

Policy on Animal Care and Ethics Training for Researchers at Saint Mary's University

October 2021

Purpose and Responsibilities

As a certified institution of the [Canadian Council on Animal Care](#) (CCAC), Saint Mary's University is required to have training programs for faculty, staff and students who use animals in their research, whether under laboratory and controlled environments/facilities or in the field.

The SMU Training Policy on Animal Care Ethics for Researchers is consistent with the [CCAC guidelines on: training of personnel working with animals in science](#) which include:

1. All personnel working with animals in science must be knowledgeable about the principles of humane experimental science and ethical issues associated with the use of those animals, including the Three Rs tenet (replacement, reduction and refinement).
2. Institutions must strive to sustain an institutional culture of respect for animal life.
3. Institutions should ensure appropriate resource materials are available to support the delivery of comprehensive, up-to-date training programs.
4. Training programs must be designed to be consistent with the Three Rs (replacement, reduction and refinement).
5. Institutions are responsible for providing evidence that all personnel working with animals have the appropriate knowledge, skills and competency to perform their required tasks.

The Policy on Animal Care and Ethics Training for Researchers is ultimately the responsibility of the Vice President Academic and Research (VPAR). The VPAR has designated day-to-day responsibility for the Policy and the training program to the Associate Vice President Research (AVPR). The AVPR has authorized the SMU Animal Care Committee, and the Animal Care Coordinator in particular, to manage the training program, to review it annually, and make recommendations on any changes to the AVPR.

All faculty, staff and students at Saint Mary's University wishing to pursue research using animals are required to undergo training, testing and certification on Animal Care and Ethics before using animals in their research.

Scope of the Policy

The training of researchers (faculty, staff and students) under this Policy is oriented to the ethical framework of the use of animals in research; it is not detailed training in the handling and care of individual species or categories of animals. **The detailed training of research team members in the handling and care of individual species or categories of animals is the responsibility of the Principle Investigator(s) of a study.**

As per CCAC guidelines, all Principle Investigator(s) of a study must ensure:

- All animal users must have the theoretical knowledge and practical skills necessary to be competent to perform their required tasks. When practical skills need to be acquired, the training should be timed in relation to when performance of the skills is required.

- Access to training must be offered on a regular basis to ensure that all personnel working with animals possess the necessary knowledge, skills and competency to perform their required tasks prior to commencement of any work involving animals.

In addition to these CCAC guidelines, the [Saint Mary's University Policy on Integrity in Research and Scholarship and Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Scholarly Misconduct](#) requires that Principle Investigator(s) of a study must ensure “that the highest standards of scholarly integrity are to be understood and practiced” and that all research “have a responsibility to maintain the highest standards of scholarship which include such components as:

- careful planning of research protocols, ensuring that methods of data collection and storage, and methods of analysis are appropriate;
- using scholarly and scientific rigour and integrity in obtaining, recording and analyzing data, and in reporting and publishing results;
- following the policies and procedures defined by the University's Animal Care Committee and consistent with the Canadian Council on Animal Care's Guide to the Care and Use of Experimental Animals”

The Training Program

Per CCAC guidelines, training of researchers using animals falls into two categories:

- CCAC's three “Core Areas” of:
 - (1) Ethics in Animal Experimentation;
 - (2) Occupational Health and Safety;
 - (3) The Three Rs of Humane Animal Experimentation (i.e. reduction, replacement, and refinement).
- “Knowledge Streams” associated with the specific kind of animals used in research. At the present time, only two Knowledge Streams of animal research is being pursued at Saint Mary's University:
 - (1) Fish (wild or captive fish);
 - (2) Wildlife (wild amphibians, reptiles, bats, birds, small mammals, large carnivores, ungulates and marine mammals)

All users of animals in research at SMU will undergo training in CCAC's three “Core Areas.” Each Core Area and the training modules for each are listed here:

- Ethics in Animal Experimentation (see: <https://ccac.ca/en/training/modules/core-stream/ethics-in-animal-experimentation.html>)
- Occupational Health and Safety (see: <https://ccac.ca/en/training/modules/core-stream/occupational-health-and-safety.html>)
- Three Rs of Humane Animal Experimentation (see: <https://ccac.ca/Documents/Education/Modules/Core Stream/CCAC training module on Three Rs of humane animal experimentation.pdf>)

In addition, researchers must take training in “Knowledge Streams” associated with the specific kind of animals used in their research. At SMU (and MSVU), our animal-baser research falls under two of these

Knowledge Streams: (1) Fish (wild or captive fish) and (2) Wildlife (wild amphibians, reptiles, bats, birds, small mammals, large carnivores, ungulates and marine mammals)

Training for researchers using fish:

- All researchers using fish must take The Experimental Fish course offered through UPEI's Canadian Aquaculture Institute (see: <https://www.upei.ca/professional-development/certificates/experimental-fish-canadian-aquaculture-institute>). Successful completion of this course meets both the CCAC's Core stream and Fish Knowledge stream training requirements. Only upon successful completion of this course will researchers be certified by SMU Animal Care Committee.

Training for researchers using wildlife:

- With the cooperation of Dr. Jennifer Devitt, Training Coordinator, Animal Ethics at Dalhousie University, SMU's Knowledge stream training program follows Dalhousie's Training Program for researchers using wildlife.
 - Researchers using wildlife will study CCAC's three Core stream modules identified above, plus [CCAC Guidelines on the Care and Use of Wildlife](#). After completing a self-study of these modules and guidelines, wildlife researchers must successfully complete an exam (minimum of 80% for a pass). Only upon successful completion of this exam will researchers be certified by SMU Animal Care Committee.

Compliance

The SMU Animal Care Committee, and the SMU Animal Care Coordinator is particular, is responsible to coordinate the training, certification and tracking of researchers using animals at Saint Mary's University and Mount Saint Vincent University. The Animal Care Coordinator will make regular reports to the SMU Animal Care Committee on the status of training of researchers and make any recommendations on changes or updating to the training over time.

Failure of researchers to acquire the required training before using animals in their research is a serious breach of [Saint Mary's University Policy on Integrity in Research and Scholarship and Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Scholarly Misconduct](#). Allegations of faculty, students or staff using animals in research without the required training may be investigated according to the *Procedures for Reporting Investigating Scholarly Misconduct* and, if found not to be in compliance, will face the outcomes as described in the Policy.