

**INSTITUTIONAL BIOSAFETY COMMITTEE – WHY IT EXISTS AND HOW IT OPERATES**

1. The IBC will consider whether risks to any of the undernoted groups may be posed and if so, whether adequate safeguards are in place:
2. staff and students
3. external persons coming on site, eg delivery persons, cleaners, external contractors, etc
4. other humans or animals with a direct nexus to the research, eg hospital patients, experimental animals
5. the general public
6. the environment
7. The remit of the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) is to respond to requests to have:
8. a laboratory approved, in which biohazardous materials are regularly handled for research and / or teaching purposes
9. an individual research project approved, where a funder considers (1) above to be inadequate for its purposes

Note: Nothing in the IBC’s remit sets aside the statutory requirement of the Genetically Modified Organisms Act, 1997 (Act No.15 of 1997), which requires that all research facilities which engage in GMO work must be registered with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (<http://www.daff.gov.za>)

1. Biohazardous materials can generally be classified as falling into one or more of the undernoted categories:
2. recombinant or synthetic nucleic acid molecules
3. other agents and toxins
4. blood borne and other pathogens
5. xenotransplants
6. stem cells
7. dual use, *i.e.* applications which could be misused, in the wrong hands, to pose a deliberate threat to society at large
8. nanotechnology, with direct human or animal application
9. gene therapy
10. genetically modified organisms1
11. The IBC will wish to receive either an assurance that activities in the laboratory observe the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP’s) set out at: <http://www.wits.ac.za/research/about-our-research/ethics-and-research-integrity/institutional-biosafety-committee-ibc/>, last line, or failing this to receive a copy of the laboratory’s own SOP’s, which ought to cover such things as receiving, storage, handling, accident containment, medical assistance and disposal mechanisms, amongst others.
12. If a laboratory carries the approval of a relevant Government Department, *e.g.* Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, it will normally expedite proceedings to present the IBC with evidence of this.
13. The onus remains on the applicant to report back to the IBC if there is any subsequent change to the nature of the biohazardous material handled in the laboratory, especially if it is more hazardous and requires different handling procedures.
14. The IBC retains the right to make spot checks to ensure compliance.

1 genetically modified organism means an organism the genes or genetic material of which has been modified in a way that does not occur naturally through mating or natural recombination or both, and 'genetic modification' shall have a corresponding meaning. This includes the genetic modification of organisms; the development, production, release, use and application of genetically modified organisms (including bacteriophages and viruses); the use of gene therapy (Genetically Modified Organisms Amendment Act (Act 15 of 1997))