

Safety Services

Guidance on Local Genetic Modification (GM) and Biohazards Safety Committees - remit

Introduction

1. Work with biological agents (defined as any micro-organism, cell culture, or human endoparasite which may cause any infection, allergy, toxicity or otherwise create a hazard to human health including any that have been genetically modified) takes place in many Schools and Faculties of the University. There is a formal reporting mechanism to the University's Health & Safety Committee through the University GM & Biohazard Advisory Group.
2. For Faculties undertaking work with biological agents, it is the responsibility of the appropriate Dean to ensure that there is a suitable number of local GM & Biohazards Safety Committees with defined areas of responsibility and that each committee is adequately represented so that it can competently advise about the health and safety implications of work taking place and work being proposed within its area of responsibility.
3. The term "local" can imply that groups carrying out such work are linked geographically, by the nature of the research, or through line management structures.
4. Each local GM and Biohazards Safety Committee should have enough members, with sufficient depth and range of knowledge and experience to be able to provide competent advice. Ideally it should be composed of:
 - a Chair
 - management representative
 - representatives of all persons having access to bio-containment facilities or who might otherwise be exposed to biological agents e.g. technical and ancillary staff, students or visiting workers
 - Union or employee representative
 - the local Biological Safety Officer and other local safety advisor(s)
 - relevant University Safety Co-ordinator and the University Biosafety Advisor
 - co-opted members to supplement internal expertise where necessary
5. All Deans and Heads of Schools (HOS) with staff and students working with biological agents have a responsibility to provide appropriate resources and to facilitate the operation of all relevant GM and Biohazards Safety Committees
6. It is not necessarily appropriate that all local committees operate in exactly the same way, as they will be dealing with significantly different numbers of projects and types of work. Subject to the approval of the University Biosafety Advisor, the scale and risk of work with biological agents may not require a separate,

stand-alone GM & Biohazards Safety Committee but its remit could form part of a general health and safety committee.

7. Unless otherwise indicated by a School or Faculty, the remit of the local GM & Biohazards Safety Committee should be as follows.

Remit of local GM and Biohazards Safety Committees

- To review in detail and in a systematic manner every proposal and on-going project involving Genetic Modification in the laboratories for which it is responsible;
- To review proposals involving work with biological agents in the laboratories for which it is responsible;
- To consider whether the proposed containment category agrees with that indicated in the relevant Guidance Notes, and confirm that the appropriate containment level is provided by the designated laboratories;
- To consider whether the training and experience of those involved in each proposal are sufficient to carry out the work safely, and advise the HOS (and, if appropriate, the Dean of Faculty or a nominated representative), and the University GM and Biohazards Advisory Group if further training needs are identified;
- To consider comments received from the Health & Safety Executive concerning previous proposals;
- To develop an inspection program for its area of responsibility and report on progress;
- To review, on a regular basis, general laboratory practice for work with biological agents with regards to safety;
- To liaise with the University GM and Biohazards Advisory Group in the event of any accident, near miss or other incident of concern related to GMOs and biological agents;
- To consider whether arrangements for health monitoring are adequate and convey any concerns to the University GM and Biohazards Advisory Group;
- At regular intervals to review whether the experimental procedures for work with GMOs and biological agents are being carried out, so far as is reasonably practicable, in a safe manner, in laboratories for which it is responsible;
- To advise on the drawing up of local rules (or other written safety arrangements) to cover work involving biological agents, taking into account University Procedures and Guidance, and including information on:
 - selection and training of laboratory staff and supervision of their work
 - disinfection and disposal procedures for potentially infectious waste
 - guidance for ancillary and maintenance staff, contractors and visitors
 - maintenance and test procedures for ventilation systems, high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters, microbiological safety cabinets, and other safety equipment
 - health surveillance and immunisation matters
 - duties of the BSO;

- To ensure that the Dean, Head of School or other nominated representative receives a copy of the minutes;
- To provide all members with copies of committee papers in a timely manner;
- To inform the University Biosafety Advisor when a notifiable project has ceased at the University and to make arrangements to ensure that all samples are removed or disposed of and that relevant safety related documents are archived including the original risk assessments and any amendments;
- To maintain a current list of all projects involving biological agents;
- To send representatives to the University GM and Biohazards Advisory Group meetings.

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Lead contact:	University BioSafety Advisor, Dr P Seechurn