

**Name:** Scientific Merit Review of Animal Use Protocols for Research, Testing, and Monitoring

**Policy Number:** 8-1023

**Origin:** SMU Animal Care Committee

**Approved:** 2020-NOV-18

**Issuing Authority:** Vice President Academic and Research

**Responsibility:** Associate Vice President Research

**Effective Date:** 2020-NOV-18

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Scope and Purpose:

According to the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) the University's research administration is responsible for ensuring that basic and applied research by Saint Mary's University researchers in which animals will be used must be independently reviewed for scientific merit through a formal process by expert peers and found to have scientific merit before subsequently being subjected to an ethics review by the University's Animal Care Committee (ACC). Scientific merit review does not apply to regulatory testing or to teaching/training (except where students are being taught/trained as partners in research projects – including honours projects, undergraduate and graduate level research). Scientific merit review does apply to pilot study research (\*except where the purpose of the pilot study is to develop or evaluate a new method within the context of a peer-reviewed research program). Scientific merit review also applies to research that is undertaken with start-up funds (\*except where it is associated with a

The relevant CCAC policy documents that inform this SMU Policy are:

*CCAC Policy Statement for Senior Administrators Responsible for Animal Care and Use Programs* and specifically APPENDIX II of this policy statement. (CCAC, 2008)

*CCAC Policy Statement on Scientific Merit and Ethical Review of Animal-Based Research* (CCAC, 2013)

*CCAC FAQ on Scientific Merit and Ethical Review of Animal-Based Research* (CCAC, 2019)

Policy:

In accordance with the CCAC Guidelines and the Saint Mary's University Animal Care and Use Program, animal use in research must only be undertaken if expert, independent opinion has attested to the probable scientific value of the research within its field. Proposed animal use for research must be independently peer-reviewed for its scientific merit before it can undergo ethics review by the ACC. Animal-based work can then proceed only if the ACC finds the use of animals acceptable ethically and in practice (i.e. the proposed animal-based methods should be appropriate for the work and meet institutional and CCAC Guidelines and standards). The Research Grants Officer (RGO) works out of the research office and is an ex-officio non-voting member of the ACC, attending all animal ethics review meetings of the ACC. Through the RGO, the ACC receives solicited confirmation that each animal-based research protocol has been found to have scientific merit according to the formal process detailed below, before it is subjected to ethics review by the ACC and; through the RGO, the research office receives confirmation of protocol approval from the ACC before releasing funds for animal-based work for the corresponding project.

**Externally funded** proposals of research involving animals are submitted to the ACC by the principal investigator (PI) using the animal-use protocol form which includes a section for the funding source and grant number required information as well as a checkbox for confirmation of peer review. In the case of externally funded proposals that do not appear to use a peer review mechanism with appropriate independence and expertise, the funding source may be able to demonstrate, to the research administration's satisfaction, that the project has been peer-reviewed by independent experts, and should be able to describe the process in writing. The ACC must receive confirmation from the PI and the research office that the work described in the research animal use protocol is part of a research project or program that has been found to have scientific merit through independent, expert review. Indication of NSERC funding is normally taken by the ACC as evidence of scientific merit for the entire funding period and the proposal is subsequently subjected to ethics review by the ACC. Otherwise, through the RGO, the ACC asks for confirmation from the research office on whether the listed funding source is sufficient evidence of scientific merit.

If the RGO on behalf of the research office communicates to the ACC Chair confirmation that scientific merit has already been demonstrated through the competitive peer-review process for the proposed work, the proposal is subsequently subjected to the ethics review process as described in the ACC Terms of Reference, to determine whether the proposed animal use and



