

# swissuniversities

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## STAAR mandate

### Background:

Animal research is a matter of great public concern. Most people consider animal research as a necessary part of Switzerland's efforts to maintain its leading role in research and innovation. At the same time, they support Switzerland's strict legislation to protect the dignity and welfare of animals. To sustain and further promote public trust in animal research in Switzerland, swissuniversities invites institutions and organisations involved with animal research to join STAAR – the Swiss Transparency Agreement on Animal Research.

By joining STAAR, organisations commit to openness and dialogue with the public.

Based on a proposal by the STAAR working group, the swissuniversities Chamber of universities decided at its meeting on 11.11.2021 to establish STAAR as commission of the Chamber of universities.

This mandate forms the basis for STAAR.

### Goals and tasks:

Within the framework of open science, STAAR aims to improve communication and transparency regarding the use of animals in research. STAAR intends to anchor communication on animal experimentation in current practice and to enhance and extend the existing coordination and networking at the national level.

In comparison with existing structures and bodies, STAAR brings together at a national level all actors in the field of research with animals. STAAR focuses specifically on an improvement of the communication in the field of animal research and the related efforts and commits its members to report on their progress toward greater transparency and to identify gaps and setbacks in this process.

In particular, it takes on the following tasks:

- Connecting the responsible researchers and communication officers in the member organisations for a better transparency on animal research.
- Collecting and disseminating best practices in communication on animal research within the member organisations.
- Maintaining a website that informs local and national political actors, potential partners, the media and the wide public on the STAAR initiative.
- Providing expertise and support to swissuniversities and its bodies (for example, by contributing to the drafting of statements on behalf of the swissuniversities Board).
- Annual reporting on progress regarding transparency in animal experimentation.

**Organisation and functioning:**

- Every Swiss organisation (public or private) conducting, funding or supporting research involving animals is invited to become a signatory of STAAR.
- Two bodies<sup>1</sup> plan and execute the activities of STAAR. STAAR is structured as follows:
  - The plenary assembly composed of the representatives of all members of STAAR. The plenary assembly:
    - defines the strategy of STAAR, especially its main activities,
    - appoints the working group of STAAR, including its president,
    - decides, at the request of the working group, the admission of new members,
    - submits, by the end of February each year, its work programme to the chamber of Universities for approval,
    - approves the standards derived from the commitments when they are updated,
    - identifies the lead organisation. One member organisation takes the lead for a period of 1 year. This organisation fosters STAAR at the national level for the corresponding period. The representative of the lead organisation chairs the plenary assembly.
  - A working group composed of maximum 12 persons appointed by the plenary assembly is responsible for the management of STAAR. The members of the working group are ideally people who can represent more than their own organisation, such as an existing group, a sector or a professional category. The working group:
    - proposes to the plenary assembly the activities to be carried out and implements the tasks listed above,
    - reports to the plenary assembly,
    - prepares the agenda for the meetings of the assembly,
    - prepares the election of the members of the working group,
    - contributes to the preparation of motions and statements for the attention of the board of swissuniversities,
    - updates the standards on a regular basis, based on the development of STAAR.
- Each signatory to STAAR names a representative of senior management with executive power (e.g. vice rector of research) and with knowledge of the domain of research involving animals. The appointed representative sits in the plenary assembly.
- A representative of the General Secretariat of swissuniversities attends the meetings of STAAR. STAAR can invite further guests to its meetings.
- The Chamber of universities of swissuniversities acts as reference organ. The chamber is responsible for the mandate of STAAR.
- The resignation of a member of STAAR is possible upon written notification with view to the next meeting of the Plenary Assembly.
- In order to optimally use or create synergies, a close exchange regarding communication on animal research between STAAR, SAFN and all relevant organizations is pursued.

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<sup>1</sup> If there are only a few members of STAAR ( $\leq 12$ ), 1 body, the general assembly with president and vice-president, may be sufficient.

**Communication:**

- swissuniversities manages a webpage on STAAR, which informs local and national political actors, potential partners, the media and the wide public.
- Communication of STAAR to the outside, including the publication of documents of a purely informative nature, is carried out in consultation with all members of the working group STAAR and in agreement with the swissuniversities communication department.
- All statements of STAAR have to be adopted by the board of swissuniversities.
- The decisions of STAAR have the character of recommendations for the member organisations.

**Resources:**

- STAAR does not charge fees to its members, but all organisations that are members of STAAR provide in-kind contributions. The in-kind contributions are defined *a priori* and all member organisations declare them explicitly.
- The representatives of the member organisations are mandated by their organisations. Working hours and expenses are covered by the respective employers.
- The exchange of information with SAFN and the hosting of the website is ensured by the research and development division of swissuniversities.
- Furthermore, the division research and development of swissuniversities prepares the invitations for the meetings of the STAAR bodies, is responsible for the minutes of those meetings and composes the annual report. All other documents (for example further reports, factsheets), tools and more, are created by the member organisations as part of their in-kind contributions.

**Commitments and standards:**

The STAAR signatories agree to be transparent about their use of animals in research by pursuing four main commitments. These four commitments represent the key objectives that the signatories commit to achieve and develop. They are listed in Appendix 1.

A list of objectives (Appendix 2) derived from the four commitments is defined each year.

These objectives constitute the concrete actions that the signatories commit to implement when joining STAAR. This document is foreseen to evolve over time. Its content will be reviewed each year and modified when appropriate. It has to be approved by the plenary assembly.