

# LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

## GUIDELINES FOR DRUGS, POISONS AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES

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### PURPOSE

The purpose of this Guideline is to inform persons of the regulatory requirements governing drugs, poisons and controlled substances and of the institutional clearance and licensing requirements prior to use.

### INTRODUCTION

Drugs and poisons are those substances which are defined in the Poisons Code under the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981*. They are substances which if misused, abused or accidentally released may result in harm to people or to the environment. They include prescription medicines, pharmacy-only medicines, drugs of addiction and many household, industrial and agricultural chemicals and may be poisonous, carcinogenic, mutagenic, teratogenic or cytotoxic.

Drugs and poisons, when used properly, are of great help, for example in treating illness, making useful household products and eliminating household pests. When not used properly they can harm people. So that drugs and poisons are used in ways which provide the most benefit for the community, laws have been introduced to control their manufacture and use.

- **Licenses** *determine who can make and sell drugs and poisons*. Licences are required to be held by any person or company who wishes to manufacture and/or sell or supply by wholesale any of the drugs and poisons listed in the Poisons Code (this includes repacking or labelling). Retailers of Schedule 5, 6 and most 7 poisons do not need a licence.
- **Permits** *allow industry users to purchase drugs and poisons they need to conduct their business*. Permits are required to be held by any health service wishing to purchase drugs or any person wishing to use drugs and poisons listed in the Poisons Code for industry or research. (A Permit is not needed for schedule 5, 6 and many schedule 7 poisons).
- People with certain qualifications (eg doctors, pharmacists, veterinary surgeons and dentists) are authorized to possess and use drugs for specific purposes.

### DRUGS, POISONS & CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES ACT 1981

The regulatory requirements for purchase, storage and use of poisons and highly toxic chemicals are contained in the Drugs Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 and the Drugs Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 1995. The Poisons Code (1994) lists substances which are defined as "poisons or controlled substances" and classified according to nine schedules. All persons or companies wishing to use drugs and poisons listed in the Poisons Code for industry or research require a permit (not needed for Schedule 5, 6 and many Schedule 7 poisons).

University employees intending to purchase, store or use substances listed in the Poisons Code and which are not available from retail suppliers should check to see whether an Educational Poisons Permit is required. Educational Poisons Permits are controlled by relevant Laboratory Managers and will cover only those substances listed on the Permit.

The Head of School or Divisional Manager is responsible for ensuring that any conditions of the permit or warrant are adhered to at all times. In some cases, additional safety precautions and procedures may need to be specified and these must be documented and carried out. The principal researcher (or laboratory supervisor) is responsible for being aware of the potential health hazards of these substances and for ensuring that suitable handling procedures are adopted.

**CLASSIFICATION OF DRUGS, POISONS & CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES**

- Schedule 1** Poisons of plant origin of such danger to health as to warrant their being available only from medical practitioners, pharmacists or veterinary surgeons.
- Schedule 2** Poisons for therapeutic use that should be available to the public only from pharmacists, or where there is no pharmacy service is available, from persons licensed to sell Schedule 2 poisons.
- Schedule 3** Poisons for therapeutic use that are dangerous or are so liable to abuse as to warrant their availability to the public being restricted to supply by pharmacists or medical, dental or veterinary practitioners.
- Schedule 4** Poisons that should, in the public interest, be restricted to medical, dental or veterinary prescription or supply, together with substances or preparations intended for therapeutic use, the safety or efficacy of which requires further evaluation.
- Schedule 5** Poisons of a hazardous nature that must be readily available to the public but require caution in handling, storage and use.
- Schedule 6** Poisons that must be available to the public but are of a more hazardous nature or poisonous nature than those classified in Schedule 5.
- Schedule 7** Poisons which require special precautions in manufacture, handling, storage or use, or special individual regulations regarding labelling or availability.
- Schedule 8** Poisons to which the restrictions recommended for drugs of dependence by the 1980 Australian Royal Commission of Inquiry into Drugs should apply.
- Schedule 9** Poisons, which are drugs of abuse, the manufacture, possession, sale or use of which, should be prohibited by law except for amounts, which may be necessary for medical or scientific research conducted with the approval of Commonwealth and/or State or Territory Health Authorities.