

Biosafety Policy

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) The University of Queensland (UQ) regards the health, safety and wellness of staff and students as integral to the pursuit of knowledge and excellence and as an ethical, moral and legal responsibility. Effective management of safety and compliance risks are non-negotiable under the Senate-approved Risk Appetite Statement.

(2) Health and safety management at UQ is an enabling management function overseen by the Vice-Chancellor's Risk and Compliance Committee (VCRCC) and the Chief Operating Officer. Biosafety is the discipline that describes measures relating to the protection of an environment or population from contamination with or infection by a biological agent. Biosafety management enables UQ to protect the health and safety of people and the environment by managing risks posed by work involving biological material and complying with relevant legislative requirements.

(3) This Policy applies to all UQ workers – including staff, higher degree by research (HDR) students, visitors, contractors and volunteers – across all UQ operations and sites who are working with biological material or working in areas where biological material is used. For the purposes of this Policy, HDR students hold equivalent responsibilities to those of workers. The definition of UQ workers is broad to support UQ's responsibilities under the [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#). The definition of UQ workers is provided in the Appendix.

(4) This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- a. the biosafety legislation, codes, standards and guidelines outlined under “Associated Information”;
- b. the Institutional Biosafety Committee Terms of Reference; and
- c. other UQ policies and procedures relevant to biosafety.

Section 2 - Principles and Key Requirements

(5) UQ is dedicated to providing a safe and healthy work environment and pursues its strategic and operational objectives in a responsible manner, having regard to the care of its workers, the greater public and the environment. UQ will:

- a. meet its statutory obligations set out under state and federal law in relation to working with biological material (as outlined in “Associated Information”);
- b. ensure all UQ workers dealing with biological material or in areas where work with biological material is undertaken comply with all legislative requirements, mandatory codes, and standards applicable to their work (as outlined in “Associated Information”);
- c. ensure its status as an Accredited Organisation under the [Gene Technology Act 2000](#) is maintained and will continue to meet [Office of the Gene Technology Regulator \(OGTR\)](#) requirements and conditions of the Guidelines for Accreditation of Organisations;
- d. establish and maintain an Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) to oversee and approve the use of genetically modified and/or biological materials. The Chair of the sub-committee is the signatory for approval of such proposal;
- e. ensure the membership of the IBC includes appropriate expertise and the IBC has the necessary resources to

assess applications relating to work involving genetically modified organisms (GMO) and/or high-risk biological work;

- f. ensure all workers dealing with high-risk biological material or GMOs follow appropriate risk management procedures, are properly trained and competent in working with such material;
- g. provide containment facilities that meet the requirements in the relevant guidelines or standards for the containment, handling, storage, and disposal of the type of organism or process being undertaken, and that these facilities are inspected regularly as per regulatory requirements; and
- h. provide information and advice to workers on the requirements of working with biological materials, including procedures, guidelines and training through the Health, Safety and Wellness Division (HSW Division).

Section 3 - Roles, Responsibilities and Accountabilities

Vice-Chancellor

(6) The Vice-Chancellor holds ultimate responsibility for all genetic modification work done at UQ or in UQ's OGTR certified facilities and work with imported Biosecurity goods. Operational oversight is delegated to the IBC Chair and the HSW Division.

Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC)

(7) The UQ Institutional Biosafety Committee will undertake duties in accordance with its Terms of Reference and provide UQ workers with education, information, and support to enable them to understand their biosafety compliance obligations at UQ. Approval of projects involving GMOs or high-risk biologicals is managed by the IBC Sub-Committee.

Institutional Biosafety Committee

(8) Consists of the IBC Chair, Deputy Chair (Director, HSW), IBC Secretary and appropriate experts from across UQ.

(9) Considers all biosafety issues arising between IBC meetings, and may make a determination on actions required.

IBC Sub-Committee (IBSC)

(10) Consists of the IBSC Chair, Deputy Chair, IBSC Secretary and appropriate experts from across UQ.

(11) Considers all work involving genetic modification or high-risk biological work to be conducted in UQ premises, by UQ personnel in non-UQ premises or by external organisations accessing IBC services under legal agreement.

Health, Safety and Wellness Division

(12) The HSW Division is responsible for providing UQ workers with education, information, and support to enable them to understand their biosafety compliance obligations at UQ. In addition, the HSW Division will provide advice specific to biosafety matters, biosecurity (quarantine), representation with Regulator visits and advice to the IBC in relation to biosafety/biosecurity matters as required.

UQ Workers

(13) UQ workers undertaking activities within the scope of this Policy must be aware of their compliance obligations as outlined in this Policy. All UQ workers involved with approved biosafety/biosecurity dealings have a duty to read, understand and comply with any dealings/permits applicable to their work.

(14) UQ workers are responsible for the integrity of the records and information involving dealings and license/permit

activities and to inform the IBC of any non-compliances as soon as possible. UQ workers are also responsible for ensuring approvals are in place for work in any non-UQ facilities and for complying with their requirements as necessary.

(15) UQ workers should seek advice from the HSW Division when wishing to contact the regulators or the IBC to ensure compliance obligations are met.

Section 4 - Monitoring, Review and Assurance

Heads of Organisational Units

(16) Heads of Organisational Units will ensure that managers and supervisors monitor and review their operational activities, risks, and controls to ensure effective health and safety management, including compliance and continual improvement of performance in the area of Biosafety.

Health, Safety and Wellness Division

(17) The HSW Division will monitor and review the compliance practices and health and safety management performance across UQ to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the related controls including policies and procedures in the area of Biosafety. The conditions will be met by:

- a. assessing compliance with this Policy and to demonstrate/confirm its effectiveness;
- b. identifying, assessing, and promptly addressing any deficiencies in this Policy;
- c. ensuring ongoing relevance of this Policy;
- d. monitoring biosafety regulatory requirements and changes to industry codes, standards and guidelines, and revisions of this Policy as required to ensure its relevancy and currency; and
- e. ensuring annual audits of certified facilities are undertaken by persons authorised by the IBC, to ensure dealings and facilities meet regulatory requirements and that all UQ workers working, handling, using or storing biological materials (both at UQ and non-UQ locations), are compliant with regulations and dealing requirements.

(18) Non-compliance with this Policy and its associated procedures may be considered research misconduct under UQ's [Responsible Research Management Framework Policy](#). It may also be a breach of relevant Federal and State legislative requirements.

Section 5 - Recording and Reporting

(19) The HSW Division provides the resources to record the transactions, activities and results associated with this Policy. The HSW Division will also provide the relevant information and reports to senior management and to the VCRC to demonstrate and provide assurance that the objectives and outcomes outlined in this Policy are being achieved. The HSW Division reports regularly to senior UQ management, including reporting of any non-compliances involving significant engagement with the involved regulators.

(20) The HSW Division is responsible for ensuring this Policy is up to date, communicating changes in standards, licencing and guidelines when required, recording UQ worker approvals through databases, providing advice and access to IBC Committees, and providing representation during Regulator visits when required.

(21) UQ's IBC is responsible for producing an annual report to the OGTR, reporting non-compliances to the OGTR and Department of Agriculture and Water and Environment (DAWE), and meeting any other reporting requests from regulators.

Section 6 - Appendix

Definitions, Terms and Acronyms

Term	Definition
Accredited Organisation	an organisation or entity that has been accredited by the OGTR for research/dealings involving genetic modification.
Biosafety	measures relating to the protection of an environment or population from contamination with or infection by a biological agent (Oxford English Dictionary).
Dealing	includes any procedure that involves a GM/GMO/GMMO, as described in the Low Risk Genetically Modified Dealings Procedure , Notifiable Low Risk Dealings Procedure, Working with Retroviral Vectors Guideline, and Requirements for the Identification of Genetically Modified Organisms in Storage Guideline .
Department of Agriculture and Water and Environment - Biosecurity (DAWE)	section within the Commonwealth Government responsible for the control of biological imports and quarantine.
GM/GMO/GMMM	Genetically Modified/Genetically Modified Organism/Genetically Modified Microorganism.
High Risk Biological Material	specified by the UQ IBC as described in UQ's Working with Hazardous Biological Material Procedure .
IBC	Institutional Biosafety Committee, established by an Accredited Organisation, as required by the OGTR.
IBSC	Institutional Biosafety Sub-Committee.
OGTR	Office of the Gene Technology Regulator
UQ workers	For the purposes of this Policy includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• staff – continuing, fixed-term, research (contingent funding) and casual staff members;• contractors, subcontractors and consultants;• visiting academics and researchers;• academic titles holders, emeritus professors, adjunct and honorary title holders, industry fellows and conjoint appointments;• higher degree by research students; and• volunteers and students undertaking supervised research or work experience.

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