PBAC

presidential biosafety advisory committee

IMPLEMENTATION DIRECTIVE

MEETING PROCESS

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INTRODUCTION

The Presidential Biosafety Advisory Committee (the Committee) operates by a Terms of Reference document, found on the McMaster website:

http://www.workingatmcmaster.ca/med/document/RMM-106-Presidential-Biosafety-Advisory-Committee-Terms-of-Reference-1-36.pdf

This document clearly outlines the scope of content and the administrative boundaries within which the committee may act.

The intent of this PID is to document agreed-upon processes for discussion, quorum and voting and provide some description of the vocabulary and process as it is to be implemented.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCESS

Parliamentary process describes how issues are decided upon within deliberative bodies. The authority given to the Committee allows it to manage biosafety issues, implement programs and procedures and to create policies which apply the stakeholder group. Given the size of the stakeholder group and the increasing administrative burden placed on the researchers and Committee members as a result of new and changing legislation, biosafety issues should be dealt with clearly and efficiently. Conducting Committee activities using some form of parliamentary procedure will help ensure consistent management and documentation of decisions.

The meeting process will be loosely based on Robert's Rules of Order.

QUORUM

Quorum is described in the Terms of Reference to be 50% of the voting members +1. Before the Chair begins the meeting, the Chair shall consult the Secretary to determine if quorum has been met. If quorum has been met, the meeting can continue. If quorum has not been met, the Chair shall inform the members present and announce that discussion but no voting or decision-making can take place. The Committee may use this time to discuss issues and introduce new business to be added to next meeting's agenda.

If there is any pressing issue that absolutely requires a decision, an e-approval should be sought.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance by members is critical to secure quorum for each meeting. Meetings where quorum is not met, potentially results in delay of approvals or critical decisions. For this reason, if a member cannot attend a scheduled meeting, they shall forward an email to the Secretary giving their regrets. Although not present at the meeting, it is expected that the member still review assigned material and submit comments with their regrets so they may be read aloud at the meeting.

DISCUSSION

Discussion is to be moderated by the Chair. The Chair may at any time interrupt the discussion to:

- Redirect speakers back onto the topic

- Seek clarity
- Stop discussion if the issues become too complex and require a revision or division of the topic(s)
- Stop the discussion if overly lengthy
- Stop the discussion if it becomes circular or repetitive to obtain a vote
- Stop the discussion if it becomes confrontational

It is at the discretion of the Chair to table a topic, or suggest a subtopic be added to the agenda under New Business for next month's meeting.

VOTING PROCEDURE

Committees do not function like a formal deliberative assembly. Most discussion topics are laid out in the agenda in such a manner which leads to a defined question or voting topic and thus formal motions are generally not required. At the end of a discussion, the Chair shall call for a motion ("Can I get a motion to approve …?"), and then a seconder ("Can I get a second?"). Once the motion has been seconded, the Chair shall call for further discussion ("Is there any further discussion on the motion?"). If there is no further discussion, the Chair shall call for the vote. Generally, if the majority seem to be "for" the motion, the Chair shall ask for hands, first asking for those opposed ("All those opposed?"). The Chair shall then ask for abstentions ("Abstentions?") – which do not count towards the vote.

The Committee should seek to reach consensus on all votes. If this is the case, i.e. there are no opposed and no abstentions, the Chair does not need ask for those in favor of the motion and may declare "The motion has passed." which is now recorded in the minutes.

Should there not be consensus, the Chair should continue to ask for all those in favor of the motion ("All those in favor?") and then confer with the Secretary to determine the number *For* and *Opposed*. If the majority is in favor of the motion, the Chair shall announce that the motion has passed. If the majority is opposed to the motion, the Chair shall announce that the motion has failed. The Secretary shall record in the minutes the status of each vote. Records of *for* versus *opposed* and abstentions is not necessary.

In the event of a tie, the motion also fails.

The Chair does have voting privileges and thus can cast a vote.

E-APPROVALS

There are occasions where a last-minute approval is required by a PI. In these cases project details will be submitted to the Committee via email with a deadline for a response. Those who do not submit a response by the deadline are assumed to have no issues with the project.