencies and reputable research journals will not accept for publication animal-based research unless it has been specifically approved by an ethics committee.

The ACREC operates, in accordance with University policies and in conjunction with the guidelines and processes implemented by the HPRA, to ethically review proposed activities that involve animals for scientific purposes conducted at the University of Galway. ACREC ensures that a thorough, expert, robust and independent assessment is performed in timely fashion, thus providing the necessary supplementary documentation to the HPRA.

3. Remit, Responsibilities and Composition

The objectives of the ACREC are:

- To evaluate and actively promote, the application of the principles of refinement, reduction, and replacement (commonly referred to as the "3 Rs") to the use of live animals in research and teaching.
- To examine research and teaching proposals involving live animals in respect to all ethical issues arising from them.

- To make a determination on the ethical acceptability of individual projects and to make recommendations for improving the compliance of individual projects with recognised ethical standards.
- To ensure that research and teaching involving live animals at the University of Galway is in line with best international standards
- To support the adherence to appropriate animal welfare, housing, and husbandry standards in the animal facilities at University of Galway.
- To assist the University in the formulation of institutional policies on the use of live animals in research and teaching.

It is the responsibility of the ACREC to consider:

- The scientific validity and novelty of proposed projects
- The welfare cost to the animals
- The potential benefits of the work
- The societal acceptability of the proposed projects

Informed by guidelines developed by the HPRA, the ACREC of the University of Galway comprises representatives of the various interests involved, including both those with animal research expertise and those without. Membership of the ACREC is ratified by the Director of Research or their nominee. The composition of the ACREC is:

- A person in institution with significant relevant research experience acting as Chairperson¹
- A person in the institution with significant relevant research experience acting as Vice Chairperson¹
- The Designated Veterinarian
- One or more persons in charge of day-to-day animal care in the University (Animal Care Worker)
- Two or more representatives of the research community in the University (Researchers)¹
- One or more independent people not involved in scientific research (Lay Member)
- One or more people with statistical expertise (Statistician)
- An ACREC administrator who is a non-voting member with administrative responsibility for coordinating meeting schedules, reviews and communications with applicants and for maintaining a record of all ACREC activities. The ACREC administrator will be contactable and will communicate primarily via a dedicated email address (ACREC@universityofgalway.ie).

4. Member Appointment, Meeting Schedule and Quorum

- The ACREC reports to the Research and Innovation Committee
- Terms of appointment of ACREC members will be for 3 years (renewable).
- Regular rotation of the representatives of the research community and lay persons is preferred.
- The Committee will meet at least four times a year.
- A minimum of five members of the ACREC are required to be present at a meeting held to determine an opinion in relation to applications for ethical approval.
- Where a quorum is not present, the Committee may not commence, continue or conclude any discussion with the purpose of determining the outcome of an application

¹ For consideration purposes, the representative(s) from each of these categories should not be directly connected with the project under review).

- The ACREC can invite additional persons, not necessarily staff members of the University, to act as advisors for the review of specific research proposals.
- For a given application review, any attending representative(s) of the research community who are directly connected with the project under consideration must recuse themselves from the discussion and decision-making.
- The identities of the members of the ACREC will remain confidential.

5. Operating Procedures

- ACREC will conduct reviews of ethical applications in accordance with the operating procedures as set out in the '*Standard Operating Procedure for ACREC Review of Ethical Applications*'.
- Minor changes to the Standard Operating Procedures will be ratified by the ACREC.
- Substantive changes to the Standard Operating Procedures will be submitted to the Research and Innovation Committee.

6. Additional Policies and Procedures

- ACREC will periodically review and revise its procedures with the goals of improving efficiency and quality of the review process and maintaining compliance with University policies and with national/EU regulations.
- ACREC will maintain its competence and efficiency through periodic training and through on-going engagement with potential new members.
- ACREC together with the AWB will:
 - Promote the highest ethical standards of research and teaching involving animals within University premises.
 - Support evaluation of the compliance of ACREC-approved, HPRA-authorized animal-based research and teaching projects
 - Support the evaluation of projected versus actual severity of the pain and distress caused to animals in the course of approved and authorized projects.
- The University has the right to revoke, suspend, modify, or reconsider ACREC approval at any time and with immediate effect. In such a case, the matter can be placed back on the ACREC agenda for the purpose of further consideration.

7. Responsibilities

Name	Responsibility
Director of Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Owner and Compliance Officer
Research and Innovation Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution and oversight of good practice
ACREC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethically review and approve all animal research conducted at University.
Principal Investigator/ Authorisation Holder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure research projects are performed only at the establishment(s) specified and that all procedures of the project are carried out within the terms of the authorisation
Project Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall implementation of research projects and compliance with the project authorisation

Researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure compliance with the terms of the project authorisation
Animal Welfare Body (AWB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review ACREC approved projects • Advise researchers on matters related to animal welfare, the 3Rs (reduction, replacement and refinement) • Follow up project development and outcome • Establish and review internal operational processes of animal monitoring, reporting and follow up.

8. Related Documents

QA501 Code of Good Practice in Animal Research

QA502 Animal Welfare Body

Standard Operating Procedure for ACREC Review of Ethical Applications