

# THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

## Biosafety Committee

Minutes of the 3rd Biosafety Committee Meeting, 20th September 2007, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Library, Safety Office, James Lee Building. 14.30-16.40.

Members present were:-

	Department	Function/Role
Dr. F.C.C. Leung	Zoology	Chairman
Professor G. Srivastava	Pathology	Medical Faculty Representative
Dr. B.L. Lim	Zoology	Faculty of Science Representative
Dr. K.S. Lo	LAU	CULATR liaison etc.
Ms Cindy Lee	Microbiology	Senior Technical Staff Representative
Dr. Mike Mackett	Safety Office	Secretary (Biological Safety Officer)

### 1. Apologies

Professor G.S.W. Tsao

### 2. Minutes

The committee confirmed the tabled minutes (Appendix A) of the Biosafety Committee Meeting, held on the 26th April 2007, were a true and accurate record.

The committee also reaffirmed its previous decision to post the agenda and minutes of the biosafety committee meetings on the safety office website. The agenda would be posted before the meeting and the minutes would be posted once approved as an accurate record of the meeting. It was agreed that comments made by individuals would generally be recorded in the third person and not directly attributed. It was decided that appendices would not be posted but would be made available on request.

### **For Action:**

**2.1 The Secretary will arrange for the agenda and minutes of previous meetings to be posted on the safety office website**

### 3. Membership of the Biosafety Committee

The chairman noted that Professor Terry Au had served the year she agreed to give to the committee and had now stepped down. He expressed his thanks to her for her contributions to the committee and the committee agreed we should write formally and express those thanks as a committee.

A number of possible replacements for Professor Au were mentioned and the chairman indicated he would follow this issue up and approach potential members.

The secretary indicated that when the committee was set up there was concern for continuity of the committee if all members retired at the same time. It was suggested that

some members were appointed for 2 years and others for 3. This particular provision was never clarified and current committee members were unsure of how long their term was. The fact that Professor Au has left after 1 year has meant that this initial concern may turn out to be unfounded. It was noted that in government committees 2 terms of 3 years was the maximum permitted and members felt this was also a suitable policy for the biosafety committee.

**For Action:**

**3.1 The Chairman to investigate the willingness of the individuals identified to serve as committee members**

**3.2 Secretary to write to Professor Au expressing the committee's gratitude for her contributions to the work of the committee.**

**4. Biosafety Policy**

Detailed and lengthy discussion of the Biosafety Policy centered on Appendix B which listed the comments received from various departments and members of staff during a consultation phase from to August 2007. The secretary indicated that he would write to those who replied assuring them that their comments were noted and that where appropriate the suggested modification or a clarification would be made. The secretary also indicated that following the discussion he would make the appropriate changes to the policy before submission for approval to the University Safety Health and Environment Committee.

It was agreed to change all the minor typographical and editorial errors that were listed in the appendix.

It was noted that some of the comments were about details that were more appropriately included in ancillary documentation rather than in the policy document itself.

One particular point on the servicing of hoods may result in further action and should be specifically recorded here. It was noted that the Biosafety policy states that biological safety cabinets (BSC's) must be serviced every year. It was also noted that with increased demand the safety office were not achieving the desired yearly service for all cabinets. It was acknowledged that for many cabinets that are used as sterile work stations or just simply as cleaner work areas that a yearly service is not absolutely essential. However the point was made it might be assumed by a user that any one of these cabinets could function to protect them from an infectious aerosol and as such all BSC's should be fully validated. The committee agreed to monitor the situation and if the target of a yearly service was not being met there may be a need to be an official approach by the committee to the safety office to investigate how the situation might be resolved.

All the issues in Appendix B were discussed and resolved to the satisfaction of the committee. The committee felt that with the modifications they were able to recommend this biosafety policy to the university safety health and environment committee for adoption as the official university policy.

**For Action:**

**4.1 Secretary to write to those who commented on the policy**

**4.2 Secretary to modify the policy in line with the comments received and the committee's discussion.**

**4.3 Secretary to submit the policy to the university Safety Health and Environment Committee meeting of the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2007 for approval and adoption as official university policy**

5. Health and Safety Information for those working with animals in the University of Hong Kong.

This document (Appendix C) was discussed by the committee and accepted without modification. Many of the comments on the document received before the meeting was of the type "Who is responsible for a particular action?" and "How will compliance be ensured?" The committee felt that it is good to ask these types of questions to ensure that a policy was practical, not too onerous and some direction on how to implement may help in practical terms. However, it also believed that a policy document need not include that type of detail, because there are usually a number of different ways of achieving the same outcome and different departments may wish to achieve the policy goals in different ways.

**For Action:**

**5.1 Secretary to post the policy on the safety office website**

6. Policy on the Management of Bites, Scratches, Splashes and Needlestick Injuries

Following a brief discussion of the policy (Appendix D) the committee unanimously approved the policy. The summary sheet (Appendix D1, which might be posted in the laboratory and used as an aid memoir in the event of an accident) was also approved.

**For Action:**

**6.1 Secretary to post the policy on the safety office website**

7. Code of Practice for the Use Helicobacter pylori in the Laboratory Animal Unit (LAU). Appendix E. For information and comment.

The secretary (in his role as biological safety officer) emphasized his belief that it would promote safe work in a variety of situations if facilities or departments produced similar guidance for their culture (cell and bacterial/viral) and animal rooms. Members accepted the document as a good example of a Code of Practice with little further discussion except the suggestion that a summary of the document be made. This will help people to quickly grasp its contents and see if the information applies to them.

**For Action**

**7.1 Secretary to draft a summary of the document for circulation to all members.**

8. Various documents for information

The documents submitted to the committee for information/ comment i.e. DNA synthesis and Biosecurity (Appendix F), The EEC Green paper on Bio-preparedness. (Appendix G),

The “Biorisk” Management Standard ([Appendix H](#)) and A Summary of investigations into the August 2007 laboratory associated outbreak of FMDV in England ([Appendix I](#)) were noted. The only item specifically commented on was Appendix I and this was simply to acknowledge that a further focus of infection had been reported only days after it was assumed there would be no more cases of FMDV.

9. Any other business: several items were brought to the committee.

9.1 UHS document “Occupational Health Program for Laboratory Animal Workers”

As members had not seen this before it was agreed to set a deadline for comments of the 19<sup>th</sup> October. If no comments were received it would be assumed that members were happy with the document.

**For action:**

**Members to review the document by October 19th.**

**Secretary to ensure the document is uploaded to the UHS and safety office web sites or modify and upload depending on whether comments were received.**

9.2 A list of documentation required to complete all the guidance mentioned in the biosafety policy was presented to the committee. The secretary indicated that a number of these were in an advanced stage of preparation and would be circulated to committee members for approval before the next meeting. The secretary indicated his intention to have finished all written policy and guidance by the end of March 2008

**For action:**

**Secretary to circulate the documents as and when they are completed.**

9.3 During the meeting a number of issues had been discussed including monitoring, inspection, regulating biosafety and risk assessments. Dr Lim discussed the possibility of systematically addressing these issues all together. He indicated that he would put a scheme together and circulate it to committee members for discussion.

**For action:**

**Dr Lim to circulate the committee members with a potential scheme for linking inspection with maintenance of hoods.**

**Scheme to be included as an agenda item at next meeting.**

The meeting closed at approximately 16.40.