

Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

21/1 A meeting of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) was held via teams on Monday 8 February 2021 at 10.00 am.

Present: [Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]

[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]

Apologies were received from [Redacted. Sec.40].

21/2 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 9 September 2020 were approved as a correct record.

21/3 Matters Arising

20/20 20/12 Discussion on ethics of service licences

[Redacted. Sec.40] informed the AWERB that no further progress had been made on this item.

20/21 Membership

[Redacted. Sec.40] stated that he wished to maintain a balance of [Redacted. Sec.40] and [Redacted. Sec.40], but was not inclined to increase the membership size of AWERB at the current time. The Committee was in agreement.

20/24 Communications timeline for BRU opening

This item was updated under Minute 21/6.

20/26 UAR Leaders in Openness Scheme

[Redacted. Sec.40] explained to the AWERB how the University had achieved successful outcomes over the last three years in regard to openness in animal research. Building on this it was proposed that the University plan additional communication and engagement activities. This programme of activity would enable the University to apply for a 'Leader in Openness' kitemark award, which was accredited by UAR and valid for three years. Activity would focus on four key areas: website, media, internal engagement and public engagement.

The following comments were made on the proposal:

- Was their capacity at the current time to undertake such a scheme?
It was noted that the plan would be spread over multiple years and that there was capacity within Communications.
- Mention had been made of having a philosophical debate around ethics. It was important to remember that: Philosophy were a small department; debates were often not a helpful format for public engagement – seminars or panel discussions might be a better format.
- The document needed rephrasing; it was not currently University policy to move towards a zero animal research model.
- Whilst it would be desirable to involve RUSU in the Scheme and to gain their insights, consideration would also need to be given to their capacity.
- Further consideration would need to be given to the resource implications of bookable visits. The Farm already undertook a number of visits – these were time consuming to arrange, had to be limited in terms of numbers of attendees, and required health and safety considerations. Whilst these visits were taking place a number of activities, for e.g. using large machinery, had to stop.
- As the BRU was a barrier facility consideration would need to be given to online videos and tours.

AWERB were supportive of the proposal in principle and the direction of travel noting that there was still more detail to be resolved. The plan should be developed further for consideration at the next meeting.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

21/4 Mid and End of Term Project Reviews

The Board received a presentation from [Redacted. Sec.40] in respect of his current Project Licence – novel therapeutics for central nervous system disorders. [Redacted. Sec.40] outlined the study and the following points were noted:

- The service licence was: studies carried out on behalf of client companies to progress drug discovery projects for Central Nervous System (CNS) disorders.
- Disorders of CNS disorders covered a very wide range of disease. The project licence covered rodent models of four CNS disorder subtypes: anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, Parkinson's disease and epilepsy.
- Current treatments for these disorders were associated with many significant side effects and were not disease modifying.
- A significant unmet medical need remained in each of the CNS disorders covered by the licence.
- Objectives were: to validate pharmacological targets for treating CNS disorders; to identify and screen compounds for treating CNS disorders; to test for possible side-effects on CNS disorder end-points of new agents.
- Protocols were outlined as: determination of drug effects; stimulus-based models; model of seizure; assessment of animals previously administered neurotoxin; intracranial administration of specific neurotoxins.
- Progress was as follows: work had taken place with three clients on projects for new Parkinson's disease treatments; screened novel compounds for 2 UK biotech companies intended for treatment of Parkinson's disease; screened novel compound intended for treatment of Parkinson's disease on behalf of a company spin out.
- Animals used were as follows – Mice (1200 estimated in licence, actual number used to date 414, estimate of number still to be used 600, actual severity mild) Rats (2,300 estimated in licence, actual number used to date 334, estimate of number still to be used 600, actual severity mild).
- Replacement, Reduction and Refinement were outlined.
- The Saretius client relationship was explained. UK drug discovery effort had largely been transformed to contract research organisations – this fragmented process was working well.
- The 2012 Saretius project licence application had been used as an example by the Home Office to ensure appropriate client interaction was incorporated into the licence.

The following comments were noted:

- Implementation of the 3Rs was well explained in the presentation but this was not articulated fully in the written report.
- It would be worth checking with the Home Office again that their position was still the same given changes in the team.
- It would be helpful to have had more on the lived experience in the form.

The Board received the mid-term review from [Redacted. Sec.40] in respect of his current Project Licence – nutrient and mineral metabolism in ruminants. AWERB agreed that the review form was completed well and was an example of good practice that could be shared more widely.

AWERB agreed that the section on lived experience could benefit from a better explanation. [Redacted. Sec.40] agreed to revise the form and share examples of good practice with those completing the reviews.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

21/5 Update on the welfare of animals during the lockdown period

In respect of animal welfare during the lockdown period the AWERB noted that:

BRU:

- Several groups in SBS had continued research, and some groups restarted studies prior to the latest lockdown.
- BRU staff had continued to work to fulfil the requests of research groups to ensure the animals required for studies were available.
- Contact has been maintained with all groups in regard to maintenance of their colonies to ensure they had adequate numbers of animals for them to recommence studies when lockdown ends.
- Routine maintenance and servicing of equipment had continued; repairs to the heating system were undertaken in January.
- [Redacted. Sec.40] visits had taken place since the last meeting.
- The BRU teams continued to have separate rotas to ensure resilience.

Members of AWERB thanked all those colleagues involved in maintaining animal welfare.

22/6 Update on transition to the BRU

It was noted that the [Redacted. Sec.40] had visited the HLS Building since the last meeting and had made a small number of recommendations.

It was reported that the HLS BRU was reliant on two different boiler systems for operation. Gas boilers to run the autoclave and cage washer, and electric boilers to control the animal room humidity. At the moment neither of these were functioning, which had led to a stop in plans for occupation. All functionality would need to be tested before opening; no date had been given when these would be working again.

Many hours had been spent up to this point with the setup, training and familiarisation for all stakeholders. Weekly meetings were being held, which the project manager was invited to, in order to continue moving forward. Lots of work has also been done with the [Redacted. Sec.40], and once the room humidity issue was resolved the University would apply for the establishment licence amendment to include this area.

[Redacted. Sec.40] noted that colleagues in Estates were fully aware of the need to resolve the boiler issues as a matter of priority.

22/7 LASA Review of lessons learnt from COVID19

[Redacted. Sec.40] informed the AWERB that he had received comments back from colleagues. He agreed to recirculate the paper for a second time to incorporate any further comments that had arisen given continuing lockdowns.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

22/8 Any other business

System for Reviews of Study Plans

The [Redacted. Sec.40] raised a case where had a study had started within the BRU for which a critical piece of equipment was no longer available. She queried introducing a system for review and authorisation of study plans prior to animal studies being started – this was to ensure that adequate equipment and staff would be available.

AWERB noted that the Farm already had a similar system in place for both internal and external projects.

The [Redacted. Sec.40] submitted a draft Study Plan for all animal work. She reported that the form would need to be submitted 28 days in advance of work commencing and would need to be approved by either the [Redacted. Sec.40] or [Redacted. Sec.40]. AWERB were supportive of the approach taken. It was agreed that the form should be discussed with the BRU Users Group in the first instance to ascertain how it could best work.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

22/9 Dates of meetings in the Session 2020-21

Thursday 13 May 2021 at 10.00 am