

## Scientific Peer Review of Animal Research Proposals from Corporate Partners

### Preamble

The Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) has indicated that the onus is on corporate partners using Dalhousie University facilities to provide solid verifiable evidence of scientific peer review for research protocols that involve the use of animals in research at University facilities.

This review is a separate process that is supplementary to – and a prerequisite for – ethical review. Both processes must satisfy criteria of rigour and arms length procedures. Evidence of scientific review must be presented and approved by the AVP Research (AVPR) prior to submission of protocol to the appropriate animal care committee for ethics review and approval.

### Review Process

1. The proponent company prepares a project proposal (maximum of 5 pages, not including references) that provides a summary and description of the project and includes sufficient information to allow a reviewer to comment on (a) the objectives and potential contribution of the study to scientific knowledge; (b) the hypotheses and appropriateness of the experimental design involving animals; (c) the animal-based methods to be employed; and (d) the originality of the study.
2. The proponent company seeks two independent peer reviews of the proposal from qualified scientists (*see requirements below*).
3. The proponent company collates and submits the following documents to the designated Associate Vice President Research (AVPR): the project proposal; reviewer CVs and contact information; and an affidavit signed by a senior signing authority (eg., CEO) representing the company indicating that the criteria for company-appointed reviewers has been satisfied.
4. The AVPR reviews the material and makes a recommendation of approval/disapproval based on scientific merit in the form of a letter or email from the AVPR to the appropriate animal care committee, copied to the proponent.
5. If the proposed project meets the requirements for scientific merit, ethical and safety reviews, the project will proceed based on the animal care protocol form provided by the corporate sponsor. To avoid delays in this ethical review, the proponent should ensure that all supplemental forms – especially those related to Environmental Health & Safety – are submitted where relevant (*see Checklist*).
6. The UCLA Secretariat will inform the proponent that the project may proceed once all approvals are met.

### Criteria for Company-Appointed Reviewers

The proponent is responsible for seeking out reviewers; qualified reviewers must meet the following criteria:

- Be a recognised expert in the field to which the project applies;

- Hold an academic appointment as faculty at a public institution and have held grants within the previous 3 years that pertain to the subject of the research;
- Have published at least three papers in a field related to the subject of research within the past 5 years;
- Is not financially linked to the company, an employee of the company or in a governance position with the company or its board;

Note that reviewers *can* receive fair compensation for conducting the review; the proponent is not obliged to detail this to the AVPR.

### **Reviewer Report on Scientific Merit**

The reviewer should provide a brief summary and evaluation in lay language of the scientific basis for the proposal; please do not include excerpts from grant proposal. The entire summary should not exceed 2 pages. Within this summary the reviewer shall provide comments on the following areas:

- *Originality and innovation*; extent to which the proposal suggests and explores novel or potentially transformative concepts and lines of inquiry; context of this proposal as opposed to other lines of inquiry in this discipline;
- *Significance* and expected contributions to research; potential for technological impact;
- *Clarity and scope of objectives*;
- *Clarity and appropriateness of methodology*, including experimental design and statistical basis for analysis;
- *Feasibility*; extent to which the scope of the proposal addresses all relevant issues including the need for varied expertise within or across disciplines, where applicable.

For each of the above categories, the reviewer should apply a score from 0 to 3 according to the following grading criteria (with appropriate justification in the narrative provided):

- 3 = Fully satisfies this review criterion in all respects; the proposed work has exceptional merit in this regard.
- 2 = Generally satisfies this review criterion; the proposed work would be considered within the median of similar studies in this regard.
- 1 = Mostly satisfies this review criterion; there are some notable but minor deficiencies in this regard.
- 0 = Does not satisfy this review criterion, or insufficient information provided to render adequate assessment of this criterion.

***For a project to be considered as having met the threshold for scientific merit, it must achieve at least a "1" in each of the above 5 categories.***

The reviewer should forward the full review concurrently to the designated AVPR and to the corporate sponsor.