



Biological Safety Related to Partners and Tenants

This is a brief guidance for Schools about the biological safety responsibilities of tenant companies and partner organisations in relation to biological safety arrangements and licences and notifications for activities involving pathogens, biological agents and genetically modified organisms. Please note that this guidance note covers some key matters but it cannot cover all aspects of the various types of relationships between different employers and organisations and their duties and specific advice should be obtained from their own managers and safety advisers where needed.

1. Law

There are various regulations under the Health & Safety at Work Act that are particularly relevant to biological safety including the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) and Genetically Modified Organisms (Contained Use) Regulations (GMOCU), but there are many other regulations including those related to animal health, plant health and environment. Each employer such as the university, tenant companies and partner organisations are separate legal entities and have various regulatory duties for the management of health and safety, animal health, plant health and environmental protection.

Employers have duties to their own employees as well as to the public, partner organisations or any persons affected by their work activities. Employers must safely control their activities and cooperate, coordinate and communicate with other relevant partners or tenants in relation to health and safety and biological safety matters. There are duties of landlords and tenants and duties in relation to protecting the safety of visitors and visiting workers including in relation to biological safety. The University and its partners and tenants have workers visiting each other's organisations to carry out work as visiting workers under the local safety arrangements of the partner organisation.

Each employer must ensure that it has the relevant biological safety related licences and notifications for its work activities and these apply only to activities of its own undertakings and not to those of partner organisations or tenant companies. Each employer has their own legal duties to ensure they have competent health and safety assistance such as the advice of safety advisers and biological safety advisers to help the employer ensure it can carry out its safety duties.

2. Regulatory Licences and Notifications

The University of Edinburgh has various biological safety related licences and notifications for its work activities that by law only apply to the University of Edinburgh, its Schools and their activities in its own undertakings and controlled facilities. These licences and notifications do not apply to the work of partner organisations in their facilities and they must have their own licences and notifications that apply to their undertaking and activities.



The University of Edinburgh is notified to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) as required under the COSHH Regulations and GMOCU Regulations as licenced premises to conduct activities involving biological agents and genetically modified organisms and it has many related project specific notifications for work at containment levels 1, 2 and 3. The University's premises notification number is 207. The premises notification and related project specific notifications only apply to the university's work activities in its own undertakings. In addition, the University and its Schools have many other types of licences including animal health and plant health licences.

Partner and tenant organisations and are responsible for obtaining their own biological safety related licences and notifications for their work activities carried out in their undertakings.

3. Regulatory Guidance

There is detailed regulatory guidance on biological safety and the duties of employers, licences, notifications and requirements for working with pathogens, biological agents and genetically modified organisms, containment and control available from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Animal Health, Plant Health and other agencies. Please see the links below to some of the key regulatory guidance documents and website resources.

3.1 Guidance

- [HSE Control of substances hazardous to health](#)
- [HSE Genetically modified organisms \(contained use\)](#)
- [HSE Containment and control of specified animal pathogens](#)

3.2 Websites

- [HSE Biological Safety](#)
- [HSE Biological Agents](#)
- [HSE Genetically Modified Organisms](#)
- [HSE Specified Animal Pathogens](#)
- [Animal Health \(Scotland\)](#)
- [Plant Health \(Scotland\)](#)
- [Animal and Plant Health Agency](#)

4. Further Information and Guidance

Please contact your School Biological Safety Adviser if you need advice on any aspect of biological safety. Further information and guidance on biological safety matters including the duties of employers, licences and notifications, working with pathogens, biological agents and genetically modified organisms, BA / GM risk assessment, and containment and control measures is on the Biosafety Unit (BSU)



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website. HSE and other regulators provides extensive guidance on biological safety for employers, managers and safety advisers to assist in ensuring safety and compliance.

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