APPENDIX A Draft

Draft Minutes for the 8th meeting of the Biosafety Committee of the University of Hong Kong. (A sub-committee of the Safety Health and Environment Committee).

Held on **Thursday, 9th February 2012, 10.00 a.m., Room 414 at Professorial Block, Queen Mary Hospital**

The following members were present:-

	Affiliation	**Function/Role**
Professor K.S-L.Lam	Medicine	Chairman
Professor J. Bacon-Shone	Social Sciences	Independent
Dr E.K.M. Hau	Safety Office	Safety Office Rep
Dr. K.S. Lo	LAU	CULATR liaison etc.
Dr Hani El-Nezami	School of Biological Sciences	Science Faculty Rep
Professor G.S.W. Tsao	Anatomy	Medical Faculty Rep
Dr C.F. Zhang	Dentistry	Dental Faculty Rep
Ms Cindy Lee	Microbiology	Senior Technical Staff Rep
Dr. Mike Mackett	Safety Office	Secretary (BSO)

1. Minutes of the 7th meeting of the Biosafety Committee (May 2011)
The draft minutes of the 7th meeting of the Biosafety Committee were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.

Action point: Secretary to arrange for the final version of the minutes to be posted on the Safety Office website.

2. Matters arising from the minutes of the 7th meeting.
i) Under point 2 (matters arising) there is mention of screening grant proposals for Biosafety concerns. Professor Bacon-Shone informed the committee that he had obtained several CD's from research services that contained all GRF, RFCID, Seed and Small grant applications in order to screen them for compliance with human ethics approval procedures. It was suggested that biosafety concerns could be identified from these same CD's and that it would be possible to look at all aspects of safety with a keyword search. This led to a discussion on the procedures adopted for safety approval on the grants and the standard tick box forms used when chemical or biological safety of the grant needs to be reviewed. It was acknowledged that the forms probably needed revising and the Safety Office agreed to investigate the issue further and potentially modify the forms. (Current forms are publically available on the Research Services and Safety Office websites)

ii) Under point 3 it was noted that the new clinical waste regulations came into force on August 1st 2011 and the Universities arrangements appeared to be running smoothly. It was noted that the main producer of clinical waste was the Faculty of Medicine and that the change in regulations (all waste going to an incinerator for which there was a charge) means that the Faculty is likely to have to pay an extra HK$150,000 per year for disposal. The meeting was informed that the Safety Office is planning a meeting to get summarize the current situation and get feedback from stakeholders.

iii) A question, arising from agenda item 5, was asked regarding whether the Faculty of Medicine had been able to purchase a cabinet for a FACS machine or a new machine with a cabinet supply. Professor Tsao, who is in charge of the core FACS facility, indicated that this had not been possible. He noted that each project fills in a risk assessment form which needs to be approved before samples can be run on the core machines. Some samples such as those from individuals with known blood borne infection cannot be run in the facility and some other projects were on hold because of safety concerns. Professor Tsao also noted that the approval forms would be modified to include an indication that the project was only approved for a specified time period.

Action points:
1) Safety Office to consider developing a process to review grant proposals for safety concerns.
2) Safety Office to review chemical and biosafety tick-box forms that accompany grant approval forms.

3. An overview of biosafety management and practice in HKU.
The secretary outlined a review of Biosafety in HKU with the intention of providing an introduction to Biosafety provision for new members of the committee and attempting to improve and set a direction. He highlighted two slides in particular (Slides 4 and 8 in Appendix B) which were a summary of biosafety in the University and the safe systems of work applied across all laboratories. As indicated in the agenda he drew attention to three areas 1) Risk assessment 2) Induction training on Biosafety 3) Codes of Practice/ Standard operating procedures.

The committee chose to discuss risk assessment at this point rather than under other agenda points.

The secretary explained that in his role as the Biosafety Officer (BSO) he had been sent a number of risk assessments and although the frequency seems to have increased recently it is still only at most one a month. In order to expedite their review he had assessed their suitability and replied directly to the individuals seeking guidance or approval without reference to the committee. While this practice is contrary to that stated in the biosafety policy it was a practical way of review. Professor Bacon-Shone indicated that he had adopted a similar policy for approval of risk assessments for research involving human subjects. As chair of the Human Research Ethics committee he approves 95% of applications where they are clearly low risk or of higher risk where the issues are well understood and only in the case of high risk applications is the committee fully consulted. Members felt this would also be an appropriate way to handle the approval of biosafety risk assessments with the BSO also approving 95% of applications and only circulating those with specific issues.

The secretary pointed out that the risk assessment section in the biosafety policy is quite stringent and the questions posed in agenda point 4 need to be answered. i.e. are the requirements for risk assessment and who carries them out appropriate (section 3.5)? At what level should requirements for risk assessment be monitored, implemented and

enforced? Some discussion ensued and the chairman suggested these issues would be best dealt with by a small sub-group of the committee and asked Dr Hau, Dr Nazri, Professor Tsao and the secretary to meet and discuss them. Any conclusions or recommendations would be circulated to committee members for further discussion.

Action points:
1) To set up small group meeting to discuss the requirements for risk assessment and who carries them out. The group will also discuss some of the details of assessment and how they might be monitored, implemented and enforced.
2) Small group to report back to Biosafety Committee.

Agenda points 5 and 6 were taken before discussion of the Biosafety Policy (Agenda point 4).

4. A review of the terms of reference and composition of the Biosafety Committee
The committee discussed briefly its terms of reference and composition. While the committee was in general agreement with the terms of reference it was noted that approving projects for 5 years seemed excessive.

While discussing the committee membership it was noted that the chairman had invited the Dean of the Faculty of Dentistry to appoint a member to join them consequently Dr. Zhang was attending the meeting. The committee realized that this initiative will need to be approved by the Safety Health and Environment Committee (SHEC). Following the last Biosafety Committee meeting several of the original members of the committee have been replaced with new appointees. SHEC has also appointed the Head of Safety to sit on the committee.

Professor Bacon-Shone suggested he might be replaced on the committee by Professor Fred Leung because Professor Leung has oversight of responsible conduct in research and would be able to advise the committee on the practicalities of any arrangements made to promote biosafety.

Professor Tsao noted that he had been on the committee since its inception and wondered if it might be appropriate for someone else to take his place. This could be, for example, someone from another department such as Pathology, where a significant amount of biohazardous research and diagnostic work is carried out.

Action points:
1. Secretary to draft slightly modified terms of reference for the committee (once the issues surrounding risk assessment have been discussed and a course of action determined). When the revised terms of reference have been drafted and approved the secretary will seek approval of SHEC.
2. Secretary to seek approval of SHEC to include a representative of the Faculty of Dentistry on the Biosafety Committee.

5. Biosafety Induction Training.
While there was little discussion on the content of the proposed introduction to Biological Safety in the appendix it was clear that the committee was in favor of a half day course that

could act as a standard introduction to Biosafety. This would be in addition to the short presentation graduate students receive in Faculty safety awareness workshops and could include Research Assistants and technical staff who would otherwise be left out. The committee envisaged this course being similar to the Radiation Safety course and would be taken by the Biological Safety Officer in person rather than being an online course, although some online backup might be given. The committee felt that all newcomers exposed to biohazard should be required to do the course – this is standard in most universities throughout Europe, America and Australasia. This might be achieved by working with the Faculties or through the Graduate School to make it a requirement. It was also suggested that attendance by Research Assistants might be monitored via their PRSD.

Action points:
1) Chairman to inform Deans of Faculties and Heads of Departments that the Biosafety committee believes all those exposed to hazardous biological materials should receive a half day training course and investigate how such a course might be delivered.
2) Secretary to develop the course.

6. A review of the Universities Biosafety Policy
The policy was commented on section by section with a few preliminary comments. One suggestion to increase the accessibility of the policy was to include a section of frequently asked questions. The appendices that contain the responsibilities of the various members of the University were thought to be helpful and will be retained.

It was noted that Section 2 was now out of date because several relevant pieces of legislation have been introduced in Hong Kong in the last few years. The secretary indicated that he will update this section with the relevant facts.

In Section 3.2 there is mention of Faculty and Departmental safety committees. It was noted that this section is partially out of step with University practice and reflects an idealised version of safety management. The secretary expressed the view that it was not good practice to have a written policy that is contradicted by current practice and either practice should be changed or the policy should be adapted. The committee felt that it was really a matter for SHEC and Dr Hau indicated that he would bring this to their attention.

In section 3.5 there is an extensive passage on risk assessment. It was agreed that the small sub-group set up to discuss this area will review this section and make suggestions.

In section 3.6 (Biosecurity) an inventory of Class 2 agents in addition to thorough and detailed inventories kept for Class 3 agents, is suggested. This topic generated some discussion and it was agreed that this was probably a good idea. However rather than organizing it centrally it was suggested that a simple inventory could be set up by each department head and they could update it on a regular basis. This could then be one of the pieces of information requested by the safety office when inspections are undertaken.

Section 4.2 was discussed and it was agreed that, in general, we will follow the categorization of agents as proposed in the US BMBL but that local considerations would also be taken into

account. The committee also agreed that all virus vector work and any work at category 2 or 3 should be risk assessed. The details of this policy are to be discussed in the small sub-group to be set up.

The secretary indicated that some work carried out at Biosafety level 2 was not clearly delineated and consequently was not well controlled. In section 5 it is stated that "Each laboratory must have clear documented local rules indicating the working practices that must be followed for activities in that laboratory". The committee agreed that this was necessary and that all laboratories designated as Biosafety Level 2 laboratories should have a code of practice.

There was discussion among members of the timescale for these changes to policy. Some members were keen to present the changes to the next SHEC meeting – probably in May. The secretary pointed out that it would probably take longer than this for the small group meeting to look at risk assessment to report back to the committee in time for May. The secretary indicated that he would make all the factual changes and updates before the SHEC meeting and possibly present them then. The other changes could be finalized once the small group had met and other issues were dealt with.

Action points:
1) Secretary to update the sections of the policy that require factual additions such as section 2 where new laws have been enacted since the policy was developed.
2) Secretary to generate a frequently asked questions section to go with the policy
3) Head of Safety (Dr Hau) to consult with SHEC on areas of the policy that are out of step with current practice in the University.
4) Chairman to write a letter to the heads of Department highlighting the need to keep an inventory of biological agents at a departmental level
5) The secretary to prepare a guidance note on what to include in a laboratory code of practice/standard operating procedure and generate an example to help departments think through Biosafety level 2 requirements

7. Dual Use Research.
The topic of dual use research was briefly discussed at the end of the meeting. It was acknowledged that some university members undertook research which could be considered to be of a dual use nature. The current controversy with transmission studies and influenza H5N1 was a good example. Members considered this issue was more relevant for research ethics than for biosafety or biosecurity.

8. Any other business.
No other business was discussed and the meeting finished at mid-day.

9. Date of next meeting.
The date of the next Biosafety Committee meeting has been set for October 11th 2012.