

## **UCLA Guidelines for Peer Review for Scientific Merit**

In accordance with the Canadian Council on Animal Care and Dalhousie University, animals must only be used for research projects/programs that have been found to have scientific merit by independent, expert peers.

**Peer Reviewed Research Proposals:** Funding of a research project by a major peer reviewed funding agency is normally taken as evidence of scientific merit. If the proposal has been reviewed but not funded, a favorable review may be acceptable as evidence of scientific merit if the principal investigator (PI) can supply a copy of the review.

If a project is funded by a smaller agency or an industrial source where peer review for scientific merit has been conducted, documentation regarding the date of review, composition of the review panel, and a brief description of the review process must be provided by the PI upon request.

Dalhousie University reserves the right to ask for additional or more rigorous scientific peer review for a specific use of animals, particularly when the ethical cost to the animals is high.

**Proposals not Previously Peer Reviewed:** Projects that are funded by non- peer reviewed sources, such as departmental funds or commercial agencies, must undergo independent scientific merit review before ethical approval can be granted by the animal care committee. The PI must provide Dalhousie Research Services with the following:

1. A summary and description of the project (maximum 5 pages) including sufficient information to allow the reviewer to comment on : a) the objectives and potential contribution of the study to scientific knowledge; b) the hypotheses and appropriateness of experimental design involving animals; c) the animal- based methods; d) the originality of the study.
2. The names and contact information for two internal and two external potential reviewers who have expertise in the area.

Two independent reviews will be solicited by Dalhousie Research Services from individuals who may or may not be those suggested by the PI. Conflict of interest guidelines for the selection of reviewers exclude those individuals who :

- a) have collaborated, published, or been a co-applicant on a research or training grant with the applicant in the last 5 years

- b) have been a student or supervisor of the applicant within the last 8 years
- c) are a close personal friend or relative of the applicant
- d) have had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the applicant

Reviewers will be asked to complete a scientific merit review form, and rate the proposal as acceptable, unacceptable, or conditionally acceptable. Concerns raised by the reviewers will be brought to the attention of the PI, who will be given an opportunity to address those concerns. The PI's response will be forwarded to the reviewers, who may then elect to change their rating of the proposal. Two acceptable ratings must be received in order for the proposal to be deemed meritorious.

Confirmation of scientific merit must be received from Dalhousie Research Services before the animal care committee can give full ethical approval to an animal-based research proposal.

Approved December 16, 2010  
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