Content
Policy statement
1. Principles
2. Definitions
3. Control measures
4. Organisation and responsibilities
5. Health and Safety arrangements
6. Policy review
7. Amendment history

Appendices
1. Authoritative Bodies/Related Documents or Policies
Policy statement

This policy sets out how BBSRC will comply with the specific requirements of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health regulations 2002 (COSHH).

BBSRC acknowledges that no substance can be considered completely safe. All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that all exposure of employees, students, visitors and others working on BBSRC sponsored sites to substances hazardous to health is prevented, or at least controlled to within statutory limits.

This policy has been agreed with local Health & Safety Advisors and the Trade Union Side and complies with statutory best practice.

The Institute Grant Agreement states that “The Institute will take all necessary steps to ensure compliance with all legal requirements and best practice for health and safety, environmental compliance and the security of staff in relation to the operation of the Institute”. Therefore implementation of this policy by such establishments will ensure they meet this requirement.
1. **Principles**

1.1 BBSRC will ensure that the COSHH policy complies with and reflects the legal framework and best practice.

1.2 BBSRC and its establishments will make every effort to reduce the risk to employees, students, visitors etc. by suitable and effective control measures.

1.3 This policy will be supported by the provision of regular training, information, instruction and supervision for the tasks employees perform.

2. **Definitions**

2.1 The COSHH Regulations define a hazardous substance as the intrinsic property of that substance which has the potential to cause harm to the health of a person. The following are defined as substances hazardous to health:

- Chemicals, products containing chemicals, fumes, vapours, mists.
- A biological agent.
- Dusts.
- Gases and asphyxiating gases.
- Nanotechnology (molecular or atomic manipulation of structures or matter that are 100 nanometers or smaller, includes both man-made and natural objects).
- Substances which the Health and Safety Executive have assigned a Work Exposure Limit, refer to HSE publication EH40: “Workplace Exposure Limits: Containing the list of workplace exposure limits for use with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended)".
- Any other substance which creates a comparable risk to health to any of the above.

2.2 Competent Person: A person with the assessed ability to undertake responsibilities, and perform activities to a recognised standard, on a regular basis. It is a combination of skills, experience and knowledge.

3. **Control measures**

3.1 Each establishment will:

- **Maintain** an inventory, so far as reasonable practicable, by site or building of substances hazardous to health, with appropriate hazard information as a means to identify significant risks.
- Appoint competent persons to advise on control of hazardous substances.
- **Ensure sufficient** competent persons to carry out risk assessments on procedures involving substances hazardous to health.
- Assess all operations which involve, or may involve, exposure to substances hazardous to health and ensure that appropriate control measures are applied if elimination or substitution of the substances are not possible.
 Maintain engineering controls (e.g. local exhaust ventilation) in an effective condition by planned preventive maintenance and perform monitoring at appropriate intervals to ensure continued effectiveness.

• Review any system of work, supervision system or any other similar measure at suitable intervals and revise as necessary.

• Inform anyone who may work in the affected areas of the purpose and safe operation of all engineering controls.

• Consider use of personal protective equipment (PPE), if necessary, for the work, or as a back-up measure during testing or modification of other controls.

• Assess carefully the type and use of PPE and maintain it according to manufacturers’ instructions. If possible, minimise the number of different types to prevent mistakes in servicing or replacement.

• Review each assessment every two years and whenever there is a significant change to the procedure that may affect the risk (e.g. following the results of workplace monitoring, incidents or change in processes).

• Appoint qualified professionals who will carry out health surveillance, when identified by the assessment.

• Provide everyone with clear information and appropriate training on the nature of the hazardous substances they work with.

• Keep any health surveillance records and records of exposures for at least 40 years.

• Inform everyone about monitoring and health surveillance procedures.

• Assess all changes to control measures and changes of PPE prior to their introduction.

• Ensure new substances and/or procedures are only introduced into the workplace after prior assessment.

4. Organisation and responsibilities

4.1 Establishment Directors

4.1.1 Establishment Directors have overall responsibility for health and safety within their establishment and therefore have responsibility to ensure that the management structures are in place and working effectively to satisfy the requirements of this policy.

4.2 Line Managers

4.2.1 Line Managers duties are to ensure the following:

• The risks to health from hazardous substances used or created by members of their department or group within the workplace are all identified and properly assessed.

• Ensure that the COSHH assessments are reviewed every two years, or when there is a significant change, following the results of workplace monitoring or when there is reason to suspect that the assessment is no longer valid.

• Members of their department or group use all control measures specified by the risk assessments and other related documentation and these are properly maintained.
4.3 Workers (including employees, students, contractors, etc).

4.3.1 It is the responsibility of all workers to:

- Understand the potential risks regarding hazardous substances in their place of work (this information is available in the COSHH assessment).
- Read and understand all relevant COSHH Risk Assessments and associated product safety data sheets.
- Follow the instructions/procedures set out in the COSHH assessments and SOPs which cover their work.
- Make full and proper use of any precautions/safe systems of work put in place by their manager to eliminate/minimise the risk of exposure to substances hazardous to health.
- Wear/use personal protective equipment (PPE) in the manner for which it is intended, report any defects and withdraw such items from use; includes storage and maintenance of re-usable PPE.
- Report immediately any malfunction or failure in the safe systems of work and/or engineering controls, and do not continue to use these until the faults have been rectified.
- Report to their line manager and/or health and safety adviser any incident involving a substance hazardous to health.
- Report any illness they suspect of being related to exposure to a substance at work and co-operate with any health surveillance programme established to monitor health.
- Familiarise their self with emergency procedures put in place by their laboratory, departments and establishment.
- Attend any COSHH training provided by their establishment.

4.4 Health and Safety Advisors

4.4.1 It is the responsibility of health and safety advisors to:

- Produce local procedures and guidelines as necessary.
Provide information, instruction and training to managers and to other staff to enable them to complete COSHH assessments.

Work with the user(s) to identify and investigate highly hazardous substances or procedures and to be proactive in identifying less hazardous alternatives where reasonably practicable.

Assure, by audit or other means, that all records relating to COSHH risk assessments, including maintenance and health surveillance records, are being maintained by appropriate departments/individuals.

Conduct an annual inspection and review of the management of hazardous substances as an integral part of their establishment Health and Safety Policy.

In conjunction with an Occupational Health Advisor and/or Human Resources, ensure that adequate systems are in place in respect of health surveillance of staff or anyone else that may be affected by hazardous substances.

5. Health and Safety arrangements

5.1 If an issue related to the use of substances hazardous to health is raised, BBSRC establishments will ensure that:

- The hazards associated with substances or procedures have been correctly identified.
- The COSHH assessments for the procedures are sufficient and up-to-date.
- Control measures in place are adequate.
- Any observed deficiencies in the control of the hazards are rectified.
- They report on the results of any investigations and actions taken, ensuring that any statutory and BBSRC reporting requirements are met.
- If an identified exposure has taken place, those affected, their managers and representatives will be informed immediately.

5.2 All employees will be provided with adequate information, instruction and/or training to ensure an understanding of the hazards to health posed by hazardous substances in the workplace, and the importance and use of the control measures provided. Information will also be given to others who may be affected, such as contractors, temporary staff, visitors, etc. Managers and supervisors of areas which use substances hazardous to health should be given additional training to ensure effective management of the risks.

5.3 Each establishment will ensure that effective safe systems of work are in place along with properly maintained and adjusted engineering control measures. All employees should be encouraged to report any defects and establishments should ensure that systems are in place for prompt rectification and/or repair and for the provision of temporary replacement controls.

5.4 Each establishment will carry out regular inspections and/or audits to monitor compliance, help identify opportunities for improvement, develop action plans and share good practice.

6. Policy Review

6.1 The implementation of this policy will be monitored through the Joint Health and Safety Committee.
7. Amendment history

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Appendix 1: Relevant Authoritative Bodies and Related Documents

**Authoritative Bodies**

| Health and Safety Executive | The HSE’s work covers a varied range of activities; from shaping and reviewing regulations, producing research and statistics and enforcing the law. |

**Related Documents**

| Health and Safety at Work Act 1974         | Often referred to as HASAW or HSW, this Act of Parliament is the main piece of UK health and safety legislation. It places a duty on all employers “to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work” of all their employees. |
| Management of Health and safety at Work Regulations 1999 | Regulations that place a duty on employers to assess and manage risks to their employees and others arising from work activities. |
| Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 | COSHH is the law that requires employers to control substances that are hazardous to health. |
| EH40/2005 Workplace exposure limits        | Document that contains the list of workplace exposure limits for use with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (as amended). |
| BBSRC Health and Safety Policy            | Policy that describes requirements for BBSRC establishments with regard to maintaining a healthy and safe working environment for employees, students and others that may be affected by their work activities. |
| BBSRC Biosafety Policy                    | Policy that describes requirements for BBSRC establishments with regard to maintaining safe and secure working practices with pathogens and toxins. |