

***The Sub-Committee for Biological Safety meeting on Monday, 19 October 2020 did not occur in person due to the University policy of minimising large group gatherings during the Covid-19 pandemic.
This meeting took place on the online platform MS-TEAMS.***

Present: Dr M Wills (Chairman), Dr A Gilliland (Secretary), Dr H Bertrand, Professor I Brierley, Dr G Christie, Mr M Elsdon, Mr T Fitzmaurice, Mrs C Gewert, Dr A Grant, Mr S Jameson, Dr G Martell, Dr T O'Connell, Professor S Ozanne and Dr K Tibbles

In attendance: Mrs D Grover

The School of Clinical Medicine has confirmed that Dr Mark Wills, Department of Medicine and Chair of the Sub-Committee for Biological Safety can continue as the School's representative for a further three years, had indicated his willingness to serve and been re-nominated by the School of Clinical Medicine for confirmation at this Sub-Committee.

Dr Gilliland, in her position as Secretary to the Sub-Committee of Biological Safety, asked the Committee if it was content to re-appoint Dr Mark Wills as Chair for a further 3 years. This was discussed and unanimously agreed. At this point, he resumed the Chair.

1. Apologies for absence

Mr R Borthwick, Prof P Cicuta (on Sabbatical for this Academic year), Ms A Dahal, Ms A Gilderdale, Mr T Jones, Ms L Smith and Dr M Vinnell.

2. Minutes of the Sub-Committee meeting held on 21 April 2020

In discussion with the Sub-Committee for Biological Safety Chairman, Dr Mark Wills, it was agreed to hold a meeting virtually on TEAMS with the CL3 Working Group of the Sub-Committee, specifically to discuss and agree a stance on the latest bulletin issued by the HSE on 7 April 2020 on appropriate laboratory containment levels for working with COVID-19 containing samples.

The minutes were circulated to the CL3 Working Group on 7 May 2020 with an invitation to provide comments via email. None were received and the Chairman signalled that he is content to sign these off.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising.

4. Remit and Membership of the Sub-Committee for Biological Safety

As Prof Pietro Cicuta is on Sabbatical for this Academic year, he has stepped down from his role as the School of Physical Sciences' representative. In the meantime, Mr Tim Fitzmaurice will continue as a co-opted member from the Department of Physics. Post-Meeting note: Mr Fitzmaurice has been appointed as the School of Physical Sciences representative on this sub-committee.

The Committee welcomed new member Dr Andrew Grant, BSO from the School of the Biological Sciences (Veterinary Medicine). Ms Aastha Dahal, President of the Cambridge University Graduate Union and Ms Alice Gilderdale the Welfare Officer at the Graduate Union were welcomed in absentia.

4.1 **Sub-Committee Remit (*Paper BS/2021/02*)**

The Secretary introduced the remit for 2020-2021 (*Paper BS/2021/02*) and asked members if they were content. The remit was accepted by the Sub-Committee and will go forward to the CCFS.

4.2 **Sub-Committee Membership (*Paper BS/2021/03*)**

The Secretary asked members to receive the document detailing the membership. Dr O'Connell asked if the membership should say 'University Teaching Officers' instead of 'Academic members'. The Secretary informed the members that the Schools decided how to appoint members to the various Sub-Committees.

Dr Tibbles commented that it was important to have representation from University Academic members so that the sub-committee was not primarily composed of safety professionals and it also ensures cross representation from across the University.

5. **Biological Compliance**

5.1 **SAPO**

The Secretary informed the Sub-Committee that there was nothing new to report.

5.2 **Human Tissue Act**

The Secretary spoke to her report (*Paper BS/2021/04*) and informed the Committee that HTA Committee met on 24 September 2020 and agreed its Terms of Reference with one amendment relating to point 3) 'To promote an active health and safety culture amongst staff, students and visitors towards their **storage and** research with human tissue.'

The Secretary reported that the new Person Designated (PD) for PDN is Dr T Cindrova-Davies as Graham Burton has retired and Prof J Gibson is the new PD at the Department of Veterinary Medicine. There are also new site PDs for the Hub licence, Prof J Doorbar and at the Satellite 3 West Cambridge site Dr G Christie.

It was noted that the MRC-Toxicology Unit, would be relocating from Leicester to Cambridge in November 2020 and has joined the University HTA Research Licence.

5.3 **Reports on Visits and Inspections (CTSA/HSE/Defra/APHA)**

The Secretary informed the members that the Department of Pathology had a CTSA routine proactive inspection, which was carried out by David Garwood on 9 October 2020. Mr Elsdon had received an email to say that the CTSA had been very happy with the inspection and there was nothing significant to report. The CTSA also visited the Department of Veterinary Medicine in March, no issues were reported.

As reported in April's meeting there had been three visits from the APHA in February and March to the Departments of Biochemistry, Geography and the Sainsbury Laboratory. All were routine, proactive inspections.

The Secretary informed the Sub-Committee that Defra and the HSE would not be carrying out in-person inspections at present.

5.4 **Biological Safety Officers**

The Secretary spoke to her paper (*Paper BS/2021/05*) informing members that most individuals have indicated willingness to be reappointed but the Safety Office had not yet received the confirmatory BSO letters. The Secretariat will chase letters of appointment that remain outstanding.

Dr O'Connell informed the Sub-Committee that the DSO for the Department of Archaeology would be leaving in the middle of January and that she would be assuming this role, in addition to her BSO role. Dr Christie also informed the Sub-Committee that Ms Singh is now the Deputy BSO for Chemical Engineering & Biotechnology. Prof

Brierley confirmed that Dr Ajioka has taken over the role of BSO for the Department of Pathology, Downing site, replacing Dr Scarpini.

Action: The Secretariat to chase Schools for the outstanding BSO appointment letters.

5.5 **Leaflets/Policies and Codes of Practice**

The Safety Office had been made aware that the use of 'screened' blood from the NHS Blood and Transplant service (NHSBT) is not a guarantee that the blood is safe to be used at Containment Level 1. The Safety Office sent out a Blood Questionnaire to find out where departments got their blood samples from so that a new guidance leaflet for the safe use of human/animal blood could be produced.

Ms Gewert reported on the results of the Blood Questionnaire 2020 (*Paper BS/2021/06*). The questionnaire was sent out to 51 departments and 40 departments completed the questionnaire, which was a response rate of 80%.

Of these, 40% of departments are using human blood source from within their departments. Also 40% of departments process human blood under CL2 laboratory conditions, which was agreed to be the most appropriate containment level in most cases.

With reference to HIV in blood samples, seven departments incubate blood for longer than 100 hours and five of these departments have assessed the risks. It was agreed that serum and plasma adventitious agents should also be addressed within the blood leaflet.

Mrs Gewert will formulate a guidance blood leaflet for discussion at the next Sub-Committee meeting in January 2021.

Action: Mrs Gewert to draft a 'Safe Use of Human/Animal Blood' guidance leaflet.

5.6 **Annual Biological Safety Questionnaire**

The Secretary reported that there had been a 90% response rate from departments and only nine responses remained outstanding.

A couple of Departments had queried the timing of the questionnaire due to various demands around the University. The consensus was to continue sending out the Annual Biological Safety Questionnaire in early September.

5.7 **Containment Level 3**

Mrs Gewert spoke to her report (*Paper BS/2021/07*) and informed the Committee that the CL3 Working Group consists of representatives from each department that has CL3 lab facilities as well as the School Safety Officers from Clinical Medicine and Biological Sciences and the two Biological Safety Officers from the Safety Office.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Sub-Committee for Biological Safety, thanked Mark Elsdon, Keff Tibbles, and Androulla Gilliland for assisting researchers and departments in getting HSE approval to carry out Covid-19 research in the early stages of lockdown.

It was reported that since May 2020, Dr Gilliland and Mrs Gewert had been members of the University SafeSpace Team, inspecting buildings to assist departments in the Covid-safe re-opening of University buildings. As most departments have now returned to the workplace, they have stepped back from the SafeSpace Team to concentrate on the biological safety and compliance work.

Mrs Gewert introduced the remit for 2020-2021 (*Paper BS/2021/08*) and asked members if they were content. The remit was accepted by the Sub-Committee and will go forward to the CCFS.

There were no amendments to the Terms of Reference but the membership has been updated to include Mr David Cheesman from CIMR and Dr Andrew Grant from the Department of Veterinary Medicine. Mr Mark Elsdon is now also the DSO as well as the BSO for University Biomedical Services, including its CL3 Animal facility.

Action: Mrs Gewert to amend 'Biological' to 'Biomedical' (University Biomedical Services).

The new highlighted paragraphs will be discussed further in the CL3 Working Group meeting immediately following this meeting.

The proposed changes to the CL3 Laboratory Policy outlined in **Paper BS/2021/0**), relate to the responsibilities of home/host departments wishing to work within CL3 facilities outside of their own Department. In addition, Mr Elsdon has provided some new paragraphs relating to the section on Animal CL3 Facilities.

The Sub-Committee agreed that once all the comments have been incorporated, the CL3 Laboratory Policy would be provided to the CCFS for adoption as the revised University policy, without coming back to the Sub-Committee for Biological Safety meeting in January 2021 for further scrutiny.

The Chairman asked that thanks should be minuted to Dr Gilliland, Mrs Gewert, Mr Elsdon and Dr Tibbles for all their hard work on drafting the CL3 Laboratory Policy.

CL3 training will be discussed in further detail at the CL3 Working Group meeting.

6. Covid-19

6.1 Guidance Note on Suitable Lab Containment Level for working on Covid-19

A guidance note had been provided to the Sub-Committee (**Paper BS/2021/10**) for information. The note aims to assist those who are planning to undertake research risk assessments for activities using the Hazard Group 3 virus SARS-CoV-2 (causative agent of COVID-19) in non-clinical settings. It takes into account the guidance issued by Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive on adopting the appropriate laboratory containment level for HG3 SARS-CoV-2 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Guidance Note is subject to review and amendment as and when new evidence or new PHE/HSE guidance comes to light.

7. Training

7.1 Biological Safety Officer's Training Event (Tuesday, 18 May 2021)

The Secretary reported that this event will take place online via TEAMS next year. Dr Wills will Chair the event and has offered to give a talk on blood samples from clinical trials containing Covid-19. Other items discussed to be suitable for inclusion on the programme were working safely with Microbiological Safety Cabinets, the Numbers Game and to have a speaker who has dealt with a biological emergency. The speakers would share their screens to display their PowerPoint presentations, with participants being able to submit questions in the Chat section of TEAMS.

Action: Other speaker ideas for the BSO Training Event are welcome from members of the Sub-Committee.

7.2 Training Courses 2020-2021, biological and others (Paper BS/2021/11)

Some training courses are still to be confirmed in the Safety Office training calendar. The face-to-face CL3 training due to take place in March 2020 had been cancelled but a provisional date has been arranged with the trainer for next year.

8. Accidents/Incidents

The Chairman drew members' attention to the report (*Paper BS/1920/12*). He reported that there are the usual animal bites and needlestick incidents and that no requests had been raised to discuss any of the incidents in more detail.

The Chairman mentioned an incident with blood from a COVID19 positive person. This was a near miss incident of blood spot in CL2 Lab (ACCB246/A5). IP was processing blood of suspected COVID19 patient when the lid of a tube slipped out of their hand. This caused a small blood spill in the MSC and some blood splashed onto the IP's lab coat outside of the MSC. The room was evacuated and decontaminated as per the SOP. IP was screened for Covid-19 and tested negative. The resulting action was to ensure all tubes remained in the rack when being uncapped/recapped.

9. Reports

9.1 Report from the Sub-Committee for Chemical Safety

As the Secretary has not heard if there will be a representative from the School of Biological Sciences on the Sub-Committee for Chemical Safety, this item was not taken on the Agenda at this meeting.

9.2 Report from Estate Management (*Paper BS/2021/13*)

Mr Borthwick provided a summary of activities since January 2020, which included water quality and safety for buildings that have reopened post lock-down.

9.3 Report from the Safety Officer, School of the Biological Sciences

Mr Elsdon reported that he had received a document entitled 'The Border with the European Union – Importing and Exporting Goods,' which he would circulate to the Sub-Committee for information. The Secretary would circulate the document to the BSOs.

Action: The Secretariat to circulate 'The Border with the European Union – Importing and Exporting Goods' document to BSOs.

9.4 Report from the Safety Officer, School of Clinical Medicine

Dr Tibbles reported that Covid-19 has generated more research interest in undertaking work at CL3 containment. Some students who want to do this research have no experience of CL3 work. Dr Tibbles would like to know how this can be addressed going forward. This matter would be discussed further in the CL3 Working Group.

9.5 Report from Occupational Health

Dr Martell gave a verbal report and updated the Sub-Committee on the current situation:

COVID work – undertaking enquiries/referrals and producing COVID risk assessment/adjusting to working remotely with no access to physical records and OPAS.

Since March, Occ Health have completed 29 Containment Level 3 assessments for COVID related work and 9 assessments for *Plasmodium falciparum* (as a new group has transferred into the University). This has risen significantly as only seven were seen in last report period (Oct – Dec 19).

Since the return to workplace – Occ health has resumed face-to-face appointments for occupational vaccinations/blood tests as part of any 'health clearance' required for work.

Health surveillance for allergy screening – these are being undertaken via telephone consultations.

Occ health aims to restart/catch up on any missed appointments for surveillance once medical student appointments completed.

Due to the need to implement social distancing and infection control measures (to protect OH staff and those attending appointments) Occupational Health have had to increase appointment times and this will impact on appointment availability.

Post meeting note – CL3 health surveillance numbers for COVID work – these were from the Clinical School and Veterinary Medicine.

9.6 Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst (SBC)

The Secretary reported that the University of Cambridge project and staff that had based at SBC have relocated to the Department of Veterinary Medicine in Cambridge. The SBC's GM centre number overseen by the Sub-Committee for biological safety is no longer required and all the organisms have been removed from SBC. The HSE will be notified that the GM3190 centre can be closed.

Action: The Secretariat to notify HSE that the GM 3190 number can be closed.

9.7 Report from Consultative Committee for Safety (CCFS)

The Secretary drew members' attention to this report (*Paper BS/19/20/14*), for noting only.

10. Dates of next meetings

The next meeting will take place on Monday, 18 January 2021 via TEAMS, starting at 14:00 hrs, followed by the meeting of the CL3 Working Group.

Monday, 26 April 2021 via TEAMS, starting at 14:00 hrs, followed by the meeting of the CL3 Working Group.

The meeting closed at 15:30 hrs.

ACTION TABLE

ACTION NUMBER	ACTION	BY WHOM	DATE COMPLETED
5.4	The Secretariat to chase Schools for the outstanding BSO appointment letters.	Secretariat	Done
5.5	Mrs Gewert to draft a 'Safe Use of Human/Animal Blood' guidance leaflet.	CG	
5.7	Mrs Gewert to amend 'Biological' to 'Biomedical' (University Biomedical Services) on Membership List	CG	Done
7.1	Other speaker ideas for the BSO Training Event are welcomed from members of the Sub-Committee.	ALL	
9.3	The Secretariat to circulate 'The Border with the European Union – Importing and Exporting Goods' document to BSOs.	Secretariat	Done Sent 27.10.20
9.6	The Secretariat to notify HSE that the SBC GM number can be closed.	AG	Done