

Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

23/10 A meeting of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) was held via Teams on Thursday 11 May 2023 at 10.00 am.

Present:



NACWO = Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer

NVS = Named Veterinary Surgeon

Apologies were received from [redacted], [redacted] and [redacted]

At the outset of the meeting the AWERB noted that this was likely to be the last meeting attended by [redacted] as NVS. After [redacted] years as the University's [redacted], [redacted] was handing over day-to-day responsibilities to [redacted]. The AWERB thanked [redacted] for all [redacted] support and advice to colleagues and wished [redacted] well in the future.

The AWERB noted that [redacted]; his replacement, [redacted] was due to join the University in September 2023.

It was proposed that the September 2023 meeting of the AWERB be held on campus, in order to allow farewells in person.

23/11 Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 6 February 2023 were approved as a correct record.

23/12 Matters Arising

22/22 Future topics – compassion fatigue and other mental health challenges

It was noted that no further progress had been made on this topic, other than the circulation of training/cpd and resources by the NIOs to the community. There had been no reports of concern from colleagues on this topic.

It was proposed that this topic be deferred until Spring/Summer 2024, following staffing changes.

22/27 Improvements to web pages

It was noted that the Research Communications Team were currently in the process of redeveloping the research pages on the website – content related to animal research would be available more prominently.

It was noted that the Minutes of AWERB would be published from the summer, and would be updated annually.

23/13 Mid Term Review

The Chair apologised to the AWERB that the mid-term reviews for:

- Microvesicles and the prevention of tissue wasting.
- Intestinal failure in neonates and adults: mechanisms, protection and repair

Had not been received. These would be followed up outside of the meeting.

23/14 Good Practice and Regulatory Requirements – progress on key actions

In response to the ongoing review of the University's compliance in relation to Standard Conditions in the University's ASPA Establishment Licence the AWERB noted the following actions:

PEL Conditions

The AWERB noted that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had met following the last meeting to discuss next steps. The meeting had received an analysis of the all the Standard Conditions (current processes, where evidence could be found, and where there were gaps) and had discussed a work plan for addressing these.

3Rs Strategy

The AWERB noted that progress has been made in regard to developing a remit, scope and draft work plan for a 3Rs group. The group would be established to promote a good level of understanding, development and implementation of the 3Rs throughout the University.

It was proposed that the draft remit be circulated to the AWERB for any comment.

Action [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] endorsed the establishment of the group which would be important from a communications perspective in talking to the public around the use of animals in research.

The AWERB agreed that it was important to see publicised demonstratable replacement.

A chart had been produced by the Group in order to make progress on various activities. It was hoped that 3R champions could be identified from relevant research divisions to drive forward activity within Departments – [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] agreed to give further thought to identifying individuals for these roles.

Named person Job Description

One action required the University to ensure that the Named roles of employees holding these be formally recognised in job descriptions and formally reviewed in the course of annual Performance Development Reviews. The AWERB noted that the line managers of all Named roles had been written to that effect; [REDACTED] agreed to chase up those who had not responded.

Action: [REDACTED]

Refresher Training

The AWERB agreed that this item would be carried forward to Spring/Summer 2024.

Audit of facilities

The AWERB noted that the report from the Home Office inspection on the BRU had still not been received and that it had now been some time. [REDACTED] agreed to chase this report.

Action: [REDACTED]

Study Plans

The AWERB noted that the Farm had a series of forms that it used depending on the client, the majority of the Farms business was external to the University. The Farm had formal processes in place. The BRU used Study Plans – dependent on the answers to the questions within there would be further follow up with relevant colleagues. It was agreed that these examples should be shared in order to ascertain whether any lessons could be learnt.

Action: [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

The AWERB noted that there were issues at the Farm in regard to succession planning and how to systematise work on the Home Office system.

23/15 Report from Technical Services

It was noted that:

- Estates – regular meetings were held with Estates to address any ongoing issues.
- Work was continuing on the air handling units – one was kept running whilst the other was being worked on.
- Work was planned for the wider building on the RO water system – discussions were taking place with the BRU on the timings of this work which could be noisy.
- Meetings were taking place with researchers on future work coming up and breeding was picking back up as use of the facility was ramping up.
- The latest health screen of the facility was all clear.
- There was continuing interest in the use of Zebrafish.

23/16 Communications Strategy

██████████ shared with the AWERB a presentation that had been presented to a UAR concordat meeting on openness in a time of increasing animal rights activism. The presentation sought to provoke a discussion around a future communications strategy. In particular the following points were noted:

- The University was doing well openness, but could it be doing more on listening.
- There was a need to clear up with activists' misconceptions around species, severity, and research topics, as well as a need to talk about alternatives to animal work and what was being done by colleagues to develop these.
- The University needed to be clear on the steps taken to minimise suffering as well as demonstrating that researchers were human, and humane.
- There was need to engage with activists to: find out what was important to them; understand why they felt the way they did; discuss suggestions for alternatives/phasing out of animal research; find a common ground; acknowledge that the University would never be entirely able to stop; demonstrate epistemic modesty.
- The Press Team were working on building relationships with particular groups.
- It was important to listen to the views of students, as critical friends.
- A list of institutions that were demonstrating positive work into the 3Rs would be useful to help students, rather than just a list of institutions undertaking animal research.
- Consideration should be given as to how to engage with student views.

The AWERB discussed whether a student member should be invited to join AWERB. Members were asked to forward any comments on this matter to the Chair.

The AWERB thanked ██████████ for the presentation. The AWERB noted that the strategy at present was to maintain the status quo, manage duties within the concordat, and to continue to develop works in areas of listening/understanding/reflection.

23/17 Items for future meetings

No items were raised.

23/18 Dates of meetings in the Session 2023-24

Wednesday 20 September 2023 at 10.00 am – this meeting will be in person including a tour of the BRU.

Monday 5 February 2024 at 10.00 am

Thursday 9 May 2024 at 10.00 am

