Pedagogical Merit Review (PMR) Expectations for Live-Animal Teaching Activities

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) and the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) have an established agreement regarding pedagogical merit review (PMR) requirements for veterinary technology educational programs. This document clarifies current expectations to support a consistent understanding across Canada and to help programs meet CVMA and CCAC standards.

Under the current agreement between the CVMA and CCAC, live-animal teaching activities identified on the CVMA Essential Skills List do not require a full pedagogical merit review. These activities are recognized as necessary components of accredited veterinary technology education and are therefore exempt from the standard PMR requirement.

As discussions about animal use in education continue and expectations for transparency and accountability evolve, programs are encouraged to consider submitting activities associated with CVMA-required live-animal skills through the CCAC Expedited Pedagogical Merit Review process. Although expedited review is not currently required for accreditation purposes, it provides documented evidence of an independent assessment of the educational necessity of the activity.

Expedited PMR may be particularly helpful in jurisdictions where Animal Care Committees (ACCs) are requesting clearer justification for live-animal teaching, or where public scrutiny of animal use in education is increasing. The expedited process is streamlined, quick to complete, requires only one reviewer, and focuses on assessing replacement alternatives. It can therefore help programs demonstrate due diligence.

Live-animal teaching activities that fall outside the scope of the CVMA Essential Skills List are not covered by this exemption. A full pedagogical merit review must be completed in accordance with CCAC requirements before these activities are undertaken.

Summary of Expectations

Activities associated with CVMA Essential Skills List competencies

- Full pedagogical merit review is not required under the current CVMA–CCAC agreement.
- Programs are encouraged to utilize the CCAC Expedited Pedagogical Merit Review process.
- Documenting an independent review can help demonstrate due diligence and educational justification if questions arise about animal use in teaching.
- Programs that adopt expedited PMR now may be better prepared if CCAC requirements evolve toward requiring PMR for all live-animal teaching activities.

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Activities not included on the CVMA Essential Skills List

- Must undergo a full pedagogical merit review in accordance with CCAC requirements.
- Programs should obtain PMR approval before ACC review and before implementing the activity.
- Clear documentation of PMR decisions can support both CCAC site visits and CVMA accreditation reviews.

The CVMA and CCAC recognize that public expectations around the use of animals in teaching and training continue to evolve. Programs that voluntarily complete expedited reviews for required live-animal skills may be better positioned to demonstrate that educational activities have been independently evaluated and that alternatives have been considered where appropriate.

The CCAC and CVMA Veterinary Technologist Program Accreditation Committee are currently discussing whether expedited PMR may become a future requirement associated with the Essential Skills List. No decisions have been made. Any proposed changes would involve partner consultation and advance notice to all accredited programs. Programs would receive clear guidance, timelines, and templates before any new requirements are implemented.

Additional guidance will be provided as discussions between the CVMA and CCAC continue. Programs with questions regarding the applicability of pedagogical merit review requirements to specific activities are encouraged to consult with their institutional animal care committee and the CCAC.

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