



Working with animals in Biomedical Research University of Edinburgh

Processes for ensuring training and competency

The University of Edinburgh, in line with legal, scientific, and ethical requirements, is committed to ensuring that all researchers performing procedures with a scientific purpose on live animals are appropriately trained and continue to be assessed for ongoing competency throughout their research careers.

Responsibility for training lies within Bioresearch and Veterinary Services, led by the Named Training and Competency Officer (NTCO).

This document describes the detailed processes involved in training and assessment for regulated procedures.

The table below summarises these processes and responsibilities and also what is required for non-regulated work:

	Non-regulated work	Regulated work under ASPA (non-surgical – includes non-schedule 1 procedures)	Regulated work under ASPA (surgical)
Handling	Animal facility staff	Animal facility staff (part of Personal Licence training)	Animal facility staff (part of Personal Licence Training)
Procedural training	Appropriate trainer (usually within research group)	Designated trainer (contact NTCO)	Designated trainer (contact NTCO)
Training Record	In house training record (can be added to Tick@lab)	Training record tick@lab	Training record tick@lab
Schedule 1 Training	Animal facility staff Add to humane killing register	Animal facility staff Add to humane killing register	Animal facility staff Add to humane killing register
Assessment	Usually within research group, may use video	Designated assessors incl. NACWO, NTCO, facility staff, NVS*.	NVS
Reassessment frequency	Recommend every 3 years in line with regulated procedures	3 years	1 year initially 3 years following

*Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer (NACWO), Named Training and Competency Officer (NTCO) and Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS)



1. New researchers with previous experience

Researchers joining the Establishment with significant animal or procedural experience may not be required to undergo training in their areas of experience but will be assessed prior to being allowed to work independently. This ensures that all staff are working to the same standards and SOPs. All staff will be assessed for handling and schedule 1 as part of PIL training whether experienced or not.

2. Training and Competency for Regulated Procedures

In line with Home Office Guidance, training and competency is a two-step process. To be signed off as competent for a regulated procedure, all individuals require training (by a designated trainer) and assessment (by designated assessors including NACWO, NTCO, facility staff or NVS). Depending on an individual's experience & the complexity of the procedure, this process can take a variable amount of time.

3. Prior to training

- All new PIL holders should attend both facility and NVS inductions.
- It is expected that anyone undertaking a regulated procedure is signed off for a relevant schedule 1 method prior to undertaking any procedural skills. Where this is not possible, the individual must arrange for someone with schedule 1 competency to be available (out-of-hours work needs to be carefully considered in this situation).
- All handling and schedule 1 training is conducted by facility staff.

4. Training

- Training in a regulated procedure requires a PIL. Individuals should ensure they hold the correct category of licence to undertake the procedures (i.e PILAB or PILABF or PILABC) and the licence covers the species involved.
- An individual can only be trained in regulated procedures as part of an experiment; therefore an Experimental request form (ERF) is required for any training and should clearly state what training is required and who will be the trainer.
- Training can only be completed by those individuals who are designated as competent to train (Refer to trainers section).
- An individual remains under training until both the trainer and trainee are satisfied that the trainee is competent to conduct the procedure unsupervised. At this time, the trainer/trainee should notify the NTCO that the trainee is ready for assessment of skills.



- It is recommended that individuals undertake cadaver training (where appropriate), prior to undertaking any procedures on live animals. An NVS can request to observe cadaver training of surgical procedures prior to live experiments being conducted where an individual is new to surgical procedures or the Establishment.
- Individuals can request refresher training for any procedures prior to reassessment of skills as required.

5. Assessments

- Assessments are arranged by the NTCO/NVS team.
- All assessments are completed by either a designated assessor, usually the NACWO, the NTCO or the NVS, as part of an experiment.
- Reasonable notification should be given as to the date required for assessment (minimum of 5 working days). Every endeavour will be made to arrange assessment for the next time the trainee will perform the procedure. If this is not possible, a discussion will be had with the trainee/trainer to arrange a suitable time and avoid delay in completion of studies.
- Assessment of skills is required for anyone joining the Establishment with previous experience without further training. It is the PPL holder's responsibility to ensure these individuals are familiar with the facility requirements and methodologies used by the research group.

6. Trainers

- For consistency of training across the facilities, each facility has experienced staff who are designated as trainers for common procedures (e.g administration of substances, schedule 1, non-schedule 1, blood sampling). They attend frequent training meetings to ensure skills and advice is consistent to all those involved with research and follow SOPs/DOPs to ensure all individuals are trained to the same standards.
- Any researcher wishing to train needs to:
 - a) be signed off as competent to perform the procedure themselves (and have up-to-date records)
 - b) review the corresponding SOP/DOPS for the procedure or write a new SOP/DOPS for the procedure
 - c) be observed training. A discussion will be held with the NTCO/NVS team as to the best course of action to observe training for both the trainee and trainer.



7. Competencies

- Unless an earlier reassessment is requested by the assessor at the time of feedback, all procedures require reassessment in the following time-frame:
 - a) All non-surgical procedures are reassessed every 3 years.
 - b) All surgical procedures are reassessed within 1 year of the initial assessment and every 3 years following a successful 1 year review. This initial 1 year period allows research teams to implement any changes in asepsis or procedure requested by the NVS.
- All competencies are recorded in electronic form (i.e in Tick@lab) by the NTCO upon receipt of the assessment sheet & any correspondence from the assessor.
- All PIL holders are responsible for ensuring their training record is up-to-date and request any reassessment of skills required.
- On occasion, competencies may need to be reviewed prior to the reassessment date if concerns are reported with animal welfare which can be improved with additional training in practical skills (e.g surgical complications, wound dehiscence).