



Role of the Biological Safety Officer (BSO)

The Biological Safety Officer (BSO) is a specialist adviser to the Head of Budget Centre on matters relating to safe handling of biological materials. The position also has a special status in the statutory controls of GM work.

The Head of Budget Centre has the duty to ensure that this policy is complied with in his/her Budget Centre. In so doing Heads of Budget Centre will usually need the assistance of someone with a detailed knowledge of the work, hazards and risks and legislation and guidance associated with handling biological materials.

The BSO advises the Head of Budget Centre. The BSO should be formally appointed by the Head so that they can act with the Head of Budget Centre's authority in dealing with biological safety. Deputy or School/Departmental BSOs may also be appointed in larger Budget Centres.

A list is given below containing the essential elements of a BSO's functions, which can be divided into 4 groups; Advisory, Investigative, Record keeping and Monitoring.

Advisory role

- The BSO should be able to advise persons carrying out the assessments on how to prepare risk assessments, identify appropriate facilities for the work, appropriate control measures, approval/notification procedures and local rules and procedures.
- The BSO should also assist supervisors in identifying training needs within the School or Department, in particular to ensure the competence of workers to carry out the work safely.
- The BSO should be the main point of contact with the Health and Safety Unit for advice on occupational health and safety matters.

Investigation

- The BSO should investigate the circumstances of any accidents or untoward incidents, in liaison with the Health and Safety Unit, involving biological agents and ensure that appropriate action is taken.

Record Keeping

- The BSO should keep an up-to-date record of work with biological materials, those persons working with the materials and the locations.
- The BSO should copy these records to the Health and Safety Unit as requested for a central record. Records of projects that have ceased or workers who have left should be sent to the Health and Safety Unit for archiving.
- The BSO should ensure that local records of accidents and untoward incidents are kept.

Monitoring

The BSO has a key function in monitoring standards of safety performance. In particular the BSO should ensure that the following are reviewed on a regular basis:

- all work has been assessed and where appropriate approved;
- appropriate supervision is provide for the work;
- procedures for safe handling are being adhered to by visits to laboratories and facilities;
- biological agents are stored and transported appropriately;
- decontamination is adequately controlled in routine activities, spillages and disposal;
- safety related equipment e.g. cabinets and autoclaves are adequately maintained and tested.