

Animal Ethics Governance and Policy Committee

Procedures for complaints, concerns and grievances regarding the use of animals

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide procedures for handling complaints, concerns and grievances regarding the use of animals at the Alfred Research Alliance campus, in accordance with the requirements of the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes* (the Code).

Procedures are provided for:

- Concerns or complaints regarding the use of animals
- Disputes regarding decisions of the Animal Ethics Committee
- Disagreements between Animal Ethics Committee members
- Disagreements between the Animal Ethics Committee and the institution/s

Requirements of the Code

Section 2.1.7 Institutions must identify clear lines of responsibility, communication and accountability by:

- ii. ensuring that procedures are developed for addressing complaints and non-compliance relating to the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

Section 2.2.29 Institutions must have procedures for dealing with complaints and non-compliance with the Code, complaints related to the AEC process, and irreconcilable differences between the AEC and an investigator.

Section 5.1 Institutions must have procedures for addressing complaints and non-compliance relating to the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, including:

- i. complaints concerning the care and use of animals by the institution, including conscientious objection in the case of teaching activities
- ii. complaints concerning the AEC process of review of an application or report, including resolution of disagreements between AEC members, between the AEC and investigators, and between the AEC and the institution

Definitions

AEC means Alfred Research Alliance Animal Ethics Committee A or B.

SPPL – Scientific Procedure Premise Licence

SABL – Specific Animal Breeding Licence

SPFL – Scientific Procedure Fieldwork Licence

Alfred Research Alliance includes:

- Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute

- Alfred Health
- Monash University Central Clinical School
- Burnet Institute
- AMREP AS Pty Ltd.
- Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA)
- Tenants or other entities nominating the Alfred Research Alliance AECs A or B on their SPPL, SABL, or SPFL

AMREP AS means AMREP Animal Services.

AWCO means Animal Welfare Compliance Officer

GAP Chair means the Chairperson of the Alfred Research Alliance Animal Ethics Governance and Policy Committee.

Procedures

1. Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Use of Animals

1.1 Principles

- The ultimate goal in the consideration of concerns is to ensure the welfare of animals;
- Confidentiality will be maintained within the requirements of a fair investigation and resolution of complaints;
- All complaints will be taken seriously and will be dealt with promptly and thoroughly;
- No person who makes a complaint in good faith will be disadvantaged;
- Procedural fairness will be observed at all stages;
- Wherever possible, the AEC Chair will attempt to resolve complaints by counselling and advice.

1.2 Making a complaint

1.2.1 Any person with a concern regarding the treatment of animals anywhere on the Alfred Research Alliance site should initially raise the concern with the General Manager, AMREP AS. If they cannot or do not wish to do so, they may raise the concern with the AWCO or the AEC Chair via the AEC Secretary.

Complaints may address research being conducted:

- in a way which the complainant believes to be unethical or contrary to existing policy or legislation
- without formal AEC approval
- in a manner contrary to the conditions placed on the research in the letter of approval from the AEC
- in a manner contrary to an AEC application which has been approved.

Refer also to *Procedures for Responding to Non-Compliance with the Australian Code, Legislation or Animal Ethics Committee Decisions*

1.2.2 A complaint may be oral or in writing. The process for investigating a complaint is detailed below.

1.3 Investigation of complaints

1.3.1 Complaints will be investigated as follows:

- (i) The person receiving the complaint shall communicate it to the AEC Chair and AEC Secretary as soon as possible, in writing, orally or anonymously. If there are

grounds for concern, the AEC Chair shall inform the AEC and the relevant scientific licence nominee.

- (ii) If in the opinion of the AEC Chair, the circumstances require urgent action, they may take such action as seems necessary, including suspending the approval for any projects or procedures pending further investigation.
- (iii) The AEC Chair shall determine whether the complaint should be investigated by one of:
 - the Chair alone
 - the AWCO acting under the chairs direction
 - a subcommittee of the AEC
 - the full AEC
 - the relevant institution's Designated Person for research misconduct.
- (iv) The investigating subcommittee, if established, shall consist of one each of Category A to D members and the AEC Chair or Deputy Chair. The investigation should include interviews with the Investigators and other parties as deemed necessary. The investigating subcommittee will provide a written report to the full AEC as soon as is practicable and make recommendations for action in the report, which may include the following:
 - no further action is required
 - the project or procedure be modified
 - conditions be placed upon approval
 - approval be suspended
 - the AEC recommend to the scientific licence nominee/institution that disciplinary action be considered against a person.
- (v) The AEC shall consider the written and signed complaint, any reports from the AWCO, AEC Chair or investigating subcommittee and any accompanying statement from any person. In the case of a report from the investigating subcommittee, the AEC shall consider the recommendations in the report and may accept, modify or reject the recommendations.
- (vi) Following consideration of the matter, the AEC shall take action as appropriate and shall inform all parties involved accordingly.

1.3.2 The AEC shall report complaints and the outcomes of investigations to the relevant scientific licence nominee.

1.3.3 All complaints will also be recorded in a central register.

2. Disputes regarding decisions of the AEC

2.1 An Investigator may make a request for reconsideration of a decision of the AEC within 10 working days of the date of the notification of the AEC's decision.

2.2 The request shall be directed in writing to the AEC Secretary, and should outline the reasons for the request and providing evidence where appropriate.

2.3 The request shall be considered by the relevant AEC at its next ordinary meeting.

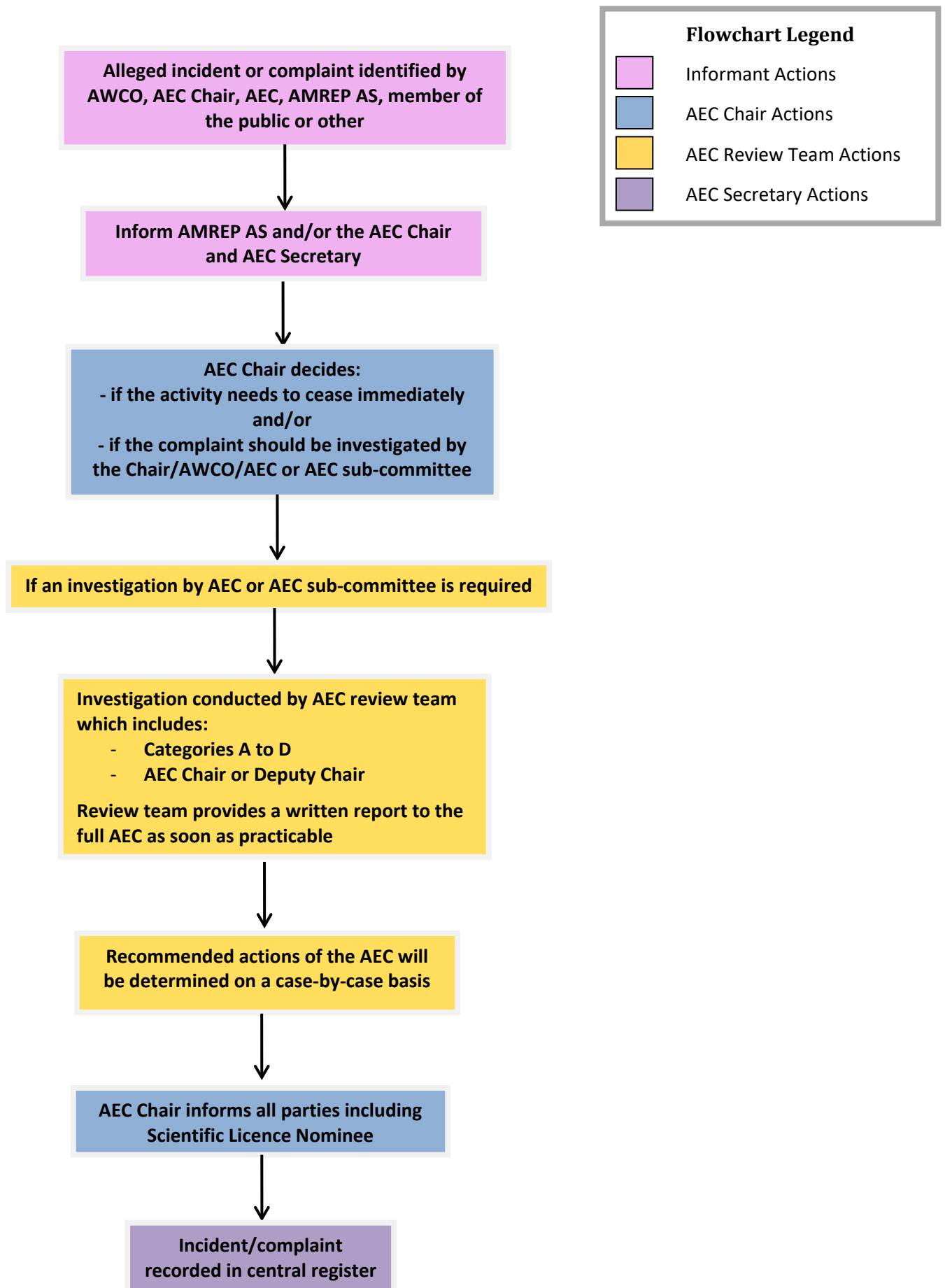
2.4 Following consideration by the AEC of the information presented by the investigator, the AEC may decide to:

- uphold its decision
- change its decision.

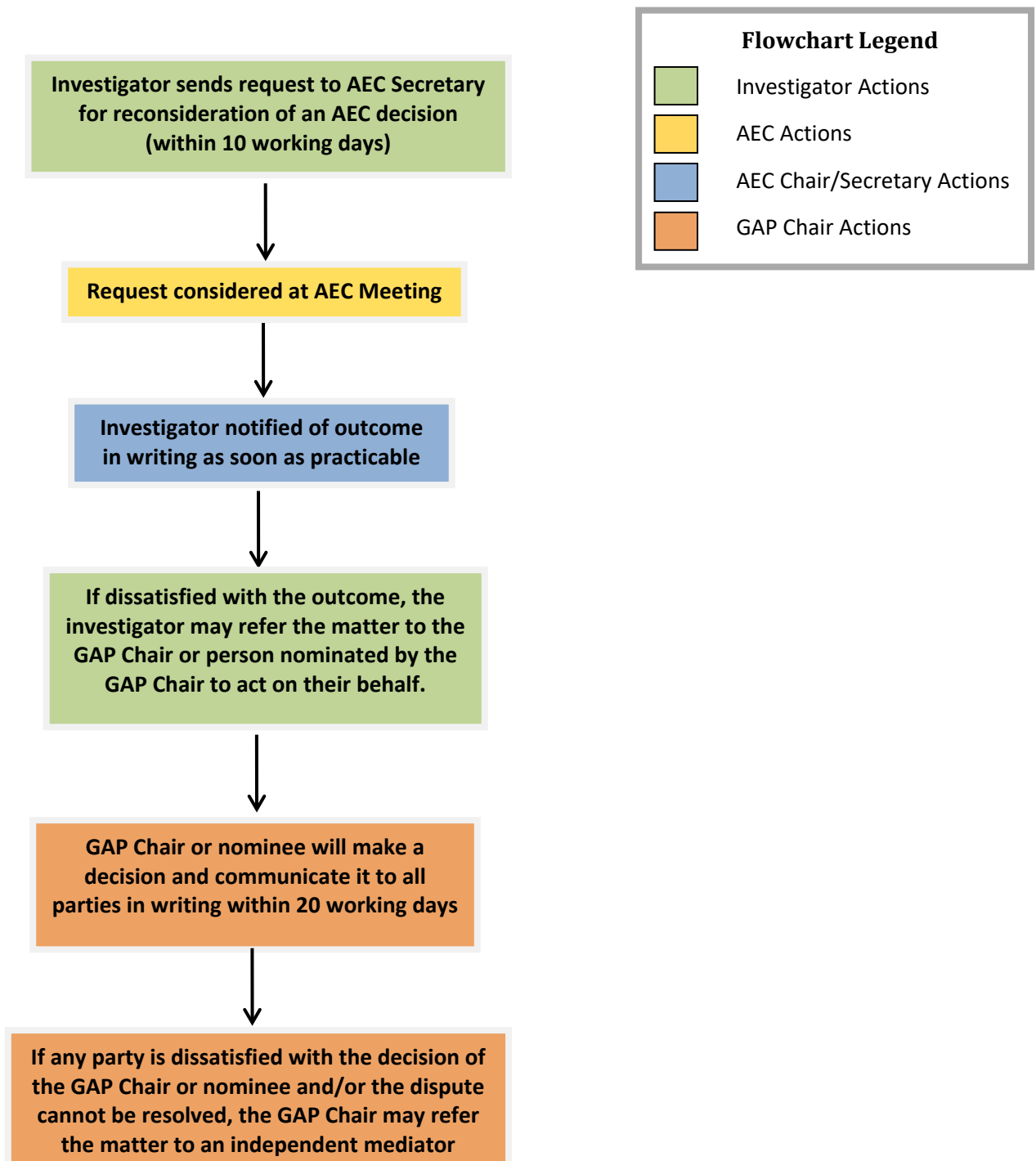
2.5 As soon as practicable after the close of the meeting, the AEC shall notify the investigator, in writing, of its decision and providing reasons for that decision.

- 2.6 If the investigator is dissatisfied with the procedures followed by the AEC in reconsidering its decision, the investigator may request that the matter be referred to the GAP Chair.
- 2.7 The GAP Chair may review the procedures followed by the AEC in reaching their decision, but not the AEC's decision.
- 2.8 The GAP Chair may require the AEC to provide documentation or other evidence of the procedures followed by the AEC in reaching its decision.
- 2.9 The GAP Chair shall review the procedures by:
- notifying the parties in writing of the date of receipt of the request for a review
 - examining the documents in 2.8
 - inviting the investigator to make any representations on the matter, in writing or in person
 - inviting the AEC Chair, or nominee, to make representations on behalf of the AEC, in writing or in person
 - making a decision and communicating to the parties in writing, within a period of no more than 20 working days from the date of receipt of the request for a review.
- 2.11 The GAP Chair shall:
- uphold the procedures followed by the AEC in reaching its decision OR
 - request the AEC to review its procedures in reaching its decision, and to review its decision in the light of the reviewed procedures. The GAP Chair cannot over-ride the ultimate decision of the AEC.
- 2.12 If, following the decision of the GAP Chair,
- any party is dissatisfied with the decision of the GAP Chair OR
 - the dispute cannot be resolved, the GAP Chair may refer the matter to an independent mediator.
- 3. Disagreements between AEC members**
- 3.1 Decisions at a meeting of the AEC shall be determined by consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached after reasonable effort to resolve differences, the AEC should explore with the applicant(s) ways of modifying the project that may lead to consensus.
- 3.2 If consensus is still unachievable, the AEC should only proceed to a majority decision after members have been allowed a period of time to review their positions, followed by further discussion.
- 3.3 The Chair should resolve other disagreements between members. If unable to be resolved by the Chair, or if the Chair is involved, the disagreement shall be referred to the GAP Chair.
- 4. Disagreements between the AEC and the institution/s**
- 4.1 Disagreements between the AEC and any of the Alfred Research Alliance institutions/ licence nominees shall be referred to an independent mediator.

Flowchart of procedures for concerns or complaints regarding the use of animals



Flowchart of procedures for disputes regarding decisions of the AEC



Supporting documents:

Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th edition 2013

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-care-and-use-animals-scientific-purposes>

Code of conduct for scientific procedures using animals under Alfred Research Alliance licences – June 2019

<http://amrepaec.bakeridi.edu.au/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=DPVaixY5Nh8%3d&tabid=600>

AEC terms of reference and operating procedures – November 2015

<http://amrepaec.bakeridi.edu.au/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Lg9XOQY330U%3d&tabid=636>

Record of version

Version No.	Author	Date	Version Reason	Due for Review
1	Animal Ethics GAP Committee	June 2013	New	June 2015
2	Animal Ethics GAP Committee	September 2013	Revisions	September 2015
3	Animal Ethics GAP Committee	October 2013	Revisions	October 2015
4	Animal Ethics GAP Committee	November 2015	Renewal	November 2018
5	Animal Ethics GAP Committee	May 2019	Renewal	2022