



UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

Research Integrity Office

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

Health Surveillance and Risk Assessment Form for Vertebrate Animal Exposure (a.k.a. Health Screening Questionnaire)

Frequently Asked Questions

Contact: IACUC@uncw.edu

In June 2018, the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) added an occupational health screening requirement to UNCW's animal care and use program. The UNCW IACUC's position on the new requirement is that the conduct of research with vertebrate animals is a privilege, and it is important for UNCW to hold its animal researchers to a standard other than those held by other industries that interact with animals. Best practices identified by various regulatory and advisory organizations such as OLAW and the National Research Council include monitoring and protection of health for those who work in animal laboratories or field settings where the daily care of, or frequent and/or independent contact with, animals exists.

What is the new requirement?

OLAW has required us to create a process to obtain medical clearance from a healthcare professional for each individual listed on an IACUC protocol. This is to identify any occupational health issues that may exist for individuals exposed to research animals. To support this new requirement, we have developed a health screening questionnaire and have partnered with our Environmental Health and Safety department (EH&S) to work out a process. The form and process are consistent with what other campuses in the UNC system use for the same requirement.

Are all animal use activities subject to this requirement?

Yes. All animal research and educational activities that require approval by the IACUC are subject to this new requirement. There are no exclusions for certain types of activities, such as netting fish or other field work, and there are no exclusions for certain species.

Who is subject to this new requirement?

All individuals listed in the research team member section of a **new or replacement** protocol (Part B.1.) are required to complete the health screening evaluation. If the PI needs to add new personnel to a study after receiving IACUC approval, the PI must ensure that new personnel meet this requirement (along with the usual required online training) prior to submitting the individual's name to the IACUC to request approval to amend the study.

How often do animal researchers have to be evaluated?

The IACUC does not require recertification of evaluation at this time, unless the researcher experiences a change in his or her health, or unless the researcher plans to have contact with a species that was not indicated on the original evaluation.

Will each new/replacement protocol require a health assessment, or can a PI list all planned activities and animals to be used that would cover them indefinitely?

A PI may list all planned activities and all types of animals on one questionnaire for evaluation, and that one Medical Provider Clearance Form could potentially cover the PI indefinitely for all protocols, if there are no changes in the researcher's health and no changes in the types of animals used.

When do we have to submit our Healthcare Provider Clearance Forms?

The IACUC will expect PIs to meet the health screening requirement prior to receiving IACUC approval on **new and replacement** protocols beginning in the Spring 2019 semester. Researchers do not have to meet this requirement until they need to submit a **new or replacement** protocol.

Does this apply to current protocols?

If a PI already has approval from the IACUC to conduct research or educational activities using live, vertebrate animals, the PI and members of the research team who were listed on the original approved protocol do not have to undergo the health screening until the protocol has to be replaced.

What if the medical provider makes a recommendation that I or a member of my research team thinks is unreasonable? Do we have to comply with the medical provider's recommendation?

No. The medical provider may make recommendations based upon his or her professional opinion, but it is up to the PI and the research team member to determine what is needed to adequately protect the researcher's health.

Do students have to undergo a health screening too?

Possibly. If a student is listed on an IACUC protocol form as a member of a research team, then the student is subject to the requirement. If a student is in a class that operates under an IACUC protocol for animal observation and experimentation, but the student is not responsible for the daily care of the animals, has only infrequent contact with the animals, and uses the animals under the supervision of the person(s) listed as investigators on the IACUC protocol form, the student should not be listed on the IACUC protocol form as a member of the research team and thus would not be subject to the health screening requirement.

Where can students go to be evaluated?

Students may go to the Abrons Student Health Center for this evaluation. Health center leadership has agreed to provide this evaluation at no charge to students. Students need to schedule an appointment

with the health center, complete the risk assessment form, and bring it with them to meet with a healthcare professional, who will review the information on the form with the student.

Will the Abrons Student Health Center provide this evaluation for graduate students and undergraduate students?

Yes.

When is the best time for a student to go to the Abrons Health Center for this evaluation?

One of our researchers suggested that you might want to instruct students to schedule the appointment first-thing in the morning to avoid delays in getting seen by medical staff. The appointment should take only about 20 minutes, but some students have waited up to 40 minutes before seeing medical staff.

What does the student do after meeting with the physician at the health center?

The student should submit a copy of the Healthcare Provider Clearance Form (just page 3 of the questionnaire) to the principal investigator (PI) of the animal research study. If the student is a member of multiple research teams, the Medical Provider Clearance form can cover multiple studies.

The student should also discuss any health-related concerns noted on the Medical Provider Clearance Form with the PI to see if any additional protective gear or accommodations are needed to ensure the health of the student. Please note that the medical provider may make recommendation based on his/her professional opinion, but the PI and research team member have the discretion to decide what actions are needed, if any, to adequately protect the researcher's health.

What does the PI do with the Medical Provider Clearance Forms?

The PI should retain the Medical Provider Clearance Forms for all research team members in a secure location and make a note of the date clearance was provided. The PI must provide the date of the health evaluation on any new or replacement protocol submitted for approval to the IACUC. The PI must also send a copy of the Medical Provider Clearance Form to Deb Tew in the UNCW Environmental Health and Safety Department (EH&S) at tewdg@uncw.edu or Campus Box 5974.

Who pays for faculty/staff evaluations?

The Research Integrity Office (RIO) has identified funds to pay for faculty and staff health screening evaluations. Departments will not be responsible for this expense. If faculty/staff use Medac Corporate Health to conduct their evaluations, they can instruct Medac to directly bill the purchase order held by RIO (for FY 18-19 PO #123389). If faculty/staff prefer to use their own personal physicians to conduct this evaluation, we ask that they first check to make sure that the university will not have to pay more than what it would be charged by Medac for the service. After confirming this, faculty/staff must pay out-of-pocket for the evaluation and submit a receipt to RIO for reimbursement.

What are the fees for this evaluation at Medac?

- \$15 for the initial health screening service if no other evaluation is required.
- \$70 for a “Fit for Duty” evaluation if they identify conditions of concern during the screening. (CORRECTION: the \$70 fee is *in addition to* the \$15 fee for the initial evaluation.)
- \$35 for a pulmonary function test, if one is required for respirator use. This is also in addition to the above fees.

Do we have to go to Medac personally, or can we submit our questionnaires to Medac without a visit?

You can submit the forms to Medac in a variety of ways. A personal visit is not necessary.

- **Send form by email to:** corporatehealth@medachealth.com with the subject line, “UNCW Health Assessment for Animal Research” (one of our researchers said this was a very efficient way to obtain medical clearance).
- **Send form by fax to:** 910-791-5359
- **Schedule an appointment at the Corporate Health office at:** 910-452-7000
- **Send form by mail or drop off in person to:** Medac Corporate Health, 4402 Shipyard Blvd, Wilmington NC 28403 (if personally visiting, this is *next door* to the urgent care office)

What can I expect when I contact Medac for this evaluation?

Medac may ask you to complete some additional forms if it is your first visit to Medac. A doctor will review the information along with your risk assessment form. If you visit in person, you will probably not meet with a physician. One of our researchers reported that it only took about 20 minutes total when he visited the office.

Does the IACUC need to see the entire health screening questionnaire, or just the medical provider clearance form?

Please note that in the interest of protecting health information, *no one should send the completed health questionnaire to the IACUC*. Personnel should submit page 3 only (the Healthcare Provider Clearance Form) to the PI of the study, who then sends a copy to EH&S. Please encourage personnel to follow instructions at the bottom of pages 2 and 3 of the form.

Questions?

Contact the IACUC at iacuc@uncw.edu

Or visit the UNCW Animal Research (IACUC) website at: <https://uncw.edu/sparc/integrity/iacuc>