

# Zoological Society of London (ZSL) Zoos and Engagement (Z&E) Directorate Research Policy

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## Introduction

This policy covers all research conducted by ZSL staff, volunteers and external researchers using resources from or within the ZSL Zoos and Engagement (Z&E) Directorate. The applicant must agree to be bound by the terms and conditions of this Research Policy. Applications to conduct research should be made using the ZSL Project Application Form (PAF). All research projects must be approved before initiation. For all Z&E research related enquiries please contact the Zoo Research Officer (ZRO) at [ZDresearch@zsl.org](mailto:ZDresearch@zsl.org)

### Definition of terms

Research covered by the 'Z&E Research Policy' includes work involving any resources contained within or provided by ZSL's two zoos; and involving any of the functions and departments of the Z&E directorate or Wildlife Health Services (WHS) department.

'Resources' include the animals and plants contained within our zoos, the exhibits at ZSL's zoos, their associated support systems and monitoring equipment, biological samples, as well as records and staff time.

The 'researcher' is the person conducting the research.

## Criteria for acceptance of research proposals

### Relevance to ZSL's Vision and Purpose

**ZSL Vision:** A world where wildlife thrives

**ZSL Purpose:** To inspire, inform and empower people to stop wild animals going extinct

**ZSL Priorities:** Wildlife & People, Wildlife Health and Wildlife Back from the Brink.

ZSL conducts, facilitates and encourages scientific research that builds up a body of knowledge to assist in advancing the ZSL Vision and Purpose. The animals in ZSL's two zoos present a unique opportunity to research species that are challenging or impossible to study in the wild and research activities may include behaviour observations, use of biological samples, animal records, evaluation of husbandry practice and the development or validation of techniques. Application of this information can be in the wild or captive setting but should always further the ZSL mission.

Priority will be given to research relevant to the ZSL Strategy (see ZSL website) and with the potential for positive impact on our activities, either through improved animal management or through the promotion of conservation action. Specific topics of current interest to the Z&E Directorate can be obtained from the ZSL ZRO.

Research topics identified as being valuable by relevant bodies in the zoological and conservation community are particularly encouraged e.g. European Association of Zoos and Aquariums (EAZA), British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA), European Association of Zoo and Wildlife Veterinarians (EAZVV), European Union of Aquarium Curators (EUAC), IUCN, Natural England etc.

## Ethical review

ZSL is committed to maintaining the highest ethical standards in the conduct of research. In accordance with the Zoo Licensing Act 1981, all research must be assessed and approved before work begins to ensure scientific validity, due ethical consideration, guaranteed animal welfare and compliance with relevant UK and EU legal requirements.

Approval is not normally given to research requiring Home Office licencing for any of its components.

Research having a direct impact on living animals will be assessed by the ZSL Ethics Committee (EC) as part of the approval process, unless the activity is considered to be part of normal husbandry management or veterinary investigation procedures. For projects falling into the former category, the applicant will need to complete the ZSL Ethical Review Form (animal impacts) as part of the application process.

Any research involving human participants will need to be assessed by an official ethics committee associated with a partner institution (academic or professional institution). For these projects, the applicant will need to provide the ZRO with written confirmation that the project has undergone ethical review and received authorisation by the partner association. This also applies to any studies regarding schools or children (under 18); these studies will need to be assessed by the partnered ethics committee and must obtain the appropriate written consent from schools/parents, before proceeding in research.

For all research projects that receive ethical approval by the Ethics Committee, an Ethical Review Feedback form will be required after the completion of the project. This will be sent to the lead researcher when the research completion date has been reached and must be completed and returned to the Secretary of the Ethics Committee within two weeks of receipt.

Data from research involving human participants must be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679).

## Application procedure

### Submission mechanism

Applicants should contact [ZDresearch@zsl.org](mailto:ZDresearch@zsl.org) for a Project Application Form (PAF). This must be completed and returned to the ZRO for review. Approval for the project must be received before data collection is initiated. If the applicant intends to conduct interviews or questionnaires, the questions need to be submitted with the application prior to approval.

### Review process

Research proposals will be reviewed by the ZRO and other relevant staff (e.g. relevant taxonomic curator, team leaders, Wildlife Health Services staff). Relevance to ZSL's priority research areas, ethical impacts, scientific validity and the practical implications for staff and animals are taken into consideration for authorisation.

ZSL aims to assess applications in three to four weeks and will either accept, reject or request amendments and resubmission. As this time period is not guaranteed applicants are encouraged to apply well in advance of the anticipated start date, with a minimum of four weeks being advisable. If

ethical approval is required, an additional two weeks may be required. Researchers will be notified by email as to the outcome of their application.

ZSL reserves the right to reject a project proposal or biological sample request.

## Project implementation

### Access to ZSL zoo sites (London and Whipsnade)

Once authorisation has been given external researchers carrying out a project on-site should join ZSL as a Student or Graduate Fellow via the ZSL website [membership/fellowship](#). This enables free entry to the public areas of both zoo sites during visitor opening hours, use of the library and discounts in the gift shop and canteen. The Fellowship card should be carried at all times when on ZSL premises.

Access beyond normal opening hours or to non-public areas of the zoo is not normally considered. If required, this must be stated in the research proposal. Prior approval from ZSL ZRO and the ZSL Health & Safety Team must be received before access during those times or to restricted areas can take place. Approval of this atypical access would be recognised through provision of a written confirmation document as well as a specific access pass. The researcher must comply with all stipulated conditions, which may involve accompaniment by a member of staff.

Whilst on ZSL sites at London Zoo and Whipsnade Zoo researchers are expected to follow the ZSL Z&E Code of Conduct for on-site researchers (see ZSL website). A copy will be sent to the researcher who must acknowledge this has been read by returning a signed version of the form.

### Costs

Researchers are required to cover any costs generated by their approved projects. For biological samples this includes the supply of consumables (e.g. sample pots), organisation of pick up (transport/courier/post) and any permits or additional equipment needed.

### Academic supervision

Students are expected to develop their research proposal in agreement with their academic supervisor and if the project is approved, should seek academic advice from their supervisor throughout the study to ensure a successful outcome.

ZSL staff have no academic supervisory responsibility unless agreed otherwise, in which case all involved parties will decide the level of supervisory input before the project starts. However, researchers will be given a named 'zoo contact' to be a liaison point and provide pertinent information e.g. husbandry routine, animal identification etc.

### Biological samples

Biological samples can only be supplied opportunistically, and it cannot be guaranteed that samples will become available during a given period of time.

It is the responsibility of the researcher(s) to ensure that the appropriate health and safety protocols are followed during handling and transport of samples. The researcher must adhere to legal protocols including CITES regulations and the Nagoya protocol where samples are to be exported from the UK.

After project completion all samples should be destroyed in accordance with the standard procedures for the disposal of biological samples (see The Animal By-Products Regulations 2005) or returned to ZSL if instructed to do so.

### Post-approval changes to projects

Any changes made to the project after the research has been approved need to be reported to and approved by the ZRO and, if relevant, the Ethical Review Committee before the changes are put into practice.

### Termination of projects

ZSL reserves the right to postpone or terminate a research project in cases of management issues (e.g. where animals need to be moved or where ZSL is dissatisfied with the researcher's conduct) or for health and safety reasons (e.g. Foot and Mouth or Avian Influenza precautions).

The researcher must inform the ZRO immediately if it becomes clear that, for any reason, they are unable to complete the project.

### Provision of results to ZSL

The researcher must provide an electronic copy of their complete research to the ZRO. Reports may be in the form of a dissertation, published paper or written specifically for ZSL. For projects lasting longer than twelve months, an annual progress report must be provided. All raw data, and copies of all film footage, photographs or sound recordings, must be given to the ZRO (in digital format where possible) within one month of study completion. Failure to provide reports and other materials from studies may result in rejection of future applications from the institution in question.

## Safety and insurance

Researchers are covered by ZSL's Public Liability insurance when in public areas of the zoos.

If ZSL approval is given for access to specified non-public areas (e.g. kitchens, or animal service areas), the associated ZSL Health and Safety induction and Risk Assessments must be conducted by relevant ZSL staff and stored with records on the animal section. ZSL approval is required for site access to public areas before public opening time but after staff working hours (8-10am). In both situations the researcher must adhere to the ZSL Z&E Code of Conduct for on-site researchers (see below) give prior notification of visits to their in-zoo contact and adhere to any stipulations made by staff. Note that access may not always be possible depending on staff availability and on-site researchers should always carry their fellowship pass for identification.

Access to ZSL sites outside of animal staff working hours will not be permitted.

Researchers are not eligible to undertake any keeping duties or handle tools or machines in the zoos (unless these duties form part of their employment at ZSL). This includes carrying heavy items such as buckets, chopping food and climbing ladders. If any such activities are necessary for the completion of a project, an appropriate Risk Assessment must be completed with ZSL staff in conjunction with the academic institution if relevant. ZSL staff must authorise deployment and supervise placement of research resources (cameras etc.)

Whilst on ZSL premises the researcher must always comply with the relevant ZSL Z&E Code of Conduct for on-site researchers (see [Access to ZSL sites](#)) which includes information on what to do in

an emergency. Further information on site specific emergency procedures, welfare facilities and any works activities that are being undertaken can be obtained from the ZSL Health & Safety and Security teams.

## Intellectual property and related aspects

### Data ownership

All data collected must be available to ZSL without restriction. ZSL reserves the right to retain, analyse, copy and distribute data to interested parties at its discretion, unless other arrangements are discussed and agreed with ZSL before the project commences. ZSL will store all project details and final reports on the ZSL Projects Database (ZPD). Video footage obtained during the course of research should not be taken off the ZSL sites unless permission is gained from the ZRO.

All biological samples supplied by ZSL are, and will remain, its property. After project completion all samples must be destroyed or returned to ZSL (see Biological Samples).

Data and biological samples acquired from ZSL may not be used for any purpose other than those stated in the approved application documents, may not be passed on to third parties without prior notification and approval by ZSL and cannot be used for commercial purposes.

### Confidentiality

If the researcher has access to business sensitive or confidential information pertaining to ZSL this should not be shared outside of the organisation without prior consent from ZSL. This includes posting on social media sites. Breaches of confidentiality or security will be treated seriously and will lead to termination of the research project. If in any doubt about a matter of confidentiality, please consult the ZRO.

### Privacy

Researchers filming, photographing or audio recording animals as part of their project must avoid capturing images of, or audio from, members of the public and ZSL staff. If members of the public and/or staff can be clearly seen in an image (i.e. face is in clear view) then please contact the ZRO for advice before including in reports. If researchers wish to use images/audio of people in their study, consent must be obtained from the participants and ZSL will need to see the consent form prior to the project commencing.

### Publications

ZSL requires final approval on all documents submitted for publication. If the researcher is considering publication ZSL must be consulted and mutual agreement obtained regarding co-authorship and acknowledgements prior to submission. Regardless of whether or not ZSL staff are co-authors, publications presenting data derived from ZSL must be circulated to the ZRO at least three weeks before submission to allow for comments, in line with normal scientific practice. This applies to all types of publication, including abstracts for poster or oral presentations, and journal manuscripts.

All reports, including conference presentations, journal articles, posters etc., should acknowledge the support and/or contribution made by ZSL and electronic copies must be sent to the ZRO following publication.

ZSL staff making significant contributions to the research should be invited as co-authors on any relevant publications. A co-author is expected to have contributed substantially to at least one of the following aspects;

- a) Conception of idea and design of study, e.g. implementing detailed project ideas or hypotheses developed by ZSL staff; design of research methods or experimental setup; follow-up project of previous research designed by ZSL staff.
- b) Collection and/or analysis of the data, e.g. including substantial laboratory work or sustained behavioural observations, determining the appropriate data analysis techniques, performing the analyses and interpreting the results.
- c) Writing a major/essential proportion of the paper or contributing substantially to its review and intellectual content. This includes responsibility for accuracy and integrity of the research.

### Media coverage and publicity

The ZSL Press Office manages all relations with the media, including creating and distributing press releases and press materials, facilitating and accompanying media activity at both sites, and responding to media requests for information or comments. Non press-office staff and external researchers should not engage with or consult the media or make any public statement of any form relating to data/samples/film footage/photographs collected at ZSL without prior discussion with the press team. If approached by a member of the press the researcher should direct them to the Press Office [pressoffice@zsl.org](mailto:pressoffice@zsl.org) for the information they require. News and information regarding ZSL, images and interviews should only be given to the media with consent from the press team - ideally a minimum of two weeks in advance. This also includes any sharing of news and information on social media channels.

The content of project reports may be used by ZSL for non-scientific publicity purposes (e.g. Annual Report, members' magazine) without notifying the researcher.