

Document Name	<b>Pedagogical Merit Review of Animal Use Protocols for Teaching and Training</b>
Document Number	ACC.POL.004
Origin	Research Office   Committee on Animal Use and Welfare (CAUW)
Authority	Vice-President Academic and Provost
Effective Date	October 2023
Review/Retirement Date	2026
Responsibility for Revision	Research Ethics and Compliance Officer
Responsibility for Implementation	Associate Vice-President Research

### 1) Preamble

As a certified institution of the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC), Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) is required to have a policy to ensure pedagogical merit review of proposed teaching and training involving animals as outlined in the [CCAC policy: Pedagogical merit of live animal-based teaching and training](#).

The Policy on Pedagogical Merit Review of Animal Use Protocols for Teaching and Training is ultimately the responsibility of the Vice President Academic and Provost (VPAP). The VPAP has designated day-to-day responsibility for the Policy to the Associate Vice President Research (AVPR). The AVPR has authorized the MSVU/SMU Joint ACC Coordinator to manage administrative aspects of the pedagogical merit review process.

### 2) Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe pedagogical merit review requirements and processes for teaching and training involving animals.

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### 3) Scope

This policy on Pedagogical merit review applies to all teaching and training activities involving animals at MSVU that require ACC review and approval (for more information, see [CCAC Requirement for submitting and animal protocol](#)). These activities include, but are not limited to:

- a) Teaching in academic institutions.
- b) Training activities and programs for research.
- c) Testing team members (e.g., graduate students, principle investigators (PI), technicians in contract research organizations).
- d) Non-degree, diploma, and certificate credit courses (e.g., professional development, continuing education, workshops, etc.) 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.

### 4) 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 for MSVU.

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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)

## 5) Policy

- a) Per CCAC policy: Pedagogical merit of live animal-based teaching and training, Saint Mary's University research administration is responsible for ensuring that training and teaching involving animal use be independently reviewed for pedagogical merit through a formal process by expert peers and found to have pedagogical merit before an associated Animal Use Protocol (AUP) undergoes ethical review by the ACC.
- b) 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.
- c) **Pedagogical Merit Reviewer Requirements**

Two independent pedagogical merit reviews must be conducted by two independent referees with knowledge of (1) pedagogy and/or (2) replacement alternatives to animal-based teaching or training before an associated AUP can undergo ethical review by the ACC. This pedagogical merit review will involve a review of the proposed AUP and supporting documents and completion of the Pedagogical Merit Reviewer Comment Form. Normally\*, reviewers must not be members of the ACC nor be involved with the associated course or training. There is no requirement for reviewers to possess knowledge in both pedagogy and replacement alternatives to animal-based teaching or training, as long as both areas are covered. Reviewers can be from Saint Mary's University, Mount Saint Vincent University, or from other institutions.

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*\*ACC members who have relevant knowledge and experience should share their expertise with the two independent referees who are responsible for completing the pedagogical merit review. Knowledgeable ACC members may participate in pedagogical merit review but must recuse themselves from the ethical review of the associated AUP.*

## 6) Pedagogical Merit Review Process

Per CCAC's guidelines, the Animal Care Committee Coordinator has been authorized by the MSVU AVPR to manage administrative aspects of the process, and will work closely with the MSVU 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.

- a) The AVPR receives support from the ACC Coordinator through the provision of all required documents to conduct the review.
- b) The ACC Coordinator identifies two potential reviewers and the AVPR confirms suitability of the individuals for the review of the proposed training or teaching activities involving animals.
- c) The ACC Coordinator contacts the potential reviewers and requests their assistance in providing a pedagogical merit review. The reviewers will be given only the protocol title, a completion deadline for the review (four week maximum) and must provide confirmation that they have no conflict of interest in conducting the review.

- d) The ACC Coordinator sends each confirmed reviewer the AUP and supporting documents to conduct the pedagogical merit review, along with the Pedagogical Merit Reviewer Comment Form to complete.
- e) The review must encompass the key considerations in the review of pedagogical merit as outlined in the CCAC policy: Pedagogical merit of live animal-based teaching and training.
- f) In the event of conflicting or inconsistent reviews from the two selected reviewers, a third reviewer will be solicited following the same process outlined in Sections 6.a-e to provide an arbitrating viewpoint.
- g) The ACC Coordinator reports the results of the pedagogical merit review to the AVPR and ACC Chair.
- h) The ACC Coordinator provides the instructor with the de-attributed Pedagogical Merit Reviewer Comment Forms and the instructor can adjust the AUP and supporting documents if desired before either:
  - i) ethical review by the ACC if the research activities were found to have pedagogical merit, or
  - ii) resubmission of the AUP and supporting documents to reviewers (via the ACC Coordinator) if the research activities were not found to have pedagogical merit.

**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.

## 7) Acknowledgements

MSVU would like to acknowledge that this policy has been adapted from the ACC Policy (2023) at Saint Mary's University - Retrieved October 2023

Additional relevant CCAC policy documents that inform this MSVU Policy are:

- [CCAC policy: 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)
- [CCAC Requirement for submitting and animal protocol](#)

## 8) Document Modification History

Policy Number	Key Changes	Effective Date
ACC.POL.004	Minor revisions/formatting to synchronize with SMU document;	October 2023
ACC.POL.004	Review for content; minor revisions; update to hyperlinks; formatting for accessibility	July 2023
ACC.POL.004	Original Version	October 2020

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