BIOSAFETY & BIOSECURITY NEWSLETTER

Spotlight on Compliance

UCT researchers must comply with national biosafety, biosecurity and research ethics-related legislation and institutional policies and regulations. The main aim is to ensure responsible research conduct, scientific integrity and compliance.

Institutional Requirements

All UCT research projects that involve human participants, animals, and potentially hazardous biological agents (pHBAs) such as specific human, animal or plant pathogens, toxins, recombinant or synthetic DNA/RNA, GMOs, etc., must be reviewed and approved by the institutional research ethics and biosafety committees. **Be aware** that some projects may require approval from more than one of these oversight committees, and degrees will not be awarded if proof of all the required approvals is not available.

Relevant UCT webpages

HREC
Human Research Ethics Committee, Faculty of Health Sciences
Faculty REC contact details on the ORI webpage

AECs
Faculty of Health Sciences
Faculty of Science

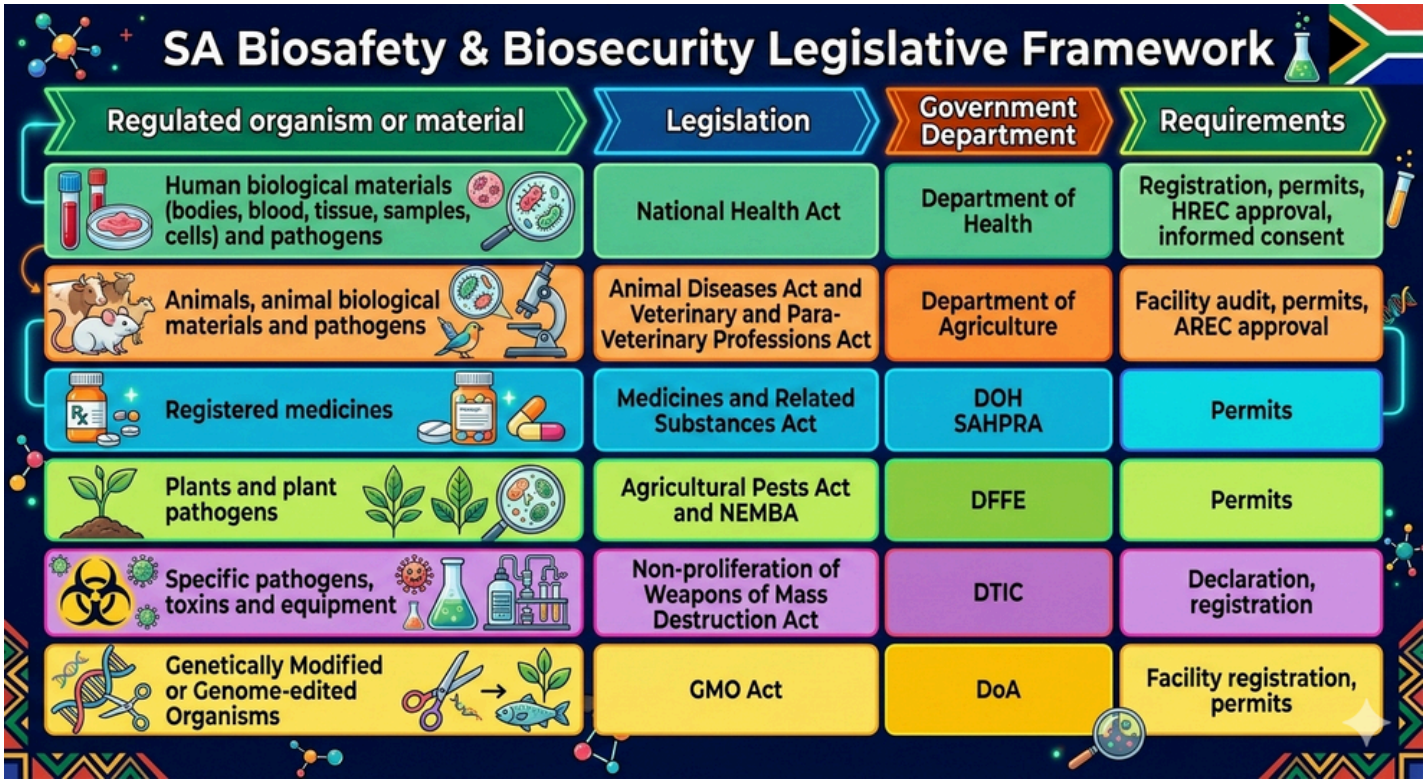
FBCs
Faculty of Health Sciences
Faculty of Science

IBC
Institutional Biosafety Committee

SPOTLIGHT ON COMPLIANCE... CONTINUED...

National Requirements

South Africa has a comprehensive and robust legislative framework for biosafety and biosecurity, comprising a wide range of acts, regulations, guidelines, standards, and ethical requirements administered by various national government departments. Researchers must ensure they comply with all relevant laws and regulations. **Be aware** that some projects may require permits or registrations under different legislation from more than one government department or directorate for the same work. No permit or registration certificate can supersede or replace other legal requirements.



An updated guideline document, "Biosafety and biosecurity compliance in research, teaching, or testing activities in South Africa (V1.15)", containing information, instructions and links to the relevant government department webpages and application forms, is available on the **UCT Biosafety and biosecurity resources** webpage under the heading "South African legislation".

Training Opportunities: Integrated Biorisk Management

Three biosafety and biosecurity training workshops will be presented in the first semester of 2026, and repeated in the second semester. *The first semester workshops have reached capacity*, details for the second semester will be available in the June newsletter.

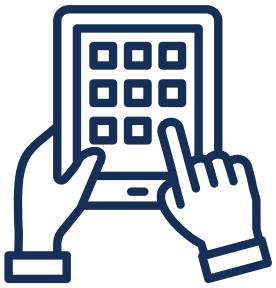
A quiz must be completed after each workshop before attendance certificates will be issued.

If your environment requires training in a specific aspect of integrated biorisk management, contact Sarita Groenewald.

Useful resources: Biological Risk Assessment and Pathogen Information Mobile Apps

World Health Organisation Biosafety Risk Assessment Tool (WHO RAST)

- Launched by WHO in 2024
- Complements the WHO Laboratory Biosafety Manual (LBM4) by guiding users through a logic-based assessment of hazards.
- The app should not be used as a replacement for comprehensive, in-depth, manual biological risk assessments, but rather as a supporting, interactive guide.
- Available for both iOS and Android platforms, offering online and offline functionality. Free download available in Google or iPhone App Store.



Pathogen Safety Data Sheets - Canada (PSDS)

- Technical documents that describe the hazardous properties of a human pathogen and provide recommendations for work involving these agents in a laboratory setting.
- Use the information to inform the biological risk assessment
- The PSDS app is available as a free download for your devices in the Android and Apple stores.

PSDS FTSS Canada

Contacts

Please feel free to contact us in the ORI should you have queries related to biosafety and biosecurity. Your queries can be directed as follows:

- Dr Sarita Groenewald (sarita.groenewald@uct.ac.za) for GMO facility registrations and imports, biosafety audit responses, the South African biosafety and biosecurity regulatory framework and questions about biosafety compliance.

- Ms Thando Mdaka (thando.mdaka@uct.ac.za) for queries related to the IBC.

- Ms Lisa Williams (lisa.williams@uct.ac.za) for submission of new Section 20 permits and Section 20 amendment applications.

If you want to enquire about import permits relating to the Department of Health, please contact Dr Blessing Silaigwana (blessing.silaigwana@uct.ac.za).

What you can do

Share this newsletter with colleagues and students in your department.

Visit our revamped webpages and let us know if they are useful, or missing something.

Share resources with us. Please let us know if you have come across a useful resource that improves, simplifies, or provides scientific evidence for your own biosafety and biosecurity management so we may add it to our repository.

Remember to submit Section 20 permit and amendment applications to the ORI for review and final signature (the Department of Agriculture (DOA) won't process an application without our sign-off!).

*** Please notify Sarita Groenewald if your facilities are scheduled for an audit by the Directorate of Animal Health, Department of Agriculture. She can assist with the audit preparation. ***