1 BACKGROUND

The Animal Ethics Committee (Committee) is established by QIMR Berghofer, under the provisions of the Australian Code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, (the Code) as published from time to time.

These Terms of Reference comply with the Code, and the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 (Qld).

2 PURPOSE OF THE COMMITTEE

2.1 The purpose of the Committee is to ensure that animal welfare is protected and that all activities relating to the care and use of animals at the Institute are conducted in compliance with the Code and relevant State and Commonwealth legislation.

2.2 The Committee reviews and issues Institute approval for research proposals involving animals and amendments to such proposals to ensure that they are ethically acceptable and follow relevant legislation, Standards, Codes and Guidelines.

2.3 The Committee, when quorate helps to fulfil QIMR Berghofer’s obligation under Queensland Animal welfare legislation. This is supported by Institute processes.

2.4 The Committee is registered with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

3 GOVERNANCE

3.1 The Committee is accountable to and reports to the Deputy Director & Chief Scientist and, through the Deputy Director & Chief Scientist, to the Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research (Council).

3.2 To ensure good communication between the Committee, Institute Management, and Council:

   a) the Committee shall submit a quarterly activity report on the operations of the AEC to the Council via the Deputy Director, Director and the Council’s Audit, Risk & Finance Committee;
   
   b) the Chairperson shall be invited to meet directly with the Council once per year; and
   
   c) the Chairperson shall be invited to meet with the Director & CEO twice per year.

3.3 In addition, the Committee Chairperson may escalate an issue or risk to the Council at any time, via the GM Research Governance and Funding, Deputy Director, or Council Secretary.
4. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Roles of the Committee

The roles of the Committee are to:

a) Consider the scientific, ethical and welfare implications of applications for all research involving animals submitted to the AEC, and determine whether to approve, request amendment of, or reject a project on ethical grounds, based on the requirements of the Animal Code;

b) Recommend to the Council any necessary measures to ensure that the standards required by the Code, and any other relevant State, and Commonwealth legislation, are maintained.

c) Monitor the care and use of animals, including housing conditions, practices and procedures involved in the care of animals in facilities.

d) Take appropriate actions to ensure the welfare of animals.

e) Approve guidelines for the care and use of animals on behalf of the Institute.

f) Provide advice and recommendations on animal welfare and on policy requirements relating to the Code, and any other relevant State and Commonwealth legislation relating to animal research to the Institute.

g) Comply with the reporting requirements of the Institute and any State or Commonwealth reporting requirements.

h) Perform all other duties required by the Code.

5. MEMBERSHIP

5.1 Composition

a) The AEC is constituted in accordance with the Code, with a minimum membership of 5 being the chairperson and one member from each of the categories listed in the Code:

b) The Institute may also appoint a person responsible for the routine care of animals within the institution.

5.2 Appointment of Members

5.2.1 The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson are appointed by the Council, on recommendation of the Deputy Director & Chief Scientist.

5.2.2 All other members are appointed by the Deputy Director & Chief Scientist.

5.2.2.1 Initial appointment shall be via a merit-based recruitment process;

5.2.2.2 Reappointment shall be on the recommendation of the Chairperson.

5.2.3 For Institute staff seeking appointment to the Committee, the recruitment process shall include confirmation of the support of the member’s line management to take up, or continue, the member’s participation on the committee.

5.2.4 All members are appointed as individuals for their knowledge, qualities, expertise and relevant experience, not as representatives of any organisation, group, or opinion.

5.3 Induction

a) All members of the Committee are provided with a formal notice of appointment and may not review any applications until they have completed an induction program.

b) The induction program includes:

   i. An induction session with the Chairperson or their delegate. In the case of a new
Chairperson not previously a Committee member, an induction session with a suitably experienced Committee member;

ii. For Institute staff, completion within the last three years of the Institute’s eLearning modules for Research Integrity;

iii. Attendance at a Committee meeting as an observer with no rights of debate; and

iv. Provision of and an opportunity for familiarisation with:

• the Code, and
• these Terms of Reference.

5.4 **Period of Appointment**

a) A Committee member is normally appointed for a three-year term.

b) Members may be appointed to two consecutive terms.

c) Members may be appointed to more than two consecutive terms with the express approval of the Deputy Director & Chief Scientist.

5.5 **Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson**

a) A Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson shall be appointed by the Council, for an initial term of three years. An appointment from the ranks of the Committee shall extend that member’s term by the full three-year period.

b) The Chairperson may be appointed for no more than a second three-year term.

c) The Chairperson shall impartially guide the operation of the Committee, resolve conflicts of interest related to the business of the Committee and represent the Committee in any discussions with the management of the Institute.

d) The responsibilities of the Chairperson include, but are not limited to:

i. ensuring that the Committee operates in accordance with the principles and requirements of the Code, the relevant policies of the Institute and the agreed Committee procedures;

ii. overseeing all requirements of Committee reporting and reviewing;

iii. advising the Deputy Director & Chief Scientist regarding the level of resourcing required by the Committee; and

iv. meeting with the Council and Director & CEO to report on the operations of the Committee and raise any issues.

e) In the absence of the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson will perform the duties of the Chair.

5.6 **The QIMR Berghofer-AEC Animal Welfare Officer**

a) If an Animal Welfare Officer (AWO) is appointed by the Institute, the AWO may attend or be a member of the AEC.

b) When attending the AEC, the AWO’s role is to advise the Chairperson on matters relating to animal welfare.

5.7 **Member responsibilities**

a) Members shall:

i. thoroughly prepare for meetings by reading applications, reports and documentation
provided in meeting agendas;
ii. attend scheduled meetings to deliberate on the ethical acceptability of agenda items for approval;
iii. actively engage in informed and thorough discussion of matters before the Committee;
iv. in a timely manner complete actions assigned to them arising from matters before the Committee, and
v. complete training appropriate to the member’s position.
vi. maintain confidentiality in relation to all discussions during meetings.

b) Where a member misses 3 consecutive meetings, that member should provide a reason for missing the previous meetings to the Chairperson, who can decide whether that member should remain a member of the Committee and make recommendation to the Deputy Director & Chief Scientist.

5.8 Remuneration

c) Members of the Committee who are not Institute staff will receive remuneration for the valuable contribution that they make to the Institute’s scientific research. Remuneration arrangements are set out in the Institute’s Remuneration of Chairpersons and External Members of Management Committees Procedure.
d) Members employed by the Institute provide their services on a voluntary basis, though may be compensated in other ways for the time commitment to the Committee.
e) All essential and necessary expenses incurred by members in carrying out their Committee duties will be reimbursed by the Institute, on production of original receipts.
f) Parking will be provided at Herston for members who are not Institute employees, while attending to Committee business.

5.9 Rights of audience and debate

a) The following position holders have right of audience and debate at Committee meetings:

i. Committee secretariat;
ii. Deputy Director & Chief Scientist;
iii. General Manager, Research Governance & Funding;
iv. Any other person with the approval of the Chairperson.

b) Persons with rights of audience and debate have no decision-making authority in relation to the business of the Committee, and shall not be present during decision making or deliberation without the Chairperson’s approval.
c) Persons with rights of audience and debate are not required to be inducted to the Committee but are bound by the conflict of interest and confidentiality provisions that apply to all members.

6 MEETINGS

6.1 Meetings

6.1.1 The Committee will meet at least eight times per year either face to face or if necessary by videoconference.
6.1.2 A schedule of Committee meeting dates and agenda closing dates will be made available by the beginning of each year.
6.1.3 Extraordinary meetings of the Committee may be convened during peak workload or to review urgent committee business.
6.1.4 Meetings of the AEC Executive, comprising the Chairperson and at a minimum a category C or D member will be scheduled to address minor matters as prescribed by the Code and agreed by the AEC.

6.2 Quorum

A quorum will comprise at least the minimum membership described in the Code, that being the chairperson and a member from each of the prescribed categories.

If necessary to attain quorum, where a minimum membership category member (Cat A-D) is unavailable and that category is the same as that of the Chairperson, the Chairperson can act both as the chairperson and the missing category member.

6.3 Secretariat

6.3.1 The Committee is supported by the Committee Secretary, who is an employee of the Institute.
6.3.2 The Committee Secretary will:

6.3.2.1 In consultation with the Chairperson, prepare and send notices of meetings and agendas and accurately record all decisions of the Committee.
6.3.2.2 Table all correspondence, reports, submission and other information relevant to the Committee.
6.3.2.3 Organise and administer the Committee and any subcommittees.
6.3.2.4 Act as a liaison between the Committee, any subcommittees and researchers.
6.3.2.5 Provide advice to researchers on the Institute’s process for ethics review.

6.4 Procedures

6.4.1 The Committee will operate in a manner consistent with that specified in the Committee’s Working Procedures.

7 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

7.1 Members are required to declare any interests that could constitute an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest in relation to their participation on the Committee, in line with the Institute’s Conflict of Interest Policy.

7.2 The declaration must be made on appointment to the Committee and in relation to specific agenda items at the outset of each Committee meeting, and be updated as necessary.

7.3 The Chairperson will determine if members with a conflict of interest on an agenda item may remain present for the discussion of the item but not take part in a decision, or if the member must withdraw from the meeting for the discussion of matters that relate to that conflict of

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interest. Once such members have withdrawn, the remaining members must still constitute a quorum.

7.4 If the member with a conflict of interest is the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson will make the determination in paragraph 7.3.

8 CONFIDENTIALITY

8.1 Confidential matters relating to the Committee include, but are not limited to:

8.1.1 the content and nature of applications before the Committee;
8.1.2 the deliberations of members during consideration of meeting business;
8.1.3 the private information of persons internal and external to the Institute contained within meeting papers;
8.1.4 arrangements involving third parties; and
8.1.5 information relating to complaints, misconduct or investigations.

8.2 Agenda items considered during a meeting and records of specific meeting discussions may be shared by the Chairperson, or by the General Manager, Research Governance & Funding, with staff of the Institute who can demonstrate a need to access the relevant information for the performance of their duties.

9 SUBCOMMITTEES

9.1 Animal Scientific Subcommittee

9.1.1 The AEC is assisted by the Animal Scientific Subcommittee (ASSC), a pre-review entity which provides advice on scientific aspects of applications.
9.1.2 The ASSC has its own Terms of Reference.

10 COMPLAINT HANDLING

10.1 Complaints may be made about research involving the use of animals or about the AEC itself.

10.2 Complaints made by members of the public or affected or interested persons these should be made via an email available on the QIMR internet. Complaints made by members of the Institute should be made to the Secretariat, though these can come by any route. Such complaints will be referred to the AEC Chairperson and the General Manager Research Governance and Funding within 48 hours of being received by the secretariat. They will be handled according to working procedures.

10.3 Complaints about the AEC must be directed to and handled by the Deputy-Director or their delegate.

11 REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

a. Variations to the Terms of Reference of the Committee must be approved by the Council.

b. The Committee will review and assess the adequacy of these terms of reference at a minimum of every three years, and recommend any changes to the Council via the Audit, Risk & Finance Committee.
12  REFERENCES


Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 (Qld)

Animal Care and Protection Regulations 2012

Biotechnology Code of Ethics

Using animals for scientific purposes (Queensland Government)

International Guiding Principles for Biomedical Research Involving Animals

Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1982 No.149 of 1982 – SECT 4

Gene Technology Act 2000 (Qld)

Gene Technology (Queensland) Act 2016

Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth)

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) Live Animal Regulations

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)

13. AMENDMENT HISTORY

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