

## **Full details of the proposed research project**

Looking into the use of animals in scientific research: An analysis of non-technical summaries of project applications involving animal use.

### **Host**

Dr Renelle Mcglacken, Research Fellow, School of Sociology and Social Policy, Faculty of Social Science.

### **Description of the proposed project**

This interdisciplinary project concerns the use of animals in scientific research. The project will add value to, and benefit from, existing Wellcome funded work on the social and ethical dimensions of animal research.

In the UK, the law requires that all research project applications intending to use animals must include a non-technical summary (NTS). This summary includes the project's objectives, benefits, predicted harms, and type and number of animals used. The NTS is the only publicly available part of project applications involving animal use and is thus intended to be accessible to lay audiences.

Non-technical summaries are, as the [European Animal Research Association](#) describe, 'widely seen as a positive development in improving transparency on animal research to the public' and their publication is viewed by the [Home Office](#) as helping 'put the debate on the use of animals in research and testing on a more informed footing'. Given the significance placed on improving openness around animal research since the [2014 Concordat of Openness on Animal Research](#) and the broader science-society contract upon which acceptable scientific use of animals is said to rest (Davies et al. 2020, McGlacken and Hobson-West 2022), the performance of non-technical summaries is thus important to examine.

The function of this proposed project is to provide a content analysis of the existing non-technical summaries. The objective is to provide a novel empirical assessment of what kinds of information they contain. Ultimately, the research aim is to gain insights into whether and how these summaries address the wider openness agenda, help to foster meaningful science-society relations, and whether they fit with stakeholder expectations.

The student will begin the project by reviewing published and grey literature related to the NTS. Detailed guidance will be provided about how best to carry out this task. A sampling criteria for analysis of the [2020 NTS document](#) (freely available to download) will then be decided upon. The aim is to ensure that the student has some input into the project design. The student will then undertake a qualitative content analysis of the sample of NTS, with the option to use qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) to do so, and finally write up their findings into a short report. Finally, the student will be given the opportunity to present their work to a small, supportive academic group, such as the Centre for Applied Bioethics (spanning the School of Biosciences and School of Veterinary Medicine and Sciences), or the Animal Research Nexus team (of which the supervisor and Co-I is a part).

This project would suit a full time student.

### **What overall scientific training will the student receive during the project?**

The student will gain experience of academic research and social scientific methods, including research design, qualitative analysis, and academic writing. They will receive guidance from Dr McGlacken throughout on reviewing literature, defining research

questions, creating a sample, performing a content analysis, using QDAS if desired, and writing. The student will also benefit from input from Professor Pru Hobson-West who has significant experience in supervising veterinary and natural science students on projects exploring social aspects of science and medicine. This project offers a student the opportunity for interdisciplinary work through a sociologically oriented analysis of current scientific policy and practice. With the issue of animal research drawing attention across disciplines and domains, research on the function of NTS will enable the student to engage with a range of perspectives and approaches to the topic. By encouraging engagement with multiple socio-ethical positions, such interdisciplinarity can help with cultivating reflexive skills, of use to students within and beyond the university environment.

### **A personal statement from Renelle**

"I am an Early Career Scholar and my current research is part of the Wellcome Trust funded programme: The Animal Research Network. This programme looks at the societal dimensions of animal research, with a particular focus on science-society relations. I am particularly interested in how animal research is societally legitimised and one key aspect of this societal negotiation is fostering openness around the practice, an objective with much significance in the current climate.

"My motivation for applying for this hosting opportunity is three-fold. First, I am keen to contribute to opportunities for students to reflect on the wider social issues that impact on science and medicine. Second, I would like to gain experience of student supervision and am attracted by this scholarship's aim to help students from varied backgrounds develop their learning and research skills in interdisciplinary ways. Finally, this project presents a possibility to develop preliminary data for future grant applications which could support my own research career, but also create potential new opportunities for other Masters or PhD studentships."

### **Is there anyone else who will be involved in the supervision of the student for this project?**

Professor Pru Hobson-West will provide assistance in supervising this student project. Pru Hobson-West is Professor of Science, Medicine and Society based in the School of Sociology and Social Policy. She also holds an Honorary role in the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science and has significant experience of this kind of interdisciplinary supervision (at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels). Pru is Nottingham PI for the Wellcome Trust project, the Animal Research Nexus. She also currently holds an ESRC Collaborative Studentship grant, on the topic of animal research, and a Wellcome Prime Scholarship. Pru is also the academic lead for the University of Nottingham Wellcome Academy, designed to improve engagement with this key funder.