



College / School Genetic Modification and Biological Safety Committees

Operational Guidance

1. Genetic Modification Biological Safety Committees

Genetic Modification Biological Safety Committees (GMBSC) provide a review and advice on the following matters:

- All genetically modified organism risk assessments.
- Biological agent risk assessments for HG 2 or HG 3 pathogen projects.
- Biological agent risk assessments for COSHH notifiable projects.
- Biological agent risk assessments for specified animal pathogen order (SAPO) licenced projects.
- Biological agent risk assessments for plant health order (PHO) licenced projects.
- Biological agent risk assessments for Schedule 5 projects.
- Any other relevant hazardous work that the GMBSC determines is needed to be reviewed and approved by the committee.

The GMBSC also issue approvals on behalf of their constituent Schools.

2. Members

The committee membership includes School management representatives including the GMBSO, deputy GMBSO, academic, safety and technical representatives of the School(s) and or College(s). The University Biological Safety Adviser (UBSA) as corporate adviser and assistant are also members.

3. Chair

The GMBSC is to be chaired by the GMBSO who leads the committee and provides guidance to principal investigators. The GMBSO is responsible for administering the GMBSC. All risk assessments must be processed through the GMBSO. The GMBSO may carry out this function with deputy GMBSO and or with administrative assistants. Administrative support may be needed to carry out this role but this is a matter for the Head of School(s) to which the GMBSO and GMBSC reports.

4. Meetings

At least one physical meeting to be held each year to discuss policies, incidents and issues etc and not generally to review risk assessment applications. Ad hoc meetings may of course be called by the GMBSO whenever needed to discuss any issues or complex risk assessments or where the committee needs to get together to directly discuss important subjects etc. At each meeting the GMBSO should give a report on the work of the committee since the last meeting. All members should be asked to provide

a brief report of any matters or issues in their area. The UBSA may provide a report and advice on any issues as needed.

5. Agendas and minutes

Agendas should be supplied at least two weeks before a meeting. Minutes must be produced and emailed to the committee for comment and preliminary approval usually within no more than 2 months of the end of a meeting. The revised version of the minutes should be sent to the whole committee although final approval will usually be at the following meeting.

6. Review and approval of risk assessments

The GMBSC provides advice and support on risk assessments but the responsibility for ensuring that risk assessments are done and are suitable and sufficient belongs to principal investigators and their Schools. The review and advice on BA and GM risk assessments is to be done electronically by virtual committee. Electronic versions of risk assessments, notification forms and all other documents and all feedback will be submitted by email. Physical meetings of the committee can be organised to discuss complex risk assessments or issues as needed but all documents must still be circulated electronically by email.

Members must be given at least two full weeks to review and provide advice on any risk assessments. This may need to be extended for higher risk or very complex risk assessments especially for work involving hazard group 3 pathogens or Class 3 genetically modified organisms. Members should review risk assessments and can give any advice or comments. The advice of the committee must be assembled into a single joint document and sent back to the full committee for review before sending to the PI.

Principal Investigators must act on the advice of the committee and either make changes or explain their reasons for not doing so or doing a suitable alternative to the satisfaction of the committee. The GMBSC will issue or deny any relevant approvals for risk assessments on behalf of the committee once satisfied.

The UBSA provides advice to the committee in relation to biological safety related law and guidance but does not issue management approval since this is the remit of the GMBSC and local GMBSC acting on behalf of the relevant Schools and Heads of Schools.

All risk assessments and other relevant documents should be dated and administered using version control (v1, v2, v3, v4 etc) so that the committee and records indicate clearly the order of changes and which is the final approved risk assessments and other related documents.

The GMBSC may need to convene at short notice to review risk assessments and controls in the event of any emergencies or serious incidents.

7. Records

The committee must maintain an up to date and complete register of approved all GM risk assessments and also all BA risk assessments for work which is notifiable under COSHH or requires an animal health (SAPO) or plant health (PHO) licence for the School(s). Suitable detailed records of these BA and GM risk assessments and associated notifications and other documents must be kept by the committee on behalf of the School(s) which it represents. The records must include a register of applications and approved projects and all risk assessments and other relevant documents must be maintained by Schools as documents on University servers where they are secure and properly backed up. It is not adequate or acceptable to maintain records solely in emails.