

LONDON AWERB HUB
Meeting held on Tuesday 17th July 2018

14.00 – 16.00h

1. Apologies

2. Welcome to New AWERB Representatives

Following a good turnout at the inaugural meeting, many new faces were in attendance as alternates to those unable to attend in person.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, which took place on 7th February 2018, were approved as a true record of events. It was also agreed that a redacted version of these minutes should be published on the UCL website.

4. Matters Arising

No subjects were put forward beside those already on the agenda.

5. Training Workshop for AWERB Members

It had been noted at the last meeting that although there are many training options for those writing project licence applications, there is little training support for the AWERB members who review them. [REDACTED] has begun planning a workshop for those assessing PPLs for valid experimental design and data analysis. Following a teleconference, it has been proposed that a session of about four hours, hosting 50-60 people would be adequate. This would be split into four sessions:

- The basics of experimental design and statistical analysis.
- Common pitfalls in the above, including checklists.
Lunch, with time for networking and posters.
- Case studies, carried out in groups of 10-15. These will consist of applications with flaws to be discussed, followed by a 20 minute presentation of findings and general discussion.
- A summary of key points to take away.

A venue is still being sought, as well as financial assistance for catering etc. Literature, including a flyer, will be produced to promote the workshop amongst AWERBs in the London Hub and beyond.

For a group of approximately 50 people, a large central room, with three side-rooms for the group project, would be ideal. The [REDACTED] may be the best venue for this. There has been a call for applications for bursaries for training projects funded by Laboratory Animals Limited, which could help to cover the costs of hosting the workshop.

It was enquired if there a possibility of producing a distance learning option for the workshop. This may be investigated once the main course has been successfully delivered.

Action:

[REDACTED] to produce a draft programme to circulate with the minutes.

[REDACTED] to investigate venue options and costs at the [REDACTED].

6. Managing late drafts for PPL applications

Most, if not all, establishments remind PPL holders of the impending expiry of their licence and the need to start drafting its replacement promptly, with the onus usually being on Biological Services Admin to ensure this happens.

It was noted that:

- [REDACTED] sends reminders to PPL holders at twelve, nine and six months before the active PPL expires. In addition, that establishment provides mentors for the writing process, arranges surgeries with the local Home Office Inspectors and provides template protocols for routine procedures such as breeding. In spite of all this, there have been two recent incidences of the Home Office only granting a short-term “bridging” licence, due to last-minute applications. These generally only allow for the maintenance of breeding colonies. This wastes time for the applicant and the Inspectorate because a further full licence is still required. Late applications also take the Inspector’s attention away from PPLs that have been submitted in a timely manner.
- It can also put pressure on the Inspectorate if AWERBs submit large quantities of applications shortly after each meeting. A ‘service breeding’ licence could ameliorate the problem by removing the need for all applications to include breeding protocols. However, ASRU have turned away from these, except for small establishments, to reduce the risk of overbreeding.
- If expiry of a PPL is imminent (i.e., less than four weeks), units should tell the holder not to begin any new procedures that would take longer than the period of licensed authority to carry out the work.
- Some PPL holders feel that having a replacement licence granted long before the expiry of its predecessor “wastes time”, as they don’t get the full five years. The ability to “postdate” new licences may help with this.

Action:

[REDACTED] to contact [REDACTED] and enquire if a representative of ASRU could attend the next meeting to add to this discussion from ASRU’s viewpoint.

7. Sharing a Standard Operating Procedure – Out of Hours Procedures

It was noted that the [REDACTED] SOP was precirculated to provide a focus for discussion of this topic.

This guidance was written by the [REDACTED] to ameliorate concerns over those working outside office hours. For the purpose of this discussion, out of hours is considered to be 5pm to 8am during the week, all weekends and closure days. The default position is that out of hours work is not encouraged, but may sometimes be necessary for scientific reasons, such as human tissue samples arriving from hospitals, preparation time, or a shortage of sufficient quantities of equipment such as microscopes.

Potential problems that could arise outside of regular working hours include a lack of access to drugs and specialist advice from the named persons: ensuring contact numbers are available for the NVS and NACWOs is vital. Monitoring during recovery periods must be given particular attention.

Users are provided with the SOP and an evaluation form. Permission may be given on a one-off basis, or for a maximum period of a year. This process is working well.

[REDACTED] has written into some “severe” protocols that procedures may be performed only early in the week, to minimise the need for weekend monitoring. This is mainly for novice researchers rather than those with proven, reliable results.

Action:

[REDACTED] requested submissions for an SOP to be discussed at the next meeting.

8. Update on ASC Activities

A few AWERB hubs have decided to merge and others may split, a natural balance should be reached soon.

The ASC currently has two standing committees, the AWERB sub-group and licence review body.

The ASC has recently published its harm-benefit analysis review, which can be found on the gov.uk website. It is now looking into comparative regulation of experiments that use animals across a range of jurisdictions. Of particular interest is how other regulators manage compliance and self-reporting.

With Brexit looming, there is a need to avoid any stagnation of the process of increasing animal protection. However, it was thought that this was unlikely in the UK.

The process of importing and exporting animals continues to become more difficult, as another airline has withdrawn the service.

A call for invitations to be re-sent to industry establishments for the London AWERB Hub was issued. Currently the hub is very academia-centric.

9. Any Other Business

The ASC is developing the AWERB Knowledge Hub, an online forum for the sharing of information and discussion between Hubs and local AWERBs. The Beta launch of this is expected later this year.

The discussion of the overseas research SOP has been postponed to a later meeting.

Another “Celebrating the 3Rs” day is planned for next year, with the hope that more establishments will be involved. Anyone interested in speaking at the event should contact [REDACTED]

Possible items for discussion at the next meeting:

- Policy to prevent overbreeding.
- How to encourage publication of ‘negative’ results.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair will set up an online poll to establish a date in February for the next meeting.