



Policy on Animal-Based Research

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POLICY ON ANIMAL-BASED RESEARCH

1. The University's commitment

The University is committed to following the UK Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, amended 2012 (ASPA), the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.

The [Animals \(Scientific Procedures\) Act 1986, amended 2012 \(ASPA\)](#) regulates the use of vertebrates and cephalopods, including wildlife species, in procedures with the potential to cause pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm. The ASPA also requires that the likely benefits of the research, to humans, animals, or the environment, are weighed against the likely harm to the animals involved.

The [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#) is the principal law relating to animal welfare. Owners and keepers have a duty of care to their animals and must make sure they meet their needs:

- For a suitable environment and place to live,
- For a suitable diet,
- To exhibit normal behaviour patterns,
- To be housed with, or apart from, other animals (if applicable),
- To be protected from pain, injury, suffering and disease.

The [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#) is the primary legislation which protects animals, plants, and habitats in the UK. The act gives protection to native species (especially those at threat), controls the release of non-native species, and enhances the protection of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

The University of Wolverhampton **does not** conduct any research requiring a Home Office license under the ASPA on its premises. However, the University does conduct other forms of animal-based research, which only takes place when it is necessary and there is no practical alternative.

The University of Wolverhampton does conduct off-site research with a wide range of animals both in the UK and overseas. In all cases where required appropriate licences are obtained and ethical clearance agreed before commencement.

The University is committed to ensuring that all staff and students involved in animal-based research treat animals with respect and consideration.

The University is further committed to pursuing a policy of replacement, reduction, and refinement (3Rs) in all animal-based research and to promote knowledge of the moral and legal responsibilities and a culture of care in all aspects of research. The 3Rs and harm/benefit assessment are relevant to animal-based research that is not regulated by the ASPA but which, nonetheless, has the potential to compromise the welfare of the study or non-study species.

The 3Rs should always be considered as part of the design and conduct of all animal-based research.

Replacement

The University is committed to ensuring animals are used in research only when it has been clearly demonstrated that there is no alternative.

Reduction

The University is committed to reducing the number of animals affected by research to the lowest number of individuals necessary to achieve the aims of the research.

Refinement

The University is committed to the highest possible standards of animal care and welfare that, wherever possible, exceed relevant legislation and standards and ensuring that all staff involved in animal-based research are committed to and promote a culture of care.

Further guidance and support on the above can be located in section 10 of this policy.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure University compliance with legislation in relation to animal-based research, and the ethical considerations that apply.

3. Principles

The key principles governing all our animal-based research are:

- It is conducted only when it will contribute to the advancement of knowledge that is likely to lead to improvement of the health and welfare of animals or human beings or involves observations that will lead to a greater understanding of the behaviour, physiology, or conservation of the animals themselves.
- It is undertaken on the basis of well-defined scientific objectives and the advancement of knowledge, giving due consideration to the welfare of the animals, minimising the number of animals involved and avoiding unnecessary duplication.
- That full consideration is given to non-animal methods and that researchers have consulted available resources for information on alternatives and have concluded that there is no satisfactory alternative.
- The University will actively support the development, validation, and adoption of appropriate alternatives, aimed at eliminating the need for animals in research and to minimise any negative impact on the welfare of animals involved.
- The species and strains chosen for study are appropriate and best suited for investigation of the questions posed.

- The University considers that animal-based research is not a right, but a privilege that must be earned by demonstration of our staff's commitment to achieving the highest standards of animal welfare and an ongoing commitment to replacement, reduction, and refinement.

The implementation of this policy is in accordance with the UK Research Integrity Office and the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity ethical values which are:

- Excellence
- Honesty
- Integrity
- Cooperation
- Accountability
- Training and Skills
- Care, Safety and Respect

4. Scope

This Policy applies to all University staff and students engaged in relevant studies or research as well as to visitors, individuals, collaborators, or agents conducting research or other studies in the name of or at the University and/or engaged to conduct research by the University.

5. The University's animal-based research

In addition to utilising animal tissue in a small proportion of research, the University is also dedicated to research that aims to increase understanding of animal behaviour and welfare. The following are our current areas of research:

Behavioural/Ecological Research

Where wild animals need to be observed and studied in their natural habitat, our responsibilities will extend outside of the UK legislation and country borders to ensure research in non-laboratory settings is also undertaken with full consideration to our robust ethical justification and animal welfare. In such cases, minimising disturbance to both to the animals around the study site and to the animals under investigation is important for the scientific validity of the research as well as for good animal welfare. Researchers will ensure that they comply with all relevant regulations and that they possess all the necessary permits and licences.

Captive Animal Welfare Research

The University is actively engaged in research to improve the welfare of captive animals hosted in zoological gardens, sanctuaries, and other captive facilities. The University is committed to collaborating with such captive facilities and provide them with scientific evidence underpinning best practices to improve their animal husbandry and management policies.

This will ensure the achievement of the standards set down in the Five freedoms ([Farm Animal Welfare Council, 1992](#)) and the Code of Ethics and Animal Welfare (World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, 2003), as well as the compliance with the requirements of the EU Zoo Directive (European Commission, 1999), by facilities hosting captive animals (further supporting guidance can be located in section 10 of this policy).

Biomedical Research

The University does not conduct any licensable research on its premises, however where researchers are using animal tissue housed in other institutions, the University will ensure that the host institution complies with the standards set down in the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (guidance below in section 10), revised 2012 (ASPA), and with the requirements of the European Directive 63/2010 on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes.

A Personal Licence holder will only work under the authority of a Project Licence at a licenced establishment, and if the Project Licence holder has given their consent. The University is committed to minimise the use of animals in research whilst continuing to facilitate advances in scientific research.

Forensic Research

Whilst the use of living invertebrates or deceased vertebrates is not covered by the Act and does not require a licence, the University wishes to emphasise welfare issues in relation to their use.

The University undertakes that deceased animals used in forensic research are obtained from recommended suppliers of animals that are commercially bred and humanely killed for human or animal consumption, i.e. commercial farms, abattoirs, local butchers, and pet shops. Any research involving live insects that are subsequently killed must be done so humanely by accepted standard methods.

6. Research collaborations and contracts with overseas institutions

The University will exercise oversight of all research work done in its name that involves animals, not just those projects that are carried out on its premises or at other UK establishments that are equally subject to the requirements of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Members of the University who participate in collaborative research projects or who enter into contracts involving the use of animals in other institutions, must notify the Life Sciences Ethics Committee, who will ensure that appropriate ethical review measures are complied with.

University staff aiming to conduct or contract animal research outside of the UK should be aware that compliance with local regulations and accreditation from organisations, do not substitute for compliance with animal welfare standards consistent with those provided under UK legislation (e.g. UK ASPA) which must be applied and maintained, wherever the work is conducted.

7. Governance and Responsibilities

The University is committed to maintaining a rigorous and objective process of ethical review that challenges researchers to justify animal-based research.

The University's ethical review process

The Life Sciences Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Science & Engineering will ensure that the potential benefits of research outweigh any suffering to animals. This committee requires researchers to demonstrate that all research programmes involving animals meet all the key principles of this policy (University Ethics Guidance www.wlv.ac.uk/ethics).

In addition to the ethical review and approval of all animal-based research projects prior to the commencement of any research, the Life Sciences Ethics Committee (LSEC) undertakes to:

- Periodically review existing projects to ensure that:
 - researchers keep abreast of new developments and techniques and apply the latest methods in their work.
 - ethical and welfare standards are met.
 - number of animals is reduced where appropriate.
- Ensure that committee members represent a diverse range of skills and include lay members who are not involved in animal-based research.
- Include, where applicable, professional and technical staff who play a key role in the ethical review process and contribute to the decisions made in committee.

Animal Research Ethics Governance Structure



8. Exceptions

There are no exceptions to this policy.

9. Amendments

This Policy was approved by the University's Executive Board on 11 July 2023. The University may change this Policy at any time, and where appropriate. Where a policy is not due for review, but is found to require updating, it will remain published, unless the reasons for review render it obsolete.

10. Information and resources

Internal information

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Research Policies, Procedures and Guidelines www.wlv.ac.uk/researchpolicies
- University Ethics Guidance www.wlv.ac.uk/ethics

External information

The links below are provided for further information. The University accepts no responsibility for the content of the websites.

UK Legislation

- Guidance on the [operation of the Animals](#) (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.
- A(SP)A 1986: [Working with animals taken from the wild](#).
- Acts and legislation that protects wildlife and wild places in the UK: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/uk-wildlife-law>

International Legislation

AAALAC International website, listing key animal research regulations from countries around the world <https://www.aaalac.org/resources/regulations-resources/>

Related bodies

- NC3Rs ([National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research](#))
- NC3Rs [Wildlife Research Guidance](#)
- The ARRIVE guidelines ([Animal Research: Reporting of In Vivo Experiments](#))

Non-governmental bodies

- Animal Behaviour Society (ABS) - [Guidelines for the treatment of animals in behavioural research and teaching](#)
- British Psychological Society (BPS) - [Guidelines for Psychologists Working with Animals](#)
- European Association of Zoos and Aquariums (EAZA) <https://www.eaza.net/>
- World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) - <https://www.waza.org/>
- RSPCA - [Harm benefit analysis | rspca.org.uk](#)

11. Contact

For general queries regarding Research Policies, Procedures and guidelines contact Jill Morgan, Research Integrity Manager, by email: J.Morgan4@wlv.ac.uk

For general queries, please contact the University Corporate Compliance Team via email: compliance@wlv.ac.uk.

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