

Research Safety Committee Charter

Purpose

This charter document defines the mission, authority, membership, responsibilities and operating rules of the University of Georgia (UGA) Research Safety Committee (RSC).

Mission and Authority

UGA is committed to ensuring that all of its programs place paramount importance on safety, health, and protection of the environment and that we have a culture that reflects this commitment. The Research Safety Committee (RSC) is a standing committee within the Environmental Health & Safety Management System (EHSMS) and is charged with guiding the development and implementation of campus-wide Environmental Health and Safety programs consistent with [Academic Affairs Policies 6.01 and 6.02](#). Per Academic Affairs Policy 6.02, the RSC is appointed by the President of UGA through the EHSMS Executive Committee. The RSC will be advisory to the Vice President for Research (VPR), and work directly with the Office of Research Safety (ORS), the Environmental Safety Division (ESD), and their respective leaders.

The RSC is charged to review safety trends regarding chemical and laboratory safety and definitively address and mitigate unresolved issues of non-compliance. The RSC will work in collaboration with ad hoc working groups and the existing research compliance committees for Animal Care and Use, Biosafety, Radiation Safety, and Human Subjects. The RSC reports to the VPR through the Associate Vice President for Research Integrity and Safety. Also, consistent with Academic Affairs Policy 6.02, the RSC will keep the VPR and EHSMS Executive Committee informed of its findings, conclusions, actions or non-actions, and recommendations. To this end, the RSC serves a critical role in ensuring UGA has a robust culture of safety, compliance, and accountability at all levels of the Institution.

Appointment of the Committee

1. The RSC members are appointed by the President of UGA, or their designee, through the EHSMS Executive Committee.
2. The RSC will report to the VPR through the Associate Vice President (AVPR) for Research Integrity and Safety. The VPR in collaboration with the Executive and Steering Committees for the Environmental Health and Safety Management System (EHSMS) will receive and act upon the Committee's findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
3. Prospective Committee members are identified and recruited by the RSC and ORS and endorsed by the RSC Chair and AVPR.

Membership

1. Voting members of the Committee will include (see Appendix A of the [Chemical and Laboratory Safety Manual](#) for current membership):
 - a. Faculty members and laboratory directors from UGA who are knowledgeable and active users of chemicals and laboratories and represent the diverse disciplines that use chemicals and laboratories (8-10 total members from this group)
 - b. The Director of the Office of Research Safety (DORS)
 - c. ORS Senior Safety & Compliance Officer - Chemical Safety (SSCO)

2. Non-voting, ex-officio members of the Committee will include:
 - a. The Associate Vice President for Environmental Safety
 - b. The Associate Vice President for Research Integrity and Safety
 - c. Senior Safety & Compliance Officer - Radiation Safety
 - d. The Director of Information Systems Support, ESD
 - e. Other subject matter experts designated as necessary
3. Terms of voting membership on the RSC are 3 years, with up to 3 consecutive reappointed terms.
4. The RSC will choose a Chair and Vice Chair from among the voting members every 3 years.
5. The SSCO will serve as the Committee coordinator and work with the Chair and DORS to develop meeting agendas and maintain meeting minutes.
6. A majority of the RSC voting membership will constitute a voting quorum.
7. A voting member of the Committee who cannot attend a meeting may designate a qualified alternate. An alternate will be a voting member of the Committee only for the meeting for which they are designated.
8. A RSC member may be replaced upon the recommendation of the Chair to the AVPR. The Chair may also recommend the name(s) of qualified candidates for any vacancy.
9. Any Committee member wishing to resign his/her seat on the Committee is requested to submit the resignation in writing at least 60 days before the resignation is to take effect.
10. The Chair may recommend the replacement of any Committee member who has missed two meetings during one calendar year.

Meetings

1. The Committee will meet monthly or on an alternate frequency determined by the Chair, but in any case, the Committee will meet at least 10 times annually. Additional meetings may be called by the Chair.
2. The minutes of each meeting will be provided to all members of the RSC and to the Chairs and members of the EHSMS Executive and Steering Committees as needed.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. The Committee will establish and review laboratory safety policies, procedures, and safety survey audit forms. Policies and procedures will be set forth in the [Chemical and Laboratory Safety Manual](#) (CLSM) and other documents. The RSC will ensure the CLSM reflects current best practices and is consistent with relevant regulations. Other than administrative changes, no changes shall be made to the CLSM, appendices, or portions of the manual contained on the web site without Committee approval. The Committee shall approve all procedures used to evaluate laboratory safety and ensure accountability.
 - a. The policies set forth in the CLSM will be designed to:
 - i. Protect and optimize safety for all faculty, staff, students, visitors, and members of the public from hazardous agents

- ii. Keep the University in compliance with local, state, and federal regulations regarding laboratory safety, the purchase, transportation, use, handling, storage, and disposal of all chemicals
2. Oversee the campus-wide implementation of laboratory-specific safety plans as a key component of local safety and accountability culture.
3. Recommend necessary and ongoing training programs on laboratory safety practices for faculty, staff, and students that will promote a strong culture of safety and accountability. Training activities will reinforce a continuing conscientious awareness and application of safe laboratory practices, chemical storage, chemical use, and chemical disposal while promoting ways of reducing the use of these materials when possible.
4. Provide oversight of the laboratory safety assessment process and performance, ensuring effective follow up and response to the inspections.
5. Review and advise on corrective actions determined by the ORS staff. To facilitate this review, the Committee will maintain an e-mail address that laboratory supervisors can utilize to contact the Committee: RSC@uga.edu.
 - a. Consider appeals of decisions made by ORS in the implementation of the laboratory safety program (see [Chemical and Laboratory Safety Manual](#), Appendix B, Unsafe Laboratory Closure Policy).
 - b. Resolve compliance concerns identified by ORS staff or others and conveyed to the RSC by the AVPR or DORS.
6. Bring to the attention of UGA administration, through the EHSMS Executive and Steering Committees, any problems that need to be addressed by institutional level administrative procedures or policies and advise them of available options.
7. Close any laboratory determined to be unsafe or non-compliant (see [Chemical and Laboratory Safety Manual](#), Appendix B, Unsafe Laboratory Closure Policy).
 - a. Any laboratory closed by the RSC will be reopened once all safety issues have been resolved.
 - b. All RSC decisions regarding closure or non-closure of unsafe or non-compliant laboratories will be reported to the VPR and EHSMS Executive and Steering Committee Chairs.
 - c. The EHSMS Executive Committee has the authority to impose more stringent sanctions than those recommended by the RSC.
8. Investigate laboratory accidents, evaluate emergency response, and make recommendations to improve safety and responsiveness.
9. Charge ad hoc subcommittees, as necessary, to address specific issues related to the RSC charge. The scope, duration, and membership, which may include non-member subject matter experts, is at the discretion of the Committee.
10. Seek means of creating better local and institutional accountability, creating efficiencies, and minimizing burdens on the UGA community in all the above activities.

Investigation of Incidents

1. An incident that causes an excessive chemical, hazardous agent exposure or other non-compliance will be investigated in accordance with the Office of Research Integrity and Safety [Policy & Procedure for Responding to Allegations of Research Non-Compliance](#).

Charter Review and Revision

1. The RSC Charter is to be reviewed by the Committee or an ad hoc committee at least every 5 years, but may be revised at any time to address required administrative or policy changes. Approval of any RSC-initiated changes to the Charter requires an affirmative vote from the EHSMS Executive Committee membership.