Terms of Reference

Name: Swinburne Biosafety Committee (SBC)

Approved by: Vice Chancellors Executive Group

Last reviewed: 8 June 2010

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SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE
The Swinburne Biosafety Committee (SBC) (formerly the Swinburne University of Technology Institutional Biosafety (SUTIBC)) has terms of reference to provide a quality assurance or risk management mechanism with respect to Swinburne activity or facilities involving biohazardous material*. More particularly, the Committee assists the University with regard to compliance with relevant legislation or contractual arrangements concerning Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), including mandatory requirements set by the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) for accredited organisations with an Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC)1. The Committee also functions to assist with biohazards pertaining to human research and human dealing with animals.

*Explanatory Note: SBC responsibility does not extend to general laboratory risks and procedures involving the use of chemicals which are otherwise covered by Swinburne Occupational Health and Safety Policies or Procedures. The Committee does concern itself with higher risk agents such as infectious agents and Security Sensitive Biological Agents (SSBAs)2.

DEFINITIONS

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<th>Word/Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Biosafety Officer</td>
<td>A qualified and experienced staff member appointed to advise on matters pertaining to biosafety within an academic unit, a campus or the University as a whole.</td>
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<td>Biohazard</td>
<td>An agent, condition, procedure or substance of whatever origin (natural or otherwise) that poses an actual or potential risk to biological entities, including humans, affecting growth, development or survival.</td>
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<td>Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC)</td>
<td><strong>Institutional Biosafety Committee</strong> means a committee established as an Institutional Biosafety Committee in accordance with written guidelines issued by the Regulator under section 98 of the Gene Technology Act 20003.</td>
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<td>Genetically Modified Organism (GMO)</td>
<td>An organism that has been modified by gene technology or an organism that has inherited particular traits from an organism (the initial organism), being traits that occurred in the initial organism because of gene technology.4</td>
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GOVERNING BODY
The Swinburne Biosafety Committee functions as an advisory committee to the Vice-Chancellor via the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (DVC(R)).

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4 The full definition of a GMO appears under section 10 of the Gene Technology Act 2000.

Please Note: Printing this document may make it obsolete. For the latest version of this policy always check the Policy and Procedures Directory
SECTION 2 - PROCEDURE

1. RESPONSIBILITY

The Committee functions:

a. To assist the University in its commitment to providing a safe and healthy environment with respect to biohazardous material or facilities\(^5\).

b. To assist the University in meeting its legislative and contractual obligations concerning the safe production, handling or storage of biohazardous material, particularly Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).

c. To assess, approve, inspect or monitor activity or facilities relating to or involving biohazardous material, including advising on or determining where appropriate whether proposed activity or a facility complies with guidelines set out by the OGTR, Occupational Health and Safety legislation or other safety regime.

d. To provide an advisory service to the University as appropriate with respect to national, international and professional codes of conduct and community standards and expectations concerning biohazardous material or facilities.

e. To advise on, develop, revise or approve policies, guidelines and procedures for the safe handling or storage of biohazardous material, including with respect to training and qualifications of personnel involved.

f. To report to the Vice-Chancellor on an annual basis or to other internal and external bodies as required.

2. COMPOSITION

2.1. Membership

Membership shall at a minimum accord with applicable external regulatory requirements but shall otherwise comprise at least 5 members some of whom may be external to Swinburne. In addition to the Chair, membership should include:

a. a person able to exercise unfettered and independent judgement in relation to IBC matters or deliberation where applicable;

b. a person appointed as a/the Biosafety Officer of the University;

c. a molecular biologist or geneticist preferably with higher degree qualifications; and

d. a microbiologist preferably with higher degree qualifications.

2.2. Additional Members or Expertise

Additional members may be appointed or additional expertise consulted as appropriate. For licence applications involving or requiring physical containment (PC) at a PC3 or PC4 level, a Biocontainment Engineer or other appropriate expert should either be appointed or consulted. Where there are resourcing implications, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) or delegate should be consulted where additional members or expertise are needed.

\(^5\) See Explanatory Note above under Purpose.
2.3. **Other Attendees**
   a. The Vice-Chancellor (or delegate) and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (or delegate) shall have right of attendance.
   b. The University’s Occupational Health & Safety Consultant (or delegate) may attend or be requested to attend meetings as required.
   c. Where appropriate, the Chairs (or delegates) of Swinburne’s Animal Ethic Committee (SAEC) or Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) may be invited to attend meetings.
   d. The Chair may invite other attendees as appropriate, additional to 2.2 above, eg, investigator(s) whose project application needs further information or a laboratory manager responsible for a facility being reviewed.

2.4. **Chair**
The Chair shall:
   a. carry out responsibilities in line with Swinburne requirements and/or as specified under applicable regulatory requirements;
   b. appoint, as appropriate, a Deputy Chair from amongst members, eg, to chair a meeting in the Chair’s absence; and
   c. represent the Committee or serve as the delegate of the University, the Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) as required.

2.5. **Term of Office**
Membership shall in the first instance be for a period of up to one year and renewable for two-year periods thereafter.

2.6. **Method of Appointment**
The Chair and members shall be appointed by the Vice-Chancellor on the recommendation of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).

2.7. **Secretary**
Secretariat assistance shall be provided by Swinburne Research (where appropriate in conjunction with Human Resources).

3. **OPERATING PROCEDURES**

3.1 **Meetings**
The Committee shall meet as appropriate and at least twice annually in person including where appropriate to assist with compliance reporting. Agendas for deliberative meetings shall be forwarded to members in a timely manner.

3.2 **Quorum**
The quorum for deliberative meetings shall consist of at least 3 members present, including the Chair or Deputy Chair. However, should decisions require specialist or independent (lay or other) input from members absent from a particular meeting these must be properly endorsed in a timely manner by those members ‘by circulation’. Where the resultant endorsement is not forthcoming or insufficient, the Committee must reconvene to review the particular decision in a deliberative manner, in the case of notifiable GMO dealings to ensure requisite collective technical scientific expertise.
3.3 Monitoring of Projects
The Committee should require and review reports as to the safe progress of projects and activity at least annually and/or upon the completion, cessation or abandonment of projects.

3.4 Inspection of Facilities
The Committee shall conduct timely inspections of facilities as required, in the context of a meeting and/or via authorised appropriately qualified delegate(s). Reports of inspections should be furnished to the Chair, the Committee, the University or external authority as appropriate.

3.5 Reports
In addition to the Vice-Chancellor (or delegate), the Committee may be required to report on its membership and activities to external authorities such as OGTR. When reporting to an external authority, this should be undertaken in conjunction with the Vice-Chancellor and/or DVC(R) as appropriate.

3.6 Manuals and Working Procedures
Working policies and procedures proposed, developed and revised under Section 1 above should be undertaken in consultation with the DVC(R) or delegate wherever there are resource implications. The content of operative policies and procedures should be appropriately publicised.

4. RELATED MATERIAL

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RESPONSIBILITY

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VERSION CONTROL AND CHANGE HISTORY

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