

ANIMAL RESEARCH ETHICS: A Handbook for USP Researchers

This Handbook explains the values and principles that guide processes and practices of research involving live animals at the University of the South Pacific.

The ethical values and principles described here apply to all University activities, to all its staff and student researchers including those visiting for short periods, and to any research agreements or partnerships that the University establishes.

The University's animal ethics will be compliant with the laws of individual University member states, particularly in relation to privacy, confidentiality, ownership, intellectual property requirements and research permit requirements.

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The University of the South Pacific

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1. Introduction

Research is work undertaken systematically in order to increase knowledge (including knowledge about animals) and to use this knowledge to gain new insights into particular issues. Research may be inter-disciplinary and may involve different approaches and methods.

At the University of the South Pacific, most research is focused on the Pacific region (islands and ocean). It aims to be relevant to the needs of the region, and as such may require the use of live animals for experimentation, tagging or other purposes. This handbook applies specifically to the following groups of animals. Researchers should seek the guidance of the University Research Ethics Committee if they propose to utilise animals not on this list for research.

- all mammals (including marine mammals) apart from humans;
- all birds;
- all other vertebrate animals (including reptiles, amphibians and fish);
- any octopus, squid, crab or crayfish (including freshwater crayfish);
- any mammalian foetus (apart from humans), avian or reptilian pre-hatched young that is in its last half of its period of gestation or development.

Ethics are the moral principles or values held by an organisation, group, or individual that govern their behaviour. For research at the University of the South Pacific, these principles are overt, written down, and underpin relevant policies, processes, and practices of the organisation and the researchers who work within it. This Handbook specifically governs ethics in research involving live animals; a separate Handbook exists for human research ethics.

2. Ethical Principles

Ethical principles relating to research involving live animals at the University of the South Pacific are listed and explained below.

2.1. Welfare

Researchers who employ live animals for their approved research have ultimate responsibility for their welfare.

2.2. Transport and housing

Researchers are required to transport live animals for research under safe, humane and hygienic conditions appropriate to the species. Likewise live animals for research must be kept under safe, humane and hygienic conditions appropriate to the species for as long as they are required for research.

2.3. Stress and pain

Researchers are required to ensure that the live animals under their care do not suffer undue stress or pain as a result of the research procedures to which they are subjected. Paralysing agents should not normally be used. Multiple procedures should not normally be carried out on the same individual. Animals that become sick or injured during the course of research should be appropriately euthanased.

2.4. Respect

Research done with live animals has the purpose of advancing and disseminating knowledge. Live animals are used, sometimes sacrificed, for this end. It is therefore expected that animals used for research at the University of the South Pacific are all treated with respect in acknowledgement of the purpose of research.

2.5. Endangered species

No research should be carried out on endangered species except where (i) the individual animals concerned will suffer no long-term harm as a result of the research and (ii) the research aims to contribute directly to reducing the degree of endangerment of the particular species/genus.

3. The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

The University Research Ethics Committee at the University of the South Pacific is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) or nominee, and comprises one representative from each Faculty with experience of the ethical conduct of research in the Pacific. The University Research Ethics Committee will generally consider applications only at the times of its scheduled meetings. These will usually be two weeks in advance of the meetings of the University Research Committee so that submissions approved by the Ethics Committee can then be considered by the Research Committee.

The Terms of Reference for the University Research Ethics Committee at the University of the South Pacific are as follows.

- (a) Receive all applications for research at the University which involve people or animals as subjects of research, judge whether the proposed research follows all pertinent ethical principles;
- (b) Actively promote all ethical principles outlined above (in Section 2);
- (c) Provide advice on ethical challenges in research and teaching at the University;
- (d) Assess research and teaching developments within the University and its member states, periodically make recommendations, and contribute to the preparation of guidelines on ethical issues important to the University and its member states;
- (e) Develop guidelines for addressing conflicts that may arise within the University;
- (f) Recommend sanctions and penalties consistent with other University discipline procedures to be imposed in cases of ethical infringements; and,
- (g) Advise on appropriate appeals processes that are consistent with those existing within the University.

In association with the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), the University Research Ethics Committee will also spearhead training in ethical practices for researchers at the University.

4. Ethical responsibilities of researchers at the University

Staff researchers should be aware of the ethical principles they are required to bring to all their research activities, including those of the students whose research they oversee. Staff researchers should also communicate to research collaborators from outside the University the nature and scope of its ethical principles, and the importance that the University attaches to their adherence.

Every staff and student researcher at the University who is proposing research involving live animals must receive clearance (in writing) from either the appropriate Faculty Research Committee or the University Research Ethics Committee before commencing that research.

Key questions that will be asked by the University Research Ethics Committee will include the following.

- Are the proposed manipulations of live animals absolutely necessary to the success of the proposed research?
- Are there alternative manipulations less likely to cause stress/pain to the animals under study?
- Might the animals (if kept alive after the study is over) suffer long-term trauma as a result of their experience?
- Is the researcher (and associates) well-experienced in the handling and experimental manipulation of live animals?

Researchers are encouraged to think carefully about the ethical treatment of live animals for research and to seek ways of ensuring that the ethical correctness of such treatment is never compromised.

5. Procedures for applying for ethical clearance of proposed research

Any research project dealing with live animals that is proposed to be undertaken under the auspices of the University of the South Pacific, whether by full-time or affiliate staff or students, is required to have ethical clearance before commencing. Procedures are essentially the same for academic staff and for students.

Researchers at the University of the South Pacific, whether staff or students, whether full-time, temporary or affiliate, are required to complete an **Animal Ethics Application** for every new research project that they propose to direct. Where several staff and students of the University are involved in a single project, only the lead researcher needs to complete the Application.

A sample Application is given in Appendix 1 for information only. Researchers should always download the current Application Form from www.usp.ac.fj/research/ethics in case it has changed from that in Appendix 1.

The Animal Ethics Application should be submitted, when complete, to the appropriate Faculty Research Committee which will then make a recommendation, perhaps liaise directly with the researcher, before either approving it or passing it on to the University Research Ethics Committee for their review. Researchers should note that the University Research Ethics Committee does not wish to discourage research involving live animals, but is mandated to ensure that all such research is ethically sound.

The University Research Ethics Committee will provide guidance and support to satisfactorily address any conflicts that may arise between the student, the supervisor, research participants and communities in the course of research. Deliberate or avoidable breaches of the ethical principles for animal research of the University of the South Pacific will be reported by the University Research Ethics Committee for appropriate action.

Appendix 1. Application for Animal Ethics Clearance (sample)

The University of the South Pacific
Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor
(Research and Innovation)

Faculty: _____

Application No: _____/_____

This number is assigned when your application is accepted. Quote on all documentation to participants and the Committees

ANIMAL ETHICS APPLICATION

FOR APPROVAL OF PROPOSED RESEARCH INVOLVING LIVE ANIMALS

(All applications are to be typed and presented using language that is free from jargon)

SECTION A**1. Project Title**

Projected start date for data collection _____

Projected end date _____

Approval will not be given if data collection has already begun

2. Applicant Details (Select either ACADEMIC STAFF or STUDENT APPLICATION and complete details)**ACADEMIC STAFF APPLICATION (excluding staff who are also students)**

Full name of Staff Applicant _____

Faculty/School/Division _____

Campus where you are based (name one only) _____

Telephone _____

Email Address _____

STUDENT APPLICATION

Full Name of Student Applicant _____

Employer (if applicable) _____

Telephone _____

Email Address _____

Postal Address _____

Full Name of USP Supervisor(s) _____

School/Division/Institute _____

Campus where supervisor is based (name one only) _____

Supervisor's Telephone _____

Supervisor's Email Address _____

3. Type of Project (tick one only)

- Academic staff research
- Student Research (Masters or PhD)
- Student Research (in-course or independent)

If other, please specify:

4. Summary of Project

Please outline in no more than 200 words in lay language why you have chosen this project, what you intend to do, and the methods you will use. Be sure to name all the countries in which you will gather data from live animals.

5. List any attachments to your Application.

Applications that are incomplete or lacking the appropriate signatures will not be processed. This will mean delays for the project. Please refer to the Ethics website (www.usp.ac.fj/research/ethics) for details of where to submit your application.

SECTION B: PROJECT INFORMATION**General**

6. For staff research, is the applicant the only researcher? Yes No

If no, list the names and affiliations of all members of the research team.

7. State concisely the aims of the project

8. Give a brief background to the project to place it in perspective and to allow the project's significance to be assessed. (no more than 200 words in lay language)

9. Outline the research procedures to be used, including approach/procedures/manipulations for collecting data.

10. Where will the project be conducted? Include information about the physical location/setting.

11. Describe the experience of the researcher and/or supervisor to undertake this type of project?

12. Describe the process that has been used to discuss and analyse the ethical issues present in this project.

SECTION C: RISK OF HARM

13. What discomfort (physical, psychological, social), incapacity or other risk of harm are the live animals being used in this research project likely to experience?

14. Describe the strategies you will use to minimise the discomfort identified in Q13?

SECTION D: CONFLICT OF INTEREST

15. Is the project to be funded in any way from sources external to the University of the South Pacific Yes No

If yes: i) state the source(s)

ii) does the source(s) of the funding present any conflict of interest with regard to the research topic? Yes No

16. Does the researcher/have a financial interest in the outcome of the project? Yes No

If yes, explain how the conflict of interest situation will be dealt with

SECTION E: INVASIVE PROCEDURES/PHYSIOLOGICAL TESTS AND EUTHANASIA

17. Does the project involve the collection of tissues, blood, other body fluids or physiological tests? Yes No

18. Describe the material to be taken and the method used to obtain it. Include information about the training of those taking the samples and the safety of all persons involved. If blood is taken, specify the volume and number of collections.

19. Describe the fate of live animals at the end of the research project.

20. Explain precisely how sick or injured animals will be euthanased.

SECTION F: DECLARATION (Complete appropriate section)

ACADEMIC STAFF RESEARCH

Declaration for Academic Staff Applicant

I have read the Animal Ethics Handbook of the University of the South Pacific. I understand my obligations. I have advised my co-researchers and assistants of their obligations. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Animal Ethics Handbook. My Head of Division/School/Institute (delete as appropriate) knows that I am undertaking this research. The information contained in this application is to the best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

Staff Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

STUDENT RESEARCH

Declaration for Student Applicant

I have read the Animal Ethics Handbook of the University of the South Pacific and discussed the ethical issues surrounding my project with my Supervisor. I understand my obligations. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Animal Ethics Handbook. The information contained in this application is to the best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

Student Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

Declaration of Supervisor

I have assisted the student in the ethical analysis of this project. As supervisor of this research, I will ensure that the research is carried out accordingly to the Animal Ethics Handbook of the University of the South Pacific.

Supervisor's Signature _____ Date _____

Print name _____