

Minutes of the 7th meeting of the Biosafety Committee of the University of Hong Kong. (A sub-committee of the Safety Health and Environment Committee).

Held on Friday, 20th May 2011 at 10.00 a.m. in the 1st Floor Library of the Main Safety Office, Cheung Yuet Ming Physics building.

Apologies were received from Professor John Bacon-Shone. The following members were present:-

	Affiliation	Function/Role
Professor F.C.C. Leung	School of Biological Sciences	Chairman
Professor G. Srivastava	Pathology	Medical Faculty Rep
Dr. K.S. Lo	LAU	CULATR liaison etc.
Dr B.L.Lim	School of Biological Sciences	Science Faculty Rep
Dr. Mike Mackett	Safety Office	Secretary (BSO)
Professor G.S.W. Tsao	Anatomy	Medical Faculty Rep
Ms Cindy Lee	Microbiology	Senior Technical Staff representative

1. Minutes of the 6th meeting of the Biosafety Committee (May 2010)

The draft minutes of the 6th meeting of the Biosafety Committee were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting. Inadvertently Professor Tsao's initials had been omitted (from the list of members present), this was noted and the omission rectified.

Action: Secretary to arrange for the final version of the minutes to be posted on the Safety Office website.

2. Matters arising from the minutes of the 6th meeting.

i) Under point 2 the agreed action was for the secretary to write to the Deans of Medicine and Science indicating the committee's recommendation that the new, currently optional, postgraduate course in biosafety, overseen by the Graduate School, is made a compulsory component of postgraduate studies for students who handle biological materials. In stark contrast to this the secretary informed the meeting that the Graduate School had contacted him to propose not to continue offering this Biological Safety course w.e.f. 2011-12 to avoid duplication and because the safety office now offers courses for the Faculties to meet the needs of the students. The secretary assured the Graduate School that there was very little duplication and that he believed many students need more biosafety training than they currently receive. He conceded that the course was more detailed than absolutely required but hoped the course could continue on an optional basis. The secretary would continue to explore with the Faculties a way of making the appropriate level of training available to those that require more than just the background in Biosafety provided by the Faculty safety awareness sessions. Professor Tsao indicated to the meeting that the Faculty of Medicine has been discussing the graduate training program and were reviewing what was formally offered – there was a general feeling that students were spending too long on courses in the first year of their studies. The Secretary

said he would follow up the issue with the faculties in order to determine what sort of training might be appropriate for those handling biological materials.

ii) Under point 3 "The discussion on Biosafety committee membership" the secretary informed the meeting that SHEC was consulted for their views. They felt it was good practice when possible to have regular turnover of committee members and would appoint a new Chairperson for the committee when the term of the current chair had expired. Consequently the meeting was informed that Professor F.C.C. Leung would step down at the end of June. The meeting asked who had been invited to take his place and were told that Professor K. S-L. Lam Head of the Department of Medicine had agreed to be the chair from July 1st 2011. All members of the committee thanked Professor Leung for his Chairmanship

iii) Also under point 3 (action point 2) the secretary indicated he would ask research services for a copy of all the RGC and RFCID grant submissions in order to scan them for possible biosafety related concerns. The secretary explained that he had not done this for the current year and had decided to adopt a different strategy in conjunction with inspection visits and scan the Hong Kong Scholars Hub for possible biosafety related concerns. If he identified any concern then there would be an opportunity on inspection to address the issue.

iv) All other action points were completed including improvements in the organization of the biosafety information on the safety office website.

3. Clinical waste regulations

The secretary explained some of the detail of the new Regulations and the likely measures the University will have to take in order to comply with the legislation. He emphasized a number of issues including the need to modify the current temporary storage areas so that they are more secure, a new administrative arrangement to facilitate the keeping of records and signing off a trip ticket as well as the need to use yellow bags for the disposal of group 2 waste (human and animal clinical waste).

The committee discussed a few minor points and acknowledged the information. The secretary indicated he would bring members up to date at the next meeting.

4. GMO (Control of Release) Ordinance Cap 607

The new regulations were noted and members stated that they had little impact on how biological materials were shipped.

5. Fluorescent Activated Cell Sorting (FACS) of unfixed cells

Following extended discussion the committee agreed to the proposals made in the paper tabled as appendix D, specifically approving the questionnaire required to be completed by all using the core FACS facility, adding a figure to the guidance for sorting unfixed cells and when the opportunity arose suggesting that the Faculty of Medicine either purchase a cabinet to house one of its FACS machines or buy a new machine with a cabinet air supply thus improving the safety profile of this type of work.

6. Guidance on Decontamination As this issue had been discussed at length in the last meeting there was very little discussion this time and the guidance document was approved.

7. Promotion of risk assessment for biohazardous work.

The secretary outlined the three risk assessments included in Appendix F and a discussion ensued on the merit of the various. No conclusions were drawn about the relative merits of these specific assessments. There was a general agreement that risk assessment could be quite complex, that they can sometimes be over bureaucratic and might on occasions actually be unhelpful. However all agreed that decisions on appropriate containment measures must be based on a thorough detailed risk assessment. There was only minimal discussion on how risk assessment might be promoted in an accessible and straightforward way and the secretary suggested the topic be considered further by the committee on another occasion.

8. Any other business.

The meeting closed with a further round of thanks being expressed to Professor Leung for his Chairmanship of the committee and all present wished him well in his future endeavors.