

University of Tasmania Institutional Biosafety Committee

Terms of Reference



Date

Version 2.2

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Overview

The Institutional Biosafety Committee is the University's primary body responsible for ensuring all practices involving gene technology, biosecurity-regulated materials and biologically-hazardous materials are conducted in accordance with legislation, Australian Standards (including AS2243.3 Safety in Laboratories – Microbiological Safety and Containment), codes of practice, and licencing requirements, and is established to comply with the guidelines published in accordance with Section 98 of the *Gene Technology Act 2000* (Cth).

The Committee will provide advice and oversight of relevant dealings and future opportunities, including collaborative projects with external organisations, and will consider the ethical aspects of proposals and applications submitted for review. The Committee will provide recommendations to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) regarding development and implementation of relevant University policies and procedures.

Relationship with Other Committees

- The Institutional Biosafety Committee is a sub-committee of the University Research Committee.
- The Biologicals Users Group is a sub-committee of the Institutional Biosafety Committee.

Membership

a. Committee Composition

The membership is to be comprised of the following members, who shall be approved by the Chair or Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research):

- A Chair who is the nominee of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research). The Chair would ordinarily be an employee of the University at an appropriate level to facilitate effective operations of the Committee.
- A representative of Safety and Wellbeing.
- A representative of Infrastructure Services and Development.
- At least one External Member to exercise unfettered and independent judgement in relation to proposed dealings. This member must have no ongoing, substantive association with the University.
- At least six Expert Members with relevant experience in a field such as molecular biology, microbiology, genetics, virology, immunology, oncology, biochemistry, epidemiology, plant biotechnology or biocontainment/biosafety engineering. These members shall represent the variety of disciplines at the

University which undertake research with gene technology and regulated and/or hazardous biological materials.

All Members shall be appropriately indemnified by the University to fulfil their Committee responsibilities.

b. Ex Officio members

The Biosafety and Biosecurity Officer is considered an Ex Officio member of the Committee, and shall oversee administration of the Committee.

c. Term of Membership

Members are normally appointed for a term of three years.

d. Chair Responsibilities

- The Chair of the Institutional Biosafety Committee shall convene meetings of the Committee and provide leadership and direction to the conduct of the business of the Committee.
- The Chair will work to support and facilitate the University's strategic plan for research, focussing on dealings with biological materials.
- The Chair will facilitate reporting to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research), and University Research Committee as required.
- The Chair will lead and manage updates to the Terms of Reference.

e. Member Responsibilities

- Members shall provide representation and advocacy for the interests of University researchers conducting regulated dealings, or dealings with unregulated biologically-hazardous materials, and balance this advocacy with the interests of the University as a whole.
- Members shall review and provide advice on proposed dealings that fall within the area(s) of their expertise, and provide input on all proposals and applications put forward to the Committee.
- Members shall disseminate relevant information, such as legislative, policy or procedural changes to University staff and students who may be affected by such changes.

Communication

All communications, including applications and submissions, relating to the Committee shall be directed to the Biosafety and Biosecurity Officer.

Functions

General Functions

- The Committee shall be a proactive and approachable group for strategy development and operational advice regarding the safe, compliant and appropriate use of biologically-hazardous materials and materials regulated by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (Cth), the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (Cth), the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment (Tas), and other relevant legislative bodies.
- The Committee shall review, evaluate and endorse applications to work with gene technology and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) without attracting liability for damages in the course of providing this advice. This includes provision of relevant guidance to assist with the development of protocols and

risk assessments for work involving these materials and/or organisms which may be classified in a risk group category as defined by Australian Standard AS2243.3.

- The Committee shall contribute to the development of University policies, procedures and guidelines as required.
- The Committee shall maintain a watching brief on broader contextual factors which may impact on the operations of biological containment facilities at the University. This includes visibility of, and involvement in Transformation Projects or major capital campus infrastructure decisions involving new research spaces which may require certification and/or accreditation. The Committee may provide recommendations to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) regarding the suitability and feasibility of capital infrastructure projects.
- The Committee shall assign a delegate or delegates to conduct an annual compliance audit of certified biological containment facilities at the University.
- The Committee shall prepare and endorse an annual report to the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator concerning dealings with GMOs and gene technology.
- The Committee shall consult and prepare submissions in response to calls for comment or reviews of relevant legislation, regulations and codes of practice on behalf of the University.

Specific Deliverables for 2021

During 2021, the Committee aims to achieve the following deliverables:

- Develop training materials to provide relevant information to staff and students working with regulated and hazardous biological materials.
- Implement a central register of import permits issued by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to facilitate Committee oversight of available import permits.

Meeting Guidelines

Frequency

The Institutional Biosafety Committee shall meet six times per year. Additional meetings of the Committee may be called for specific purposes as and when required.

Agendas

Meeting agendas will be managed by the Biosafety and Biosecurity Officer and composed with input from the Chair, Committee Members and other delegates of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) as required.

Attendance

Members are appointed to the Institutional Biosafety Committee based on their relevant experience, and must avail themselves wherever possible for meetings of the Committee.

Members unable to attend a meeting must notify the Chair as soon as possible, and should nominate a delegate to attend on their behalf subject to approval by the Chair at least 5 working days prior to the meeting.

The Committee may co-opt or invite relevant parties from outside the Committee to provide expert advice on subject matter areas outside the experience of Members.

Quorum

Decisions made by the Committee must be made by consensus at quorate meetings, where quorum consists of at least four Members present and must include an External Member. Members unable to attend a meeting may provide written comments *in absentia* to be tabled by the Chair in lieu of physical attendance at a meeting. Such comments will be included in any decisions made, and will be considered as attendance by the Member to count towards quorum.

Minutes

Discussions, decisions and actions arising from Meetings will be recorded by the Biosafety and Biosecurity Officer. Unconfirmed minutes will be made available to members as soon as practicable after the meeting.

Meeting Format

Meetings will ordinarily be held via videoconference.

Conflict of Interest Management

A conflict of interest in a matter may include:

- a direct financial interest;
- any indirect interest, for example a financial benefit accruing to a relative, close friend or partner of the Member;
- a non-financial interest, for example an interest arising as a result of an affiliation with a research group or project; or
- any combination of the above.

Members must declare any such conflict of interest whether direct or indirect, pecuniary or otherwise, and perceived or real prior to the matter coming before the Committee.

Terms of Reference Review

The Terms of Reference for the Institutional Biosafety Committee will be reviewed annually during the first meeting of the year.