



Biosafety Committee Terms of Reference

1. Background

For work involving biological hazards, Federal law (Human Pathogens and Toxins Act) requires adherence to the standards in Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) document "Canadian Biosafety Standards" additionally, the Federal Granting Councils require all Canadian institutes who receive their funding to comply with these requirements for research involving biohazardous materials.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario (OHSa) requires that employers take every reasonable precaution to protect employees, students and volunteers from workplace hazards.

Lakehead University fulfills its responsibilities under the federal law, federal research councils and OHSa by the establishment of and adherence to an institutional Biosafety Committee and Biosafety Program.

2. Purpose

To oversee the Biosafety Program at Lakehead University. The terms described herein will ensure the risk-based management related to use of biohazardous materials in Lakehead University programs, both in facilities managed by the University and, insofar as the biohazardous materials are subject to the control of the University or the investigator, in other facilities or jurisdictions.

3. Functions

- a. To develop a comprehensive biosafety program for all laboratories on campus in which biologically hazardous materials (biological hazards) should be handled. The biosafety program consists of a policy, terms of reference, procedures and approval process, biosafety program, biosecurity program, biannual assessments of compliance and training.
- b. To provide a consultative service with respect to risk assessment, classification and control of biological hazards that are used or are proposed to be used in research and teaching laboratories at Lakehead University.
- c. To evaluate research proposals, teaching activities and facilities handling biological hazards in order to determine required containment level (Level 1 or 2).



- d. To evaluate laboratory design and equipment in order to ascertain whether facilities are adequate for the required containment level.
- e. To make recommendations arising from **b, c** or **d**.
- f. To assess training needs for researchers, teachers and technical staff who work or propose to work with biological hazards.
- g. To arrange for delivery of training that meets the needs determined in **f**.
- h. To advise administration about financial support required to accomplish **a** to **g**
- i. To disseminate new biosafety and biohazard information and ensure that all personnel working with biohazardous materials and technical staff are informed of, and comply with, institutional biosafety use policies and procedures
- j. To advise the Vice-President Research and Innovation (VPRI) of any other matters relating to biohazard safety.

4. Powers

In order to achieve its purpose and perform its functions, the committee has the authority, on behalf of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation, to:
Evaluate the risks related to biosafety and biosecurity and approve proposals for research and teaching activities that involve the use of biological hazards and provide documentation of its approval.

- a. Approve laboratories and facilities for work with biologically hazardous materials up to containment level 2 and provide documentation of its approval.
- b. Require a researcher or a faculty member to submit a self-declaration regarding the use or proposed use of biological hazards. The declaration includes a description of the relevant qualifications and experience of the principal investigator and a description of the facilities, equipment, procedures and training proposed to be used to ensure compliance with the biosafety program and applicable standards.
- c. Enter and inspect any laboratory or any premises under the control of the University at any time.
- d. Stop any work with biologically hazardous materials that is being done without equipment or procedures as required by the biosafety program.

The Chair of the Committee and the Biosafety Officer must have access at all times to all areas where biohazardous materials are or may be held or used.

5. Composition

The Biosafety Committee has representation from faculty, technical staff and administration. Members will be appointed by the Vice-President, Research & Innovation for terms of no less than two years and no more than four years, renewable only up to a

maximum of eight consecutive years of service. The terms should be staggered to ensure continuity of membership. This does not apply to Biosafety Committee members who must be members because of their role within the institution, such as the Biosafety Officer, animal facility manager(s) and members representing the Office of Research and Physical Plant.

Four (4) Faculty or representatives of the University, upon recommendation by the Deans, with active research and/or teaching engagement with biohazardous materials. They should represent at least two different departments, preferably also at least two different Faculties with both campuses represented;

One (1) staff member working with biohazardous materials;

One (1) member of Physical Plant;

One (1) member representing graduate students engaged in research involving biohazardous materials but preferably not supervised by a Biosafety Committee member;

Other persons may be appointed to the Biosafety Committee by the Vice-President, Research & Innovation as the need arises.

All members aforementioned are voting members.

Ex-officio members are: Laboratory and Biosafety Specialist, University Veterinarian and Member from the Office of Research.

The Laboratory and Biosafety Specialist will act as Biosafety Officer.

One member may be designated by the committee as Secretary.

A quorum is three voting members. For binding decisions, the Chair or Biosafety Officer must be present. Decisions will be made by consensus among the Committee members.

6. Terms of office

The term of office will be three (3) years, with member terms staggered. Members may serve subsequent terms. The Biosafety Chair will be appointed by the VPRI for terms of no less than two years and no more than four years, renewable only up to a maximum of eight consecutive years of service. The Chair should not be directly involved in the management of the institutional biosafety facilities, nor be involved in the preparation of a significant number of the protocols to be reviewed by the committee, in order to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

7. Meetings

Meetings will be scheduled once every quarter as required but at least once per year.

8. Procedures

The Biosafety Committee will implement the following procedures:

Identification of biological hazards

Assessment and approval of facilities (see checklist) and laboratory procedures

Assessment and approval of research activities

Assessment and approval of teaching activities

Accident/incident investigation and record keeping (with Human Resources)

Overarching Risk Assessment

Training Needs Assessment

Local Risk Assessment

Biosecurity Risk Assessments

Post approval monitoring through regular inspections and annual renewals

The Committee may delegate the responsibility of review of amendments and renewals to a review subcommittee, which must include at least one scientific member/or one veterinarian, Biosafety Officer and the Chair of the Committee.

Committee members shall not participate in the review of their own biosafety protocols or the protocols submitted by persons with whom they are in direct academic collaboration or conflict. If a Committee member is unsure whether a conflict of interest exists, he/she must disclose the nature of the potential conflict to the Committee and abide by the Committee's decision as to whether he/she should participate in the proposal review.

If approval of an application is postponed, the Biosafety Officer will communicate the

concerns of the Committee to the researcher. The researcher can re-submit the protocol through Romeo addressing specific issues as well as attend the following meeting if desired. It is recommended that applications be first sent to the Biosafety Officer for content review prior to the Committee meeting in order to expedite the process. A meeting or email/phone interaction can be held to discuss biosafety details and procedures involved in the experiment and assist with overall risk mitigation the project.

9. Reporting Structure

The Biosafety Committee reports to the VPRI. The Biosafety Committee will forward to the Office of Research a copy of the minutes of each committee meeting and by January 31 of each year, an annual report summarizing the activities of the year.