Agenda for the 8th 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, 9th February, 10.00 a.m., Room 414 at Professorial Block, Queen Mary Hospital**

1. Minutes of the 7th meeting of the Biosafety Committee (May 2011)
To confirm the minutes of the 7th meeting which are included as Appendix A.

2. Matters arising from the minutes of the 7th meeting.

3. An overview of biosafety management and practice in HKU.
One of the mantra's of many modern safety management systems and ISO standards such as ISO14001 is a plan- check- act cycle of continuous improvement. In order to achieve any desired improvement a regular review of safety provision is necessary and the paper included as Appendix B (A PowerPoint Handout with notes) is intended to be a review of Biosafety in HKU. Hopefully it will provide a useful introduction to Biosafety provision in the University for new members of the committee. A summary of the powerpoint will also be presented at the next Safety Health and Environment Committee. Questions and comments would be welcome.

Although a number of conclusions could be drawn three areas for particular focus are highlighted at the end of the presentation. Risk assessment is at best inconsistent; newcomers to the university do not always receive enough information and training on Biosafety; all laboratories where Biosafety Level 2 work is undertaken should have Standard Operating Procedures (or at least a Safety Operating Manual with some detail).

4. A review of the Universities Biosafety Policy
Following consultation across the University the Biosafety Policy was finally approved in October 2007 by the Safety Health and Environment Committee. At the time it was agreed that it should be reviewed on a regular basis and with new members joining the committee this seems an opportune time to review both its contents and how it operates. Over the coming months the secretary will redraft some of the sections which require updating e.g. the one on Hong Kong legislation. Any other issues arising out of the committee's deliberations may also result in the need for modification and the revised document will be circulated amongst committee members before the next meeting.

Appendix C 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?

Are the requirements for risk assessment and who carries them out appropriate (section 3.5). At what level should requirements for risk assessment be monitored, implemented and

enforced? i.e. Is this best dealt with by departments without input from SHEC or the Biosafety committee?

It is acknowledged that the document in rather long and detailed. How might it be improved and made more accessible? What 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?

The current policy can be found on the Safety Office website at: - http://www0.hku.hk/safety/pdf/HKUBSP.pdf and has been included in the electronic circulation of the agenda and papers as Appendix C1.

5. A review of the terms of reference and composition of the Biosafety Committee
Appendix D contains the terms of reference and composition of the Biosafety Committee, agreed by the Safety Health and Environment Committee (SHEC). The original terms of reference and committee membership were broadly modeled on what had been adopted by Australian universities and are in line with the HKU's policy to adopt international standards where appropriate. Australian gene technology regulations are quite specific and stringent in their requirements both for risk assessing work and licensing organisations and laboratories. The committee may wish to modify the terms of reference in sections 2 and 3 to reflect the situation in Hong Kong in the light of any discussion under previous agenda points. The committee may also wish to modify the composition of the committee and the details of appointment in order to reflect current practice. Any changes will need to be approved by SHEC.

6. Biosafety Induction Training. One of the conclusions from of a series of departmental safety inspections by the safety office is that the induction of new staff and students is not as thorough and systematic as it could be. Members are invited to comment on an outline core biosafety induction programme attached to the papers as Appendix E. How might this best be delivered to newcomers? Should all newcomers exposed to biohazard be a required to do the course? How could this be monitored or overseen so that all those that need to take the course complete it?

7. Dual Use Research.
Part of the remit of the Biosafety committee is to "promote, collect and disseminate information and guidance" on Biosecurity issues and this includes "dual use" biological experiments. The US based National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity (NSABB) has defined dual use research of concern as "research that, based on current understanding, can be reasonably anticipated to provide knowledge, products, or technologies that could be directly misapplied by others to pose a threat to public health and safety, agricultural crops and other plants, animals, the environment or material."

Papers under consideration at Science and Nature were reported to describe the creation of a highly pathogenic H5N1 influenza virus that is capable of airborne transmission in

ferrets. The NSABB was asked to review the papers and, in a highly unusual move, has recommended that the 'experimental details and mutation data that would enable replication of the experiments' be removed, although the general conclusions of the manuscripts can be published. Appendices F & F1-F6 contain a copy of some of the articles and a summary with a number of questions about how to promote and disseminate guidance on dual use issues.

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

9. Date of next meeting.
The date of the next Biosafety Committee meeting has been set for October 11th 2012.