Purpose / Scope

This policy is to apply CCAC's guidelines for training Animal Users and Caregivers and to outline the associated roles and responsibilities for the Institutional Animal User Training Program (IAUTP) associated with Western's Research Community.

Rationale

Both our national (CCAC - Canadian Council on Animal Care) and provincial (OMAFRA - Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs) regulators require that people working with live animals are "knowledgeable about the principles of humane experimental science and ethical issues associated with the use of those animals and skilled in performing hands-on procedures."[1]

> The *CCAC guidelines on: training of personnel working with animals in science* forms the foundation for the training, supervision and attainment of competence for all personnel involved in the care and use of animals in science. It focuses on general principles to permit institutions to determine the relevant requirements for the various categories of personnel and/or design training programs that meet the requirements of the CCAC and are tailored to individual institutional needs.

Policy

Institutional Animal User Training Program (IAUTP) elements must engender a culture of respect for animal life and must be designed to align with The Three Rs, as per CCAC's guideline on: training of personnel working with animals in science (2015).

- All Animal Users and Caregivers must demonstrate their understanding of ethics associated with the humane use of animals, including The Three Rs of replacement, reduction, and refinement.

Animal users and Caregivers must demonstrate competency in animal-based procedures, handling, and care, including core and AUP-specific skills.

Any concerns associated with respect to Animal User and caregiver competency that cannot be readily resolved must be forwarded to the ACC (Animal Care Committee) Executive for consideration, as per the *Concerns Policy* (POL-004).

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[1] Canadian Council on Animal Care. CCAC guidelines on: training of personnel working with animals in science, *CCAC/CCPA*, Ottawa, 2015, P.1, https://ccac.ca/Documents/Standards/Guidelines/CCAC_Guidelines_on_Training_of_Personnel_Working_With_Animals_in_Science.pdf (accessed 05 March 2024).

Training Program Administration & Composition

The IAUTP must be administered centrally by Western Research, led by an Institutional Veterinarian, and composed of animal health professionals who specialize in laboratory animal species.

Institutional Animal User Training must be offered with adequate frequency and oversight by proficient trainers to ensure all animal users receive necessary core knowledge, skills, and competency prior to performing ACC-approved animal procedures independently.

- When practical skills must be acquired, training should be timed in proximity to the time when the skills are required.

Training standards must align with best practices as outlined within ACC-approved Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and veterinary standards of care.

- Divergences from SOPs / other standards must be disclosed in the AUP.

The IAUTP Team must: determine Animal User training requirements; establish training competency benchmarks; develop and maintain training program content and training platforms; maintain centralized training records.

The ACC via its Executive must be apprised of any significant changes to the IAUTP.

Required Training

Animal Ethics and Regulations Training
All personnel associated with an Animal Use Protocol and Caregivers must complete the following CCAC-mandated animal training – involving both theoretical and practical skills – prior to undertaking animal-based science or animal care work, as outlined within ACC-approved Animal Use Protocols (AUPs) and/or associated with institutional roles.

- Supervisors may request Animal Ethics & Regulations and Core Skills Training for new lab members/staff in advance of AUP submission/approval.

Animal Ethics & Regulations Training
All personnel listed on an AUP or working in a Facility or other support area that facilitates live animal science must complete Western's *Animal Ethics and Regulations* online ethics course.

Core Skills Training
Core skills are the foundational principles and practical capabilities required to perform animal-based tasks. All personnel directly involved in animal oversight and/or handling must complete IAUTP hands-on Core Skills training and their associated online course prerequisites, as applicable to their role.

- Core Skills Training requirements will be determined by the IAUTP Team during the AUP review process, or based on planned activities submitted by the user's Supervisor, e.g., species-specific handling and care, injection and blood collection techniques, anesthesia and surgical foundations, and euthanasia.

Training for all species may not be covered by the IAUTP. At the discretion of the Institutional Veterinarian, additional Trainer Designates outside the IAUTP Team may be utilized for specialized hands-on training of various species based upon their demonstrated expertise and training competency.

- All Trainer Designates must work with the IAUTP Team to develop the training framework.

Animal Use Protocol Specific Skills Training

Although Core Skills Training provides the foundation, many specific procedures, especially surgeries, may require additional lab-level training.

Specialized procedures are not covered by the IAUTP. Once competency in Core Skills has been demonstrated, the PI must ensure that the trainees receive the necessary training for AUP specific skills, e.g., expert lab members, external experts. The PI may also seek veterinary consultation and service if they do not have skilled lab members available.

Trainers of surgeries must be experienced and have documented competency to perform the specific surgery (see below – Competency Assessment & Assurance).

Competency Assessment & Assurance

The responsibility for ensuring that Animal Users and Caregivers are competent will be shared among ACC-approved trainers and supervisors of Animal User trainees, e.g., AUP Holders, Facility Supervisors.

Individuals who identify gaps in competency must notify the IAUTP Team in order to ensure adequate training support is provided.

Core Skills Competency Assessment

Trainees must demonstrate Core Skills competency during hands-on sessions as assessed by IAUTP Trainers or Trainer Designates (80% passing grade) before performing associated live-animal procedures outside the training environment.

A competent individual within the lab or animal facility must oversee the trainee until they demonstrate competency in core skills as assessed by the trainee's supervisor.

For species in which training courses are not offered within the IAUTP, a competency assessment must be performed by an institutional veterinary professional who will focus on humane technique and safety of animals and personnel.

AUP-Specific Skills Competency Assessment

A competent individual within the lab must oversee the trainee performing AUP-specific specialized procedures until they demonstrate competency.

For recovery surgical procedures, an Institutional Veterinarian or their designate must assess competency and submit related assessment records to the IAUTP Team.

Exemptions from Training Requirements

Exemptions from the hands-on training requirements may be requested and will be considered by the ACC's Training Exemption Working Group based upon documented and/or demonstrated evidence that an equivalent course or experience has been obtained elsewhere (See *Procedures for Institutional Animal User Training-PROC-017*).

References

Canadian Council on Animal Care

- CCAC guidelines on: training of personnel working with animals in science (2015)
- CCAC Frequently Asked Questions – Training of personnel working with animals in science (2017)

Animals for Research Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. A.22, s.17(2)(c)

Revision History

Version	Approval Date *dd-mm-yyyy*	Description of Changes	Author(s)
00	10-11-2020	MAPP 7.10 replacement of operational elements	LT
02	26-01-2023	Clarification of requirements for Western's Animal Ethics and Regulations course, and where the approval is required for alternatives	JSN / LT
03	11-04-2024	Rationale & several policy updates, e.g., delineate between 'core' and 'AUP specific' skills.	JSN / KH / LT

Animal Users – Individuals who are directly involved in undertaking animal-based procedures, or are employed to care for 'animals,' as defined by the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC)

Caregivers – Individuals identified by the institution and the Principal Investigator responsible to provide care for animals, e.g., health checks, animal handling, sick animal response.

Core Skills – Foundational principles and practical capabilities required to perform animal-based tasks, e.g., Species-specific handling, Restraint, Injections, Blood Collection, Anesthetic & Surgical Principles, Euthanasia

IAUTP Team – Western Research's animal health professional team led by an institutional veterinarian responsible to administer the Institutional Animal User Training Program and provide core Institutional Animal User Training.

Western's Research Community – Institutions and their departments involving animal-based scientists having Animal Use Protocols under the jurisdiction of Western's Animal Care Committee (ACC)

Competency – as per Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC), the ability to effectively perform a particular task in relation to the care, maintenance, or use of animals, while ensuring their welfare is protected as far as possible within the constraints of any approved Animal Use Protocol (AUP).[2]

Core Skills Training – A combination of didactic and hands-on instruction on foundational animal-based procedures: species-specific handling and care, common techniques (e.g., injections, blood collection, anesthesia, surgical principles, euthanasia).

The Three Rs – Principles developed by Russell and Burch (1959) that provide a framework for the ethical use of animals in scholarship: Replacement, Reduction and Refinement. Replace – avoid or replace the use of animals wherever possible; Reduce – utilize strategies that reduce the number of animals used while maintaining experimental design; Refine – modify procedures and/or practices to reduce animal stress or pain.

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[2] Canadian Council on Animal Care. CCAC guidelines on: training of personnel working with animals in science, *CCAC/CCPA*, Ottawa, 2015, P.5, https://ccac.ca/Documents/Standards/Guidelines/CCAC_Guidelines_on_Training_of_Personnel_Working_With_Animals_in_Science.pdf (accessed 05 March 2024).