

BCIT Animal Care Committee Terms of Reference

In all its teaching, research, and other activities, the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) is committed to the humane care and treatment of animals. To that end, BCIT follows all current policies and guidelines of the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC), a national organization that sets standards for the ethical use and care of animals in science.

The CCAC guidelines establish the basic requirements that all institutional animal care and use programs in Canada must follow as part of animal ethics and care. The use of animals in teaching and research is considered acceptable only if it promises to contribute to the understanding of fundamental biological principles or the development of knowledge that can reasonably be expected to benefit humans or animals. Animals should only be used in teaching or research when best efforts to find an alternative have failed, as outlined by the Three R tenets of “Replacement, Reduction, and Refinement”.

The CCAC requires institutions conducting animal-based research, teaching, or testing to have established a functioning animal care committee (ACC) governed by formal Terms of Reference that reflect CCAC policies. BCIT will maintain a shared ACC with Vancouver Island University (VIU), referred to as the BCIT Animal Care Committee (BCIT-ACC), that reviews any activities where animals are used in research or teaching by BCIT Persons. The BCIT-ACC reports to the Provost and Vice President Academic (VPA) and exercises authority delegated by the President to the VPA who acts as the senior administrator for matters concerning animal care, pursuant to BCIT Policy 6505 (Animal Care: Ethical Use of Animals in Research and Teaching).

Appointment Process

The VPA is responsible for appointing BCIT members to the BCIT-ACC.

Terms of Appointment

BCIT-ACC members are normally appointed for terms of at least two years and not more than four years, renewable at the VPA's discretion up to a maximum of eight consecutive years. These terms do not apply to BCIT-ACC members who must be part of the ACC because of their role within the institution (e.g., Animal Care Coordinator, veterinarian[s]).

Composition

The BCIT-ACC includes a minimum of seven members according to the following criteria:

- One regular BCIT faculty member and an additional VIU or BCIT member, both experienced in animal care and use, who may or may not be actively using animals during their term on the BCIT-ACC.
- A veterinarian, normally experienced in experimental animal care and use, who actively participates in continuing education and training opportunities in experimental animal care and use.

- At least one institutional member from BCIT or VIU whose normal activities, past or present, do not depend on or involve animal use for research, teaching or testing.
- At least one person (but preferably two or more persons) representing community interests and concerns, having had no affiliation with the Institute and without prior involvement in animal use for research, teaching, or testing.
- At least one student representative from BCIT or VIU (graduate or undergraduate).
- The VIU Animal Care Officer.
- Any other person the VP Academic may deem appropriate.

BCIT-ACC Meetings

The BCIT-ACC will meet at least twice per year or as often as necessary to fulfil the Terms of Reference and be satisfied that all animal use at BCIT complies with institutional, municipal, federal, and provincial regulations, and CCAC guidelines. Meetings may be held in-person, online, or hybrid. Discussions, decisions, and modifications to protocols will be documented in minutes provided to the VPA.

Quorum

Quorum is “fifty percent plus one” of voting members, including a community representative, the contract veterinarian, and a student representative. If one more of these individuals is unable to attend a BCIT-ACC meeting, they are encouraged to submit written comments concerning protocols and annual renewals subject to review at the meeting. If the BCIT-ACC reaches a decision contrary to such submissions from an absent individual, the decision will be postponed until the next BCIT-ACC meeting.

Meeting Agendas, Minutes, and Reports

Any information relevant to a BCIT-ACC meeting should be circulated to all members at least one week prior to a scheduled meeting. Formal minutes will be recorded for each meeting and subsequently reviewed and approved by the BCIT-ACC at the next meeting. Meeting minutes and decisions will be shared with the VPA.

Responsibilities

The BCIT-ACC will ensure that:

- No research or teaching (including field studies) involving animals begins until all animal users complete an animal use protocol form and receive BCIT-ACC approval.
- All research projects using animals have scientific merit and all teaching using animals has pedagogical merit through independent peer review before approving the use.
- Appropriate care, including adequate veterinary oversight, is provided to all animals used in research or teaching in compliance with CCAC guidelines and policies, BCIT policies and

procedures, Canadian Association for Laboratory Animal Medicine (CALAM) Standards of Veterinary Care, and applicable legislation.

- All BCIT-ACC discussions and decisions are documented in the committee minutes and in attachments to the protocol forms.
- Procedures are established requiring:
 - Avoidance of unnecessary pain or distress, animal stress, and injuries and that all procedures are carried out in the most humane and scientifically justified manner.
 - Proper and effective use of anesthesia and analgesia.
 - Provision of appropriate post-operative care.
 - Due consideration of animal welfare.
 - Appropriately trained animal users.
- BCIT policies and guidelines are developed and updated as needed to enforce its responsibility for animal care at the Institute.
- Procedures are established for post-approval monitoring of animal use.

Authority

The BCIT-ACC has the authority, on behalf of the VPA, to:

- Stop any objectionable procedure if it considers that unnecessary distress or pain is being experienced by an animal.
- Stop immediately any use of animals that deviates from the approved use, any non-approved procedure, or any procedure causing unforeseen pain or distress to animals.
- Have an animal euthanized humanely if pain or distress caused to the animal is not part of the approved protocol and cannot be alleviated.
- Investigate reports of non-compliance with BCIT Policy 6505 or complaints of improper treatment of animals under the aegis of BCIT.
- Recommend penalties for individuals who have failed to comply with BCIT Policy 6505 to the Provost and VP Academic.

The BCIT-ACC's authority with respect to the points above is also delegated to the Consulting Veterinarian and their BCIT-ACC approved delegates, who will report to the BCIT-ACC within 24-hours in cases where this authority is exercised.

The Chair of the BCIT-ACC and the Consulting Veterinarian must always have access to sites where animals may be held or used.

Animal Use Protocols (AUPs)

The BCIT-ACC is responsible for establishing animal use protocol (AUP) review and approval procedures, with BCIT-ACC consensus is required for decisions regarding the approval of a protocol. Consensus in this context is defined as general agreement among committee members, but does not mean unanimous agreement, with individual committee members able to register their opposition. Any BCIT-ACC member can call for a vote; approval of a decision requires the support of 50% plus one of voting members present at the meeting (assuming quorum is met). Any AUP review is completed in accordance with BCIT-ACC Policy 013 (Request to Use Animals Application and Review Process).

The BCIT-ACC must confirm:

1. That any animal use for scientific research purposes has documented scientific merit prior to AUP review. The VPA is responsible for ensuring an independent, expert peer review of the scientific merit of a proposed research project, as outlined in CCAC guidelines and BCIT-ACC Policy 011 (Scientific Merit Review).
2. That any animal use for teaching or training purposes has documented pedagogical merit prior to AUP review. The VPA is responsible for ensuring review by at least two independent individuals with combined knowledge of pedagogy and alternatives to use of animals for teaching, as outlined in CCAC guidelines and BCIT-ACC Policy 012 (Pedagogical Merit Review).

For AUP review, the BCIT-ACC follows CCAC policies and guidelines, in particular *Protocol Review* guidelines, and the *Guide to Care and Use of Experimental Animals* along with other relevant CCAC and institutional policies and guidelines, CALAM Standards of Veterinary Care, and applicable legislation. The BCIT-ACC will work with applicants to resolve any concerns raised by the committee with respect to an AUP. This may include requesting the applicant appear before the BCIT-ACC.

Approval of an AUP is valid for a maximum of one year. Following this, further use of animals under the AUP requires a renewal application. An AUP cannot be renewed for more than three consecutive years – a new AUP application must be submitted after three consecutive renewals or if four years have elapsed since the previous AUP approval.

Any amendments or modifications to an approved AUP must be submitted for review – no changes to animal use as described in the AUP are permitted without further approval by the BCIT-ACC. If, in the BCIT-ACC's opinion, the proposed changes are substantial, the committee will require the applicant to submit a new AUP application.

Proposed changes to an existing AUP are defined as follows:

- *Administrative amendments* are changes that are not animal related. This can include personnel changes or updates to training, funding, or contact information. These amendments can be approved by the Animal Care Coordinator.
- *Minor amendments* are changes that are minimally invasive with no significant impacts on animal welfare. These amendments can be approved by a subgroup of the BCIT-ACC that includes the Chair and Consulting Veterinarian.

- *Major amendments* are changes that may be considered invasive and could have an impact on animal welfare. Major amendments can include an increase in the category of invasiveness, use of more invasive, more frequent, or entirely new procedures, change of species, a greater than twenty percent increase in animal numbers, or other change deemed major at the discretion of the BCIT-ACC. Major amendments must be approved by the BCIT-ACC.

Appeal Process

If the BCIT-ACC does not approve an AUP, the applicant has the right to appeal the decision to the VPA. The VPA will address the appeal in accordance with BCIT Policy 6505 (Animal Care: Ethical Use of Animals in Research and Teaching) and in a timely manner, ensuring a separate, fair, impartial process, which may include seeking expertise from appropriate external institutions. The VPA's decision is considered final.

Facilities and Animal Housing

No animals are permitted to be housed at a BCIT facility.

General

The BCIT-ACC must:

- Review the Terms of Reference, standard operating procedures, and institutional animal care and use policies every three years to ensure they meet new CCAC guidelines or policies and changing needs within the Institute, scientific community, animal welfare community, and society.
- Liaise with the CCAC and provide information (including annual animal use data) as needed and inform the CCAC of any changes to the animal care and use program.
- Act as a resource to BCIT animal users, assisting with unanticipated issues and providing opportunities for BCIT Persons to learn more about the use of animals in science, ethics of animal experimentation, CCAC guidelines and policies, and other legislation or BCIT policies applicable to the use of animals in research and teaching.