Agenda for the 10th meeting of the Biosafety Committee of the University of Hong Kong. (A sub-committee of the Safety Health and Environment Committee).

To be held on **Thursday, 14th March 2013, 10.00 a.m., Room 412 at Professorial Block, Queen Mary Hospital**

1. Minutes of the 9th meeting of the Biosafety Committee (Oct 11th 2012)
To confirm the minutes of the 9th meeting which are included as Appendix A.

2. Matters arising from the minutes of the 9th meeting (action points etc.)
(A). Administration (point 1 of minutes)
Secretary to arrange for the final version of the minutes of the February 9th 2012 meeting to be posted on the Safety Office website. See http://www.safety.hku.hk/homepage/BCom.html for the Biosafety Committee information page and links to committee agenda and meeting minutes including February 9th 2012 and agenda for the current meeting.
(B). Monitoring biosafety (discussed under point 2B of minutes)
See item 3 on current agenda
(C). Risk assessment (discussed under point 3 of minutes)
See item 4 on current agenda
(D). A review of the University Biosafety policy (discussed under point 4 of minutes)
See item 5 on current agenda.
(E) Guidance on the use of cell lines in research (discussed under point 5 of minutes.
See item 6 on current agenda
(F) Updated guidance on clinical waste (discussed under point 6 of minutes). *Secretary arranged for the final version of the document to be posted on the Safety Office website.*
Please see: - http://www.safety.hku.hk/homepage/pdf/CWD.pdf

3. Monitoring Biosafety
At our last meeting it was noted that safety approval for research grant applications involves the consideration of a number of types of risks such as chemical and radiation hazards in addition to biological safety. It was concluded that the Safety Office should review the approval process, forms and potential scanning of grant applications for all safety concerns. Dr Hau as the Head of Safety approached the Safety Health and Environment Committee to obtain their approval for the review which was given. Appendix B summarizes initial considerations made to assess the feasibility of monitoring grant applications for safety concerns and whether any changes could be made to improve the safety approval process. These considerations have been piloted looking at biological safety and other issues will need to be considered before any changes are made. Members are encouraged to add any comments or observations they have on the process and any suggestions they have for improving the process.

4. Risk assessment.
As reported at our last meeting the secretary met with Dr Hau, Dr El-Nezami, and Professor Tsao on 25th April 2012 and agreed that a pamphlet describing risk assessment with worked examples would provide a resource that might be used as a standard.

Appendix C modified slightly from the one originally presented to the committee includes the example shown in the cell line guidance as a further example and a different bacterial pathogen. The first part of the document describes the internationally accepted practice of assigning infectious agents to 4 hazard groups (sometimes called risk groups) and the difference between different levels of containment.

The document is clearly long but the nature of some assessments requires detail and the committee agreed at its last meeting that this is not too much of a disadvantage. To make the document more accessible a one page index and many highlighted boxes have been used to emphasize the important points. As also previously stated we have given one particular example (adenovirus vectors) in two different formats to illustrate that assessments can be flexible in their approach and underline the fact that no one way has been adopted internationally as a standard.

We would appreciate comments on the examples used. The thinking behind the first few examples is to make the methodology clear with simple examples where the risks are widely appreciated.

Any further thoughts would be appreciated. Is the document at a stage where it can be approved or would the committee like to see further changes? Should it be submitted to SHEC for approval?

5. A review of the University Biosafety Policy

An updated Biosafety Policy document is included in the meeting papers as Appendix D and includes a redraft of some sections e.g. the one on Hong Kong legislation and attempts at various points to move information to other sources hopefully making the policy document less cluttered and more accessible. This is also the function of the section called “frequently asked questions” although to be fair we have never actually been asked any of the questions listed!

Appendix contains an index of the main sections of the Biosafety Policy with comments below some of the sections. Do members agree with the comments? Do members have further suggestions? Should any of the policies be adapted, changed or discarded? As indicated in the overview of Biosafety three areas were of some concern (Risk assessment, Biosafety Induction training and Standard operating procedures/Safety manuals) and might be addressed in the policy. How could this best be done?

It is acknowledged that the document in still rather long and detailed. How might it be improved and made more accessible? What more could be deleted or separated out into ancillary guidance documents? Should anything else be included e.g. a section on laboratory acquired infections or some sort of departmental inventory requirement?

How could awareness of the policy and its provisions be improved within the University? Should we carry out a consultation with interested parties as was done for the original policy? Should we seek approval of SHEC for the current document or would members like to see it modified further?

6. Guidance on the use of cell lines in research
The document "Guidance on the use of cell lines in research" (Appendix E) has been modified from that considered at the last meeting and includes extra paragraphs on xenotransplantation experiments, stem cells, iPSC's and cells modified by lentiviruses. The committee is invited to review, comment and if felt appropriate approve its contents. The document includes an example risk assessment on the bulk culture of EBV positive cell lines using the 5 steps to risk assessment explained in the risk assessment document.

7. Selected recent incidents and laboratory acquired infections - for information.
Following a minor incident in the University where a researcher nicked themselves with a needle that contained vaccinia virus while injecting a mouse it seemed appropriate to review a few "recent" incidents and laboratory acquired infections in laboratories. This document is included as Appendix F.

8. Any other business.
To consider any business not otherwise on the agenda.

9. Dates of next meetings.
The date of the next Biosafety Committee meetings has been set for the 10th October 2013.