



Animal Care Committee

Policy Name	Pedagogical Merit Review of Animal Use Protocols for Teaching and Training
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Origin	Committee on Animal Use and Welfare (CAUW)
Authority	Associate Vice-President Research
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Responsibility for Revision	Research Ethics Coordinator
Responsibility for Implementation	Associate Vice-President Research

1) Scope

All animal-based teaching and training activities at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) that require an animal protocol must undergo a pedagogical merit review (see the [Requirement for submitting an animal protocol: Addendum to the CCAC policy statement on terms of reference for animal care committees](#)).

These include:

- teaching in academic institutions,
- training activities/programs for research, and
- testing team members (e.g., graduate students, principal investigators, technicians in contract research organizations),
- as well as non-degree/diploma/ certificate credit courses (e.g., professional development or continuing education workshops) provided by faculty or other institutional personnel under the aegis of a certified institution.

This policy does **not** apply to activities that do not require a protocol, such as third-party animal-based activities conducted on campus (e.g., clubs using college facilities), or off-campus student practicums.

2) Purpose and Responsibilities

MSVU, as a CCAC-certified institution that conducts animal-based research, teaching and training, is required to have a formal pedagogical merit review process in place. At least two independent referees with knowledge of pedagogy and alternatives to animal-based teaching and who do not sit on the animal care committee (ACC) will determine if animal-based teaching or training is essential to meeting learning objectives and outcomes. Decisions shall be documented and sent to the ACC.

Pedagogical merit review is ultimately the responsibility the Vice President Academic and Research (VPAR) at Saint Mary's University (SMU), in consultation with the MSVU Associate Vice-President Research (AVPR) for MSVU-related activities. The VPAR has designated day-to-day responsibility for pedagogical merit review to the SMU Associate Vice President Research (SMU AVPR). The MSVU

AVPR has authorized the SMU Animal Care Coordinator to manage the pedagogical merit review process.

Relevant CCAC policy documents that inform this Policy are:

- *CCAC policy on Pedagogical merit of live animal-based teaching and training* (CCAC, 2016)
- *CCAC FAQ on Pedagogical merit of live animal-based teaching and training* (CCAC, 2020)

3) Policy

a) **Frequency of Pedagogical Merit Reviews:**

The pedagogical merit review of live animal-based teaching and training should be undertaken for every new teaching or training course and reviewed at least every four years for ongoing teaching or training, even if there are no changes to the course. Ongoing teaching or training can undergo a pedagogical merit review when a new protocol is submitted. The four-year interval gives institutions enough time to identify possible replacement alternatives.

b) **Pedagogical Merit Reviewers**

Ideally, at least two independent referees with knowledge of pedagogy and replacement alternatives to animal-based teaching or training should be involved in the pedagogical merit review. **Reviewers normally* must not sit on the Animal Care Committee nor be involved with the proposed coursework under review.** There is no requirement for the same individual to possess knowledge in both areas as long as both areas are covered. Reviewers do not have to be “in-house”, as in faculty, staff or other personnel at the institution.

**Animal care committee members who have knowledge of replacement alternatives in teaching and training should share that knowledge with the individuals responsible for pedagogical merit review. Knowledgeable animal care committee members may participate in pedagogical merit review as long as they recuse themselves from the ethical review of the same animal-based teaching or training project.*

c) **Pedagogical Merit Review Process**

Per CCAC’s guidelines, the SMU Animal Care Committee Coordinator has been authorized by the AVPR to manage administrative aspects of the process, and will work closely with the SMU AVPR, who is responsible for the pedagogical merit review.

Per CCAC’s requirements, MSVU has developed two review forms:

1. The Pedagogical Merit Teaching Form
2. The Pedagogical Merit Reviewer Comment Form

The first should be completed by instructors to provide information on the course/training that will help the reviewers perform their assessment. The second form will guide reviewers in their evaluation of the course/training. Reviewers should receive the completed animal protocol form, the instructor’s completed form, and a blank review form to document their comments and conclusions. The reviewers’ comments will be documented and forwarded to the instructor, who will be given an opportunity to make appropriate changes to the protocol and related documents, based on the reviewers’ comments, before resubmitting the documents to the reviewers, if necessary. Reviewers will then send their final comments and conclusion to the SMU AVPR (through the Animal Care Committee Coordinator). If pedagogical merit is confirmed, the SMU AVPR will submit the following to the animal care committee:

- the final protocol
- the reviewers’ comments and conclusions

If based on the comments and conclusions of the reviewers, the SMU AVPR decides that there is no pedagogical merit, the ACC should not undertake ethical review of the protocol.

d) **Key Considerations in the Review of Pedagogical Merit**

For each assessment of animal-based teaching/training, it is expected that the pedagogical merit review process will consider key aspects such as:

- whether the learning objectives are clear and specify the involvement of animals;
- whether the learning objectives specify the proportion of the objective that must be achieved and/or how well the behaviour must be performed (accuracy, speed, quality);
- whether the composition, learning level and needs of the student group(s) are compatible with the goals and objectives of the animal-based teaching/training;
- whether the timing of the inclusion of animals in the teaching/training is suitable for the projected timing of the expected outcome(s);
- whether the review of the obstacles and opportunities for implementing 'Three Rs by the animal-based teaching/training instructors' is sufficiently thorough; and
- whether criteria proposed for assessing the completed animal-based teaching/training is suitable and will contribute to optimization of this use of animals for the benefit of future students.

4) **Acknowledgements**

MSVU would like to acknowledge that this policy has been adapted from the ACC Policy (2020) at Saint Mary's University