

BIOSAFETY & BIOSECURITY NEWSLETTER



Appointment of a biosafety and biosecurity specialist

As of 1 November 2024, Dr Sarita Groenewald, joined the ORI in this position. Sarita jumped straight in and has already assisted many of you with Section 20 and GMO applications, and some of you may have worked with her previously in her consultant position with Properties & Services. Amongst some of the exciting initiatives Sarita is working on, she will be developing a quarterly newsletter for this community to provide you with the latest updates and useful resources to support your work.

In her new role, Sarita will spearhead the development, implementation, and coordination of a sustainable, integrated biorisk management programme at UCT. This comprehensive approach will provide researchers with the support and guidance necessary to ensure compliance with all relevant biosafety and biosecurity requirements in support of research excellence and sustainable bio-innovation.

Sarita holds an MSc in Biochemistry (Biotechnology) from Northwest University and a PhD in Plant Molecular Biology from UKZN. Her 30-year career spans both academic and industry environments, where she has made significant contributions in laboratory biosafety, biorisk management, GMO regulatory compliance, project management, and teaching at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Sarita says: "I am thrilled to be joining the UCT community and look forward to engaging with researchers from all disciplines. By promoting and enabling an institutional culture of biosafety and providing a comprehensive compliance support toolbox, we will empower our researchers to do their work safely and sustainably."

Beyond her professional life, Sarita has diverse interests, including spending quality time with her family, exploring the wonders of nature through walking, immersing herself in historical fiction, and experimenting with the art of cheesemaking at home.

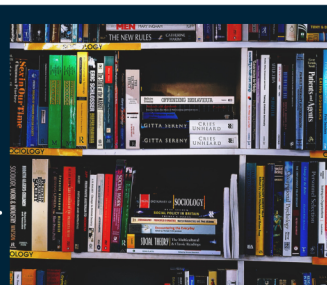


Access to biosafety resources

We have revamped the biosafety and biosecurity information on the ORI webpages and created a distinct "[Biosafety and Biosecurity](#)" page, separating it from the "[Institutional Biosafety Committee](#)" page.

Resources are also available through the [Occupational Health, Safety and Environment webpage](#). This site provides access to national compliance guidelines, specific UCT compliance certificates, links to international biosafety manuals and relevant biosafety- and biosecurity-related literature is now available on the ORI, and Faculty- and Institutional Biosafety Committee webpages. The resource webpage is located on the Occupational Health, Safety and Environment (OHSE) webpage, behind the single sign-on services (SSO). Please don't forget to visit the [other OHSE pages](#) for critical information to support your work in UCT laboratory facilities.

Along with the revamped ORI webpages, the OHSE webpage includes a set of rich and detailed resources that will help you with a variety of activities from performing a risk assessment, to figuring out what to put in your Section 20 application.



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.

- Mrs Suraya Azam (suraya.azam@uct.ac.za) for submission of Section 20 permits applications and queries related to the IBC.

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

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

