



Terms of Reference

University of Southern Queensland Institutional Biosafety Committee (USQ IBC)

Trim Location	12/G/28
Responsible Officer	Chair, USQ BC
Approval Date	12 March 2021
Approval Authority	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

1 Role

The University is obligated to comply with the requirements of the *Gene Technology Act 2000* (the Act), the *Gene Technology (Queensland) Act 2016*, and the *Gene Technology Regulations 2001* (the Regulations) and/or instruments issued by the Office of Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR). In accordance with the requirements of the Act and the Regulations pursuant to it, the University has established the University of Southern Queensland Institutional Biosafety Committee (USQ IBC).

In addition to its OGTR statutory obligations, the Committee will oversee acquisition, use and storage of any, biological organism and agent which may pose a potential biological risk (as per the Biosafety Procedure Schedule of High-Risk Biological Materials), thereby assisting the University to meet its obligations relating to the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and associated regulations.

2 Functions

2.1 Compliance with relevant legislation and standards:

1. Perform the functions of an Institutional Biosafety Committee in accordance with the *Gene Technology Act 2000* (Cth), *Gene Technology Regulations 2001* (Cth) and corresponding Queensland legislation.
2. Perform the functions of a Biosafety Committee in accordance with Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 2243.3 Safety in laboratories - Microbiological safety and containment:
 - a. Ensure a system is in place for training and assessment of staff
 - b. Overall monitoring and surveillance of continuing implementation of standards and guidelines
 - c. Review of safety audits pertaining to biological risk

- d. Review and consideration of applications for activities included in the Biosafety Procedure Schedule of High-Risk Biological Materials
 - e. Monitor inspections, audits and any licencing of laboratories
 - f. Monitor appropriate records for staff training, immunizations and relevant medical advice given
3. Perform, if required, the functions of a Management Committee as outlined in the Security Sensitive Biological Agent Standards and in accordance with the *National Health Security Act 2007* and *National Health Security Regulations 2008* and associated guidelines.
 4. Provide assurance that biological risk is appropriately managed to satisfy obligations relating to the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and associated regulations.
 5. Monitor and provide advice on matters regulated by the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (Cth).
 6. Monitor and provide advice on permits required under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* (Qld).
 7. Oversee the university's adherence to the Queensland Biotechnology Code of Ethics where it relates to biological materials.
 8. Monitor and provide advice on any other law relating to biological agents and materials.
 9. Advise the University Safety Committee and Research Committee on any matters which may require action to mitigate biological risk and comply with external requirements.

Review and approval of activities/projects

10. Review and approve research and teaching activities/projects involving dealings with GMOs and high-risk biological agents and materials (as defined in the Biosafety Procedure Schedule of High-Risk Biological Materials).
11. Oversee the University's process of review and approval of low risk non-GMOs and agents through regular reporting from the Biosafety Advisor on the Biological materials/hazards process and register of reviewed and approved activities.
12. Approve only those activities/projects which it considers are ethically acceptable (as per the National Framework of Ethical Principles in Gene Technology 2012) and conform to the requirements of the legislation and standards including but not limited to biological agents and materials.
13. Confirm that all proposals for exempt and notifiable low-risk dealings with GMOs are correctly classified and communicate the correct information to the Office of Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR).
14. Where required, refers activities to the Gene Technology Regulator.

Monitoring of approved activities/projects

15. Ensure that registers for approved work are maintained for exempt GMOs, NLRD dealings assessed by the USQ BC, biological agents and materials, Queensland Biosecurity permits, and Biosecurity permits that have a requirement to be used in an Approved Arrangement (AA) and facilities certified by OGTR.

16. Monitor the conduct of approved high-risk and GMO activities/projects until their completion to ensure continued compliance with relevant requirements and withdraw approval if a project is not complying with relevant requirements.
17. Monitor and review incidents within biological laboratories.
18. Monitor approved research and teaching biological activities/projects.
19. Members with relevant scientific and technical expertise to participate in the inspection of GMO certified facilities prior to certification and annually thereafter.
20. Suspend and/or revoke approval to conduct activities with GMOs by individuals in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements when required.

Provision of advice to the University

21. Review and provide advice to the University with regards to:
 - a. policy, procedures, and/or guidance relating to the management of biological risk.
 - b. training for those working with GMOs and non-GMO biological agents and materials; and
 - c. training relating to certification of GMO facilities (laboratory, plant, and animal).

3 Meetings, Reporting and Minutes

Frequency of Meetings:

The Committee will meet quarterly (noting that it is an OGTR requirement that the Committee meet at least once annually). Additional meetings may be called by the Chair as required. The meetings of USQ IBC shall be chaired by the Chair (IBC).

In the absence of the Chair (IBC), the Deputy Chair (IBC) shall act as Chair.

Reporting:

The Committee will report at least once a year to the Research Committee of Academic Board. The Committee will also have a matrix reporting line to the University Safety Committee (USC). The Committee will have authority by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) and will also have oversight by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise Services), and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) as required.

Minutes:

Minutes shall be kept for all meetings.

4 Membership

4.1 Membership Structure and appointment

The Committee must be constituted in accordance with the requirements of the Gene Technology Act 2000, Gene Technology Regulations 2001 (Cth) and corresponding Queensland legislation.

Members must have the collective technical and scientific expertise to assess and advise on the projects and activities reviewed and approved by the Committee. Experts with experience or specialist knowledge required to address specific, short-term skills deficit will be co-opted as required to the USQ IBC.

4.1 Training and Induction

The University will ensure that each member of the USQ IBC undertakes USQ Safety approved Biosafety online training modules annually and any training as mandated by the OGTR (e.g. OGTR Physical Containment training).

In accordance with WHS regulation, the University will maintain any records of training of committee members.

Before appointment, all members of the USQ IBC shall acknowledge in writing their acceptance of the Committee Terms of Reference and the requirements for confidentiality imposed by the University.

4.2 Executive Committee

The USQ IBC may establish an Executive Committee from the available members which must include:

- the Chair (or Deputy Chair), and
- at least two other voting members.

The USQ IBC is responsible for determining and endorsing the membership of the Executive Committee annually.

Membership of the executive should be shared and rotated between USQ IBC members.

The Executive Committee may consider the following at its meetings:

- Approval of amendments to projects which have received conditional approval by the USQ IBC
- Approve activities which the USQ IBC have determined are Minor Amendments and which do not require a full meeting of the USQ IBC as required by the OGTR
- Initiate urgent action in response to adverse event reports, incidents or hazards.

4.3 Minimum Membership

Member	Requirements	Type	Appointment
Chairperson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suitable experience, - Senior academic standing, and - Knowledgeable in the University's policies and procedures 	Voting	<p>Nominations for Chair shall be sought from suitably qualified University staff or suitably qualified/experienced external knowledge holders. Criteria will be provided stating requisite skills, capacity and experience.</p> <p>The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) shall consider the nominations and progress an appointment against the stated criteria for up to three years</p>
Deputy Chairperson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suitable experience - Senior academic standing, and - Knowledgeable in the University's policies and procedures 	Voting	<p>Nominations for Deputy Chair shall be sought from IBC members.</p> <p>The Chair shall consider the nominations and progress an appointment against the stated criteria for up to three years.</p>
Members with relevant scientific and technical expertise, one of which must be an independent member	<p>At least 3 members representing the following disciplines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant Biology • Microbiology • Molecular Biology • Biomedical research • Applied agricultural or environmental sciences • 	Voting	<p>Nominations shall be sought.</p> <p>Selections will be considered by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), in consultation with the Chair, IBC.</p> <p>Appointments will ordinarily be for a three-year term.</p>
University Biosafety Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must be suitably experience and qualified to hold the position of the University's Biosafety Advisor. Appointed by the University through a competitive selection process. This position is 	Voting	<p>Ex-officio (appointed by the Director (Safety and Security) and the IBC)</p>

	within the USQ Safety team.		
One USQ Safety staff member	- Must be suitably experienced and qualified in a relevant area. Appointed by the institution.	Voting	Ex-officio (appointed by the Director (Safety and Security) and the IBC)
One Teaching Operations staff member	- Must be suitably experienced and qualified in a relevant area. Appointed by the institution.	Voting	Ex-officio (nominated by the Executive Dean, HES)
One Research Operations staff member	- Must be suitably experienced and qualified in a relevant area. Appointed by the institution.	Voting	Ex-officio (nominated by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation)

In the case of even votes, a casting vote may be made by the chair.

4.4 Conduct and attendance at a meeting

Where the Chair is unable to be present at a meeting, the Deputy Chair will preside.

A quorum exists at a meeting of the USQ IBC if 80% of voting members are in attendance. This 80% must include the Chair (or Deputy Chair), and three members with relevant scientific and technical expertise, one of which must be an independent member.

When deemed appropriate a particular role on the committee may be shared by two persons to ensure minimum attendance requirements can be met. Where both the Chair and Deputy Chair are unavailable to be present at a meeting the Chair will nominate a committee member to chair the meeting in their absence.

The IBC or its Chair may invite other University staff members and persons external to the University, as required for the purposes of the IBC, to attend meetings as advisors.

The DVC (R&I), Executive Dean (HES), DVC (ES) or Director (Safety and Security) may attend meetings of the USQ IBC and shall have rights of audience and debate, but do not have voting rights.

4.4 Terms of Office

Appointed members shall serve for up to three years, via the Expression of Interest and Selection process. There is no restriction on the number of renewable terms. An appointed member who is absent from two or more consecutive meetings without having been granted leave of absence from the Chair shall be deemed to have vacated the position, resulting in a vacancy.

Ex officio members remain members for their term of office. Ex-officio members of the USQ IBC may nominate an acting person who has the relevant training to represent them in their absence. The member is to ensure the nominee is fully briefed and prepared to contribute to the meeting.

5 Authority

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation).

6 Ethical Practices, Confidentiality and Independence

Members of the Committee are to:

- exercise objectivity and integrity in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities;
- refrain from entering into any activity that may prejudice their ability to carry out their duties and responsibilities objectively and independently;
- act in a proper and prudent manner in the use of information acquired in the course of their duties and responsibilities, particularly in regard to the maintenance of confidentiality and privacy of information;
- exercise sound judgement guided by highest personal standards of honesty and integrity in all matters relating to membership of the Committee;
- ensure that they do not place themselves in situations which could lead to, or be perceived to give rise to a conflict of interest;
- disclose to the Committee any matter which could compromise, or be seen to compromise, the performance of their duties on the Committee or give rise to a perception of a conflict of interest; and
- have a sound understanding of the University's Code of Conduct.

Should it be identified that a conflict of interest may exist for a particular project or activity as above, to be assessed by the USQ IBC (as per the Biosafety Procedure Schedule of High Risk Biological Materials), the committee member must excuse themselves for the relevant assessment. If a quorum cannot be met, consideration must be given to the use of an external chair and/or members without an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

7 Committee Services Officer

USQ Safety provides the Committee Servicing for the University's Institutional Biosafety Committee.

8 Review of Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed by the USQ Institutional Biosafety Committee annually or earlier if required by external regulatory bodies.

9 Modification History

Date	Source	Details
02/02/2017	Manager, Research Integrity and Ethics	Removed Names, corrected formatting, minor content edits
02/02/2017	Manager, Research Integrity and Ethics	Updated Quorum details to include Chair or Deputy Chair.
30/05/2019	USQ IBC (via the Manager, Research Integrity and Ethics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended formatting and ordering of sections to be more consistent with Research Committee terms of reference. • Deleted information in role section which were functions of the USQ IBC. • Included new role and associated functions regarding the oversight of non-GMO activities involving biological materials/hazards and the referral of matters determined to be high-risk to the USQ IBC. • Included an Executive Committee with defined responsibilities
20/11/2020 – 12/02/2021	USQ IBC & University Biosafety Improvement Steering Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant revision to expand and clarify the scope, functions, and membership as per the University's Biosafety Review recommendations. • Inclusion of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise Services) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) in reporting section. • Change in support of the Committee from Research and Innovation to Safety, Enterprise Services, reflecting the institutional nature of the Committee. • Supporting information and training to assist with the expanded terms of reference to be developed and provided by the University's Biosafety Advisor.