

# HEALTH & SAFETY TERMS OF REFERENCE

## GENETIC MODIFICATION & BIOLOGICAL SAFETY COMMITTEE

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<b>TITLE</b>	Genetic Modification & Biological Safety Committee Terms of Reference		
<b>PUBLICATION</b>	September 2025	<b>CURRENT VERSION</b>	1 (Sep 25)
<b>APPROVED BY</b>	Safety, Health & Wellbeing at Work Office (SHWO)	<b>NEXT REVIEW DUE</b>	September 2026

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## 1. Purpose of the Genetic Modification & Biological Safety Committee

### 1.1 Purpose & scope

The Genetic Modification & Biological Safety Committee (GMBSC) is formed to keep continual oversight of biological safety operations within the University. The key aims of the forum are to ensure:

- Biological safety operations are adequately resourced (nominated personnel; training & competence etc) to manage risks effectively and comply with regulatory requirements
- Relevant research areas are complying with the University policy on Workplace Health, Safety, Fire & Welfare, and associated processes for managing risks from biological agents and genetically modified organisms (GMOs)
- Biological safety management arrangements / systems remain fit for purpose, with proper communication, cooperation & collaboration among stakeholders
- Significant issues impacting on biological safety are openly raised and discussed to facilitate appropriate corrective action and continuous improvement to health & safety standards

The GMBSC is an oversight group, which considers & consults on information and takes action (where necessary) to develop and improve health & safety management strategies in areas under their remit.

The GMBSC is a sub-committee of the University Workplace Health & Safety Committee (WHSC), and will provide the WHSC with assurance on biological safety & GMO matters as well as highlight any significant compliance issues which should be addressed.

### 1.2 Authority

The GMBSC is primarily an advisory body to the University, and does not have any direct budgetary control or financial decision making power. Advice and recommendations from the GMBSC are escalated to the executive level, who have the authority and financial capability to make leadership decisions affecting biological safety operations.

The GMBSC does not have the responsibility for approving central University health & safety policy or associated processes.

## 2. Key remit of the GMBSC

The GMBSC forms a collective of expertise in both biological sciences research (including scientific techniques & procedures), as well as biological safety. The group has a cross-collaborative and intelligence sharing remit for managing biological safety with key functions described below:

Function	Description
Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reporting on the performance of biological safety across the University, by measuring key safety performance indicators (e.g. incident reporting; training; delivery of inspections etc)</li> <li>Reviewing significant incidents &amp; issues, ensuring they have been followed up with robust investigation and sustainable corrective actions have been taken</li> <li>Data analysis to identify trends, strengths &amp; weaknesses in biological safety operations and opportunities for improvement</li> <li>Transparent information sharing of internal &amp; external audits or inspections and how any important corrective actions are being managed</li> <li>Ensure that the University is compliant with any relevant regulatory returns (such as GMO notifications) &amp; licences (such as SAPO licences; HTA licences etc)</li> <li>Ensure that the University is adequately &amp; sustainably resourced to manage biological safety operations</li> <li>Review and advise on risk assessments for work activities involving biological agents (primarily GMOs, SAPO agents and Hazard Group 3 biological agents) to ensure they are suitable and sufficient</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep stakeholders up to date with biological safety matters and topical issues</li> <li>Communicate key incidents, trends and lessons learned across research areas &amp; departments who have a common interest, helping to promote continuous improvement across the University</li> <li>Shared awareness of good practices and refinements to systems of work</li> <li>Keep stakeholders up to date on important changes &amp; developments to central policy, processes, infrastructure etc</li> <li>Data analysis to identify trends, strengths &amp; weaknesses in biological safety operations and opportunities for improvement</li> </ul>
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider future projects &amp; operational changes within the University that requires collaborative planning &amp; organisation for positive health &amp; safety outcomes</li> <li>Identifying gaps or opportunities for a cross-departmental / collaborative approach e.g. organisation of training; shared expertise</li> <li>Review &amp; consider reports from collaboration work between the University &amp; other organisations where relevant (e.g. clinical trials at healthcare institutions)</li> </ul>
Escalation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raising significant / persistent issues or concerns that have been evidenced at departmental level (e.g. findings from local inspections; facilities maintenance operations &amp; contractor management; poor practices &amp; behaviours)</li> <li>Raising significant concerns and recommendations from staff, students &amp; unions relating to biological agents &amp; GMO activities carried on at the University</li> <li>Raising strategic level issues that are impacting on the ability to deliver biological safety operations, for consultation and action</li> <li>Deciding on key issues to escalate to WHSC for resolution, which cannot be resolved by departmental or GMBSC committees</li> </ul>

## 3. GMBSC core membership

Member	Capacity	Description
Senior Researcher in Biological Sciences	Committee chair	A member of staff, appointed by the Head of Biology Department, with significant research experience with biological agents and genetic modification activities.
Biological Safety Officer (BSO)	Committee secretary & attendee	The member of staff responsible for coordinating biological safety operations. They administrate the committee (meeting scheduling; compile agendas) and report information to the committee.

Biological Safety Advisor (BSA)	Attendee	The advisor from the university central health & safety office, who provides support to biological safety operations.
Biological Sciences Research Representatives	Attendees	Staff who represent a cross-section of laboratories with relevant expertise to advise on work activities involving biological agents and GMOs (microorganisms, plants & animals).
Stakeholder Representatives	Attendees	A cross-section of persons who are involved in work activities involving biological agents and GMOs e.g. facilities managers; postgraduate researchers; technicians; union members.

## 4. Committee meeting format

### 4.1 Meeting frequency

Committee meetings will be scheduled 2 times per academic year (roughly every 6 months), to align with time frames in the University health & safety governance structure, and additionally if required. The committee secretary will schedule meetings in the appropriate time frame, in a timely manner to provide attendees with fair notice.

### 4.2 Meeting mode and length

Committee meetings will be attended in person, with the option to join virtually (using video conferencing). Meetings will be scheduled to run for 90 minutes.

### 4.3 Meeting agendas & record keeping

A recommended standard agenda structure has been produced (**see Appendix 1**). The committee secretary will ensure that information (such as reports and logs) is compiled in a timely manner before the meeting date, and circulated amongst core members and any other invitees.

The committee secretary will keep a record of minutes for each meeting, including any agreed remedial actions, and circulate among members for approval.

### 4.4 Quorum

In order for committee meetings to be quorate, at least 50% of core members must be present (50% plus 1 where there is an odd number of invitees).

## 5. Communications

### 5.1 Formal reporting to the GMBSC

The BSO will furnish the committee with a formal summary report, providing information on biological safety matters in the period since the last committee meeting.

The GMBSC can create task & finish working groups to resolve specific issues. Where relevant, these groups may be required to submit a formal progress report to the committee for information.

## 5.2 Formal reporting from the GMBSC to WHSC

The GMBSC will agree on issues which must be escalated upward to raise with the WHSC. An escalation log will be in effect to formally raise these matters to the executive level committee for consultation and corrective action. The BSO has ownership of raising these matters to the WHSC, through the formal escalation log.

## Appendix 1

### Recommended standard agenda structure

Item	Topic	Description
1	Apologies for absence	Note any members who are unable to attend the meeting.
2	Review of last meeting	Agree minutes and review the progress of any actions agreed from prior meetings.
3	BSO update <sup>(i)</sup>	<p>A periodical review of biological safety performance in the period since the last committee meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accident &amp; incident reporting and analysis</li> <li>• Trends &amp; persistent issues</li> <li>• Significant investigations &amp; outcomes</li> <li>• Status of biosafety inspections</li> <li>• Training &amp; drills delivered</li> <li>• Regulatory assurance</li> <li>• New projects to note</li> </ul> <p>Communication of any important updates, changes or developments to biological safety processes or infrastructure.</p>
4	Risk assessment reviews	<p>Discussion &amp; feedback on risk assessments for new work activities requiring committee review &amp; approval.</p> <p>A feedback form will be circulated to committee members in advance of the meeting to record comments &amp; recommendations on each risk assessment under consideration.</p>
5	Specific items for consideration	Any items raised by committee members for discussion (e.g. Facilities maintenance; resourcing; prospective work etc).
6	Matters for escalation	Agreement of any matters to be escalated upwards to the Workplace Health & Safety Committee for consultation and corrective action.
7	Any other business	Any other relevant matters to discuss

**(i)** The BSO will produce a summary report to the committee, reviewing the period since the last GMBSC meeting.