

Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

21/10 A meeting of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) was held via teams on Thursday 13 May 2021 at 10.00 am.

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

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

[Redacted. Sec.40] welcomed [Redacted. Sec.40] to the meeting who was attending from Redkite in [Redacted. Sec.40]'s absence.

21/11 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 8 February 2021 were approved as a correct record.

21/12 Matters Arising

21/3 Discussion on ethics of service licences

[Redacted. Sec.40] informed the AWERB that a meeting had now been held and that there had been no feedback from other organisations on service licences.

21/4 Mid/End of Term Project Reviews

[Redacted. Sec.40] agreed to provide a revised schedule for Mid/End of Project Reviews to the next meeting.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

21/7 LASA Review of lessons learnt

[Redacted. Sec.40] agreed to circulate the latest version to users.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

21/8 System for review of study plans

The AWERB received copies of the Study Plans. It was noted that:

- The draft study plans had been circulated to users for their comments which had been incorporated into the revised version.
- The revised version had been presented to a user group meeting.
- The forms had now been added to Share Point so that colleagues could fill in the forms directly and share with specific Team channels. Both [Redacted. Sec.40] and [Redacted. Sec.40] could access and comment on the forms.
- The next stage would be to roll the form out to more users.
- [Redacted. Sec.40] reported that some colleagues had commented that the forms would take time to complete but they had accepted the requirement to think through planning/process/requirements before starting any animal experimentation.
- It had been agreed that the timing around 28 days would be flagged as an ideal timeframe but that a shorter notice period might be accommodated where necessary.
- A user guide and FAQs had been developed that would be added to.

[Redacted. Sec.40] commented that study plans were becoming more common in other institutions and that it was important to develop a system that worked practically for all colleagues. Once in place most institutions found the plans beneficial.

21/13 UAR Leaders in Openness Scheme

The AWERB noted that the application for the *Leader in Openness* kitemark with Understanding Animal Research (UAR) had been successful and on Friday 14 May 2021 Reading would be announced as the 14th institution to be awarded leadership status and the only institution to receive such an award in 2021. It was reported that the judges were impressed with our enthusiasm for openness and the commitment to following best practice across the principles of the concordat. The Press Team were planning an announcement externally and for staff and students about the award; consideration was also being given as to how to reflect the award on web pages and social media. The announcement was being made at the end of Mice Awareness Week that UAR were running to celebrate their seventh anniversary.

Members of AWERB recorded their thanks to both [Redacted. Sec.40] and [Redacted. Sec.40] for their work on this.

It was noted that work would continue to revise the strategic plan and that would be brought to a future meeting.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

21/14 Demonstrations on campus

It was noted that on the 24th April, a protest was held at the Shinfield Gate entrance to the Whiteknights Campus about animal research by the local branch of an antivivisection group (Vegan Action for Animals). Ahead of the protest, the University posted public information on its Facebook profile to demonstrate our reasonableness about the right to protest and shared information about our animal research and facilities available on campus. The protest was attended by around 6-7 people. The engagement with our post included some positive comments from staff and students about the need for research involving animals.

The protestors had decided to protest again on 15 May 2021 which was the national Tuberos Sclerosis Day – the University would highlight research that it undertakes in this area.

[Redacted. Sec.40] highlighted that the protestors had picked up on some out-of-date information available on the web pages that should be corrected.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

21/15 Update on the welfare of animals – Zebrafish Fry

The AWERB noted that:

- Zebrafish fry had been acquired from UCL on 14th April 2021 (one day post fertilisation).
- On day 13 all of the fry died.
- All of the parameters for the tank and water had been checked daily and nothing had been detected as having obviously caused an issue. An electronic pH probe had been purchased as an additional measure.
- The fry were on the same system as used for adult fish and there had been no changes in husbandry techniques.
- A report had been made to the [Redacted. Sec.40] as this could potentially be a breach of the PEL.
- It had been agreed that a meeting would be held with the [Redacted. Sec.40], who was also the [Redacted. Sec.40].
- It would be important to ascertain whether UCL had also experienced any issues.

The AWERB asked for an update at its next meeting.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40] and [Redacted. Sec.40]

21/16 Update on transition to the BRU

It was noted 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. As at 05/05/21 neither of these were functioning, which had led to a stop in plans for occupation. The functionality of all the boilers needed to be tested before opening and no date had been given as to when these would be working again.
- Using light data loggers there had also been a fault discovered with the timers in several rooms. The lights were not going off as programmed at night. This had been raised as an issue and would need to be satisfactorily resolved before moving forward with the Home Office designation.
- The Individually Ventilated Cages air handling units were showing faults when connected to the unit HVAC system. This had been raised with the BMS team in Estates for help.
- Regular updates were being requested from the project manager for the latest timelines to resolve these issues.

21/17 Animals in Science – Culture of Care

The AWERB received the April edition of the Animals in Science Department Newsletter, noting in particular the article in regard to promoting a good Culture of Care.

Members discussed how a culture of care would be promulgated amongst animal users. It was suggested that a training session/event along the lines of the previous 3Rs event would be helpful; [Redacted. Sec.40], [Redacted. Sec.40], [Redacted. Sec.40] and [Redacted. Sec.40] were asked to think further on what could usefully be arranged.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40], [Redacted. Sec.40], [Redacted. Sec.40], [Redacted. Sec.40] [Redacted. Sec.40] informed AWERB that it would be useful to start by defining what the University meant by Culture of Care; this would link in well with work under the Leaders in Openness Scheme.

21/18 Animal Research Policy

AWERB received the Animal Research Policy for review. It was agreed that:

- More could be made of UAR.
- 3Rs could be more prominent.
- The data included needed to be checked and links needed to be updated.
- The last sentence of the overview section could read better.
- The policy did not necessarily reflect current work.

[Redacted. Sec.40] was asked to update the policy and submit a revised version to the next meeting.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

21/19 Any other business

Spring ELH Meeting

[Redacted. Sec.40] reported to the AWERB on the Spring ELH Meeting. It was noted that:

- The meeting had focussed on Replacement and the responsibilities as PELh and the challenges faced by animal-free innovations.
- Animal alternatives and progress - in some specific areas of endeavour, we are already at – and accepting of – the ‘animal free’ stage (cosmetics development/regulation); In human drug development, the very large drop off in candidate drugs between ‘safety’ (lots pass) and ‘efficacy’ (few do) was attributable to the poor predictive value of many animal models; Regulatory acceptance was variable but evolving (and only moving in one direction).
- Techniques to accelerate and de-risk therapeutic development while reducing and refining animal usage: Hard to change the traditional drug development paradigm; Animal models were poor at predicting human efficacy; AI/modelling faced challenges because of maths/computational skills needed.
- Animal free innovations, an alternative approach: the Francis Crick Institute had good webpages as previous UAR award winner.

The AWERB asked [Redacted. Sec.40] to think about how best to reach the University community and organisations such as [Redacted. Sec.40] to seek their input around animal-free innovations. This item would be discussed again at the next meeting.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

Farm

It was noted that it was currently business as usual at the Farm. Work was in hand to develop the new piggery. This work would fall under the purview of [Redacted. Sec.40] and would be done under an externally held project licence with a small AWERB comprising [Redacted. Sec.40], [Redacted. Sec.40] and [Redacted. Sec.40].

The AWERB noted that soon there would be more external work on the Farm than under the University’s licence. Consideration would need to be given as to how this work was portrayed in project listing and data.

Membership

The AWERB recorded its thanks to [Redacted. Sec.40] who was stepping down as [Redacted. Sec.40] and wished her well in her new appointment as [Redacted. Sec.40].

21/20 Dates of meetings in the Session 2020-21

Thursday 30 September 2021 at 10.00 am
Monday 7 February 2022 at 10.00 am
Thursday 12 May 2022 at 10.00 am