

McGill University UACC Policy on Peer Review for Scientific Merit

1. In accordance with Canadian Council on Animal Care and McGill University policy, all research projects involving the use of animals must be peer reviewed for scientific merit.
2. In cases where project funding comes from non-peer reviewed sources, it is the Faculty or Institute's responsibility to provide the Facility Animal Care Committee with appropriate peer review.
3. Documentation must come from two qualified individuals. Reviewers must refuse to do the review when in conflict of interest when they:
 - a. are from the same immediate department or unit as the applicant and who interact with the applicant in the course of their duties at the institution,
 - b. have collaborated, published or been a co-applicant with the applicant, within the last five years,
 - c. have been a student or supervisor of the applicant within the last ten years,
 - d. are a close personal friend or relative of the applicant,
 - e. have had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the applicant,
 - f. are in a position to gain or lose financially from the outcome of the application or for some other reason feel that they cannot provide an objective review of the application.
4. The Principal Investigator must provide a written description of the project (as for a grant) including the background rationale, specific aims, methodology and significance of the proposed experiments justifying the science behind animal use. The proposal can be up to five pages.
5. The reviewers must comment on the points mentioned in the Scientific Merit Peer Review Form in attachment.
6. The decision of the reviewer will be one of the following:
 - Excellent – approve 'as is';
 - Good – minor revisions suggested as per the recommendations above;
 - Fair – major revisions are suggested as per the recommendations above;
 - Poor – should not be pursued.
7. The review must be documented on a scientific merit review form (see example of the form in attachment).
8. The Faculty or the Institute will inform the appropriate FACC that the scientific merit has been established to the satisfaction of the reviewers. Where concerns are revealed the Faculty or Institute must inform the Facility Animal Care Committee.

Revised as per CCAC communication in Oct 2019



SCIENTIFIC MERIT PEER REVIEW FORM

DATE OF PUBLICATION: October 2019

The Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC), which oversees animal-based activities in research, teaching and testing, requires that all animal-based research projects undergo scientific peer review by at least two independent experts prior to their review by an animal care committee.

In order to perform the review, a project description that explains the objectives, hypotheses, potential contributions, and methodological approach of the study must be provided by the researcher(s). Animal use protocols typically do not include all the necessary scientific information and are not structured to provide this information and therefore, the researcher(s) is responsible for making this information available.

The CCAC has provided the following set of questions to serve as a suggested template for assessing the scientific merit review. Institutions are encouraged to use and modify this sample form in building their own scientific merit peer review form. Institutions are also encouraged to modify the list of conflict of interests as appropriate for their program.

Research project title:		
Researcher(s):		
Research Objectives		
a) Are the objectives clearly described ?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <div style="background-color: #e6f2ff; height: 25px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>
b) Are the objectives realistically achievable , given the methodology and experimental design?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <div style="background-color: #e6f2ff; height: 25px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>
c) Does the knowledge expected to be gained from this study have scientific importance ?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <div style="background-color: #e6f2ff; height: 25px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>

General comments on the study objectives:

Research Project Quality

a) Do the proposed activities show evidence of good understanding of current scientific literature and knowledge of the issue?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <hr/>
b) Is the research hypothesis/hypotheses clearly formulated?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <hr/>
c) Is the experimental design appropriate to test the research hypothesis/hypotheses?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <hr/>
d) Are sufficient details provided in the methodology to evaluate the likelihood of successful reproducibility ?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <hr/>
e) Is the proposed statistical data analysis appropriate for the experimental design described?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	Comments: <hr/>

Overall impression (summarize your impression of the quality of research proposal and make any recommendations that you believe would be appropriate):

Final Decision on Scientific Merit

With regard to the scientific merit of the described research, how would you rate the proposed study:

- Excellent;** approve “as is”
- Good;** minor revisions suggested as per the recommendations above
- Fair;** major revisions required as per the recommendations above
- Poor;** should not be pursued

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest is a conflict between a person’s duties and responsibilities with regard to the review process, and that person’s private, professional, business or public interests.

There may be a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest when the external reviewer:

- would receive professional or personal benefit resulting from the funding opportunity or application being reviewed;
- has a professional or personal relationship with the applicant or co-applicant; or
- has a direct or indirect financial interest in a funding opportunity or application being reviewed.

A conflict of interest may be deemed to exist or perceived as such when the reviewer:

- is a relative or close friend, or has a personal relationship with the applicant(s);
- is from the same immediate department, institution, organization or company as the applicant, and interacts with the applicant in the course of their duties at the institution;
- has collaborated, published or been a co-applicant with the applicant, within the last five years;
- has been a student or supervisor of the applicant within the last ten years;
- has had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the applicant;
- is in a position to gain or lose financially from the outcome of the application; or
- for any other reason feels that s/he cannot provide an objective review of the application.

If you believe you might be in a conflict of interest, please explain briefly:

I certify that I have no real, perceived or potential conflict of interest in relation to this research proposal.

Reviewer name:

Signature:

Date of review:

Please forward this form to the senior administrator responsible for scientific merit review, who will forward it to the researcher(s) and the animal care committee.