



amity college

INSPIRE. EXPLORE. ACHIEVE.

Pandemic Action Plan: COVID-19

RATIONALE

This Pandemic Action Plan: COVID-19 communicates key action areas to be used by Amity College in preparing for widespread outbreak of COVID-19. It aligns with advice from the NSW Department of Education.

This Plan must also be used in accordance with advice from other state and federal government departments, such as the Department of Health and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trading.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19

COVID-19 (previously called novel coronavirus) is a new strain of a coronavirus that first emerged in Hubei province in China in late 2019. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses and can cause the common cold in humans. Other coronaviruses include SARS or MERS. Rarely, strains of coronavirus can jump from animals to humans.

Infection with COVID-19 is now a notifiable condition under the NSW Public Health Act, so all cases and suspected cases must be reported by doctors to NSW Health public health authorities who will work to prevent spread of the infection to others.

COVID-19 is primarily spread through respiratory droplets, such as through:

- close contact with an infectious person
- contact with droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze
- touching objects or surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, benches, handrails) that have cough or sneeze droplets from an infected person, and then touching your mouth or face

People with coronavirus may experience:

- fever
- flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat, runny nose and fatigue
- shortness of breath

The infection period for the virus will vary from person to person. The majority of cases have milder symptoms; particularly in an otherwise healthy individual, these mild symptoms may resolve over just a few days. Like influenza, for an individual with other ongoing health issues, such as a respiratory condition, recovery may take weeks and in severe cases could be potentially fatal. For children, the impact and severity of the symptoms are usually minor.

The spread of COVID-19 will coincide with Winter which already places a seasonal burden on the health system.

Government Response

As at 11 March 2020, NSW Health advises that the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is believed to be highest for those people who have travelled through mainland China, Iran, the Republic of Korea or Italy. Individuals arriving from these countries are required to self-isolate for 14 days.

People who have been in one of the other countries at risk of COVID-19 listed are also considered to be at risk of exposure to COVID-19:

- Cambodia
- Hong Kong
- Indonesia
- Japan
- Thailand
- Singapore

If students or staff have travelled (including transit) through any of the above countries at risk of COVID-19 in the past 14 days, schools and families should monitor for symptoms. NSW Health

recommends practicing social distancing – avoiding crowds and small gatherings in enclosed spaces, and keeping a distance of 1.5 meters when out in public. Note however that self-isolation for those that have visited these countries is currently not recommended by NSW Health.

Pandemics are caused by novel strains of a virus where the population has little immunity and there is global spread of the virus. The virus can be rapidly spread, and the severity can be variable across the population ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. The spread of disease in pandemics is uneven with a disproportionate impact on high density population areas and impact seen later in rural/regional areas.

The objectives of a government pandemic response are:

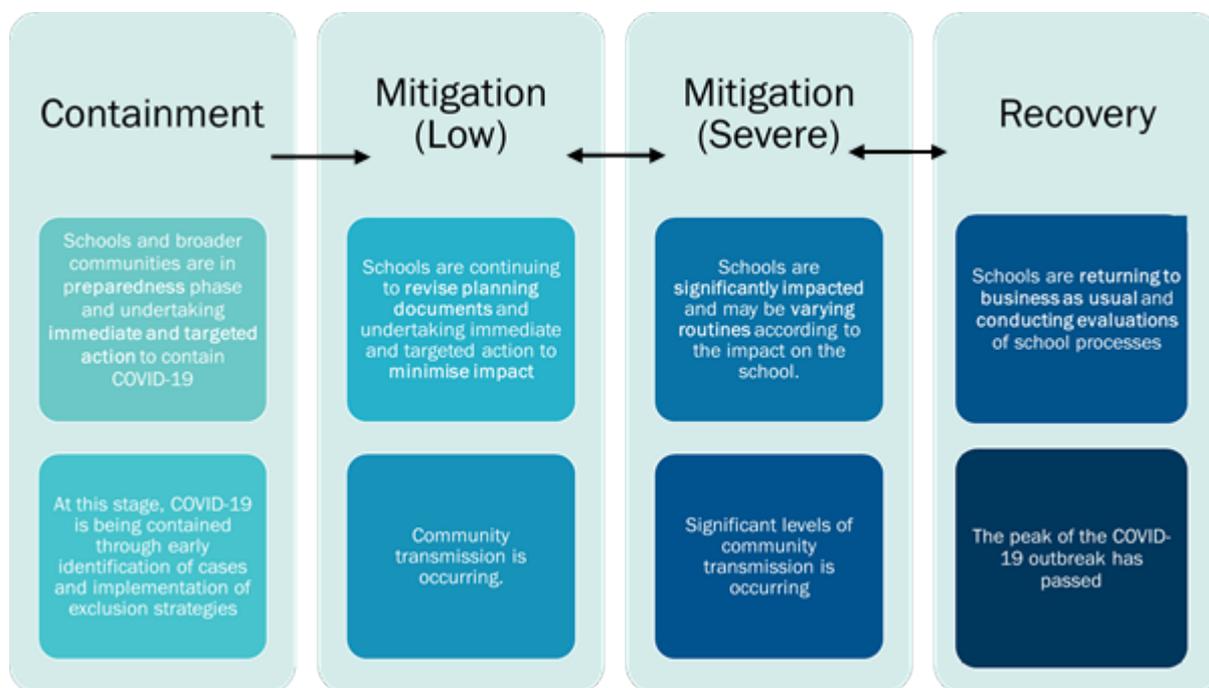
1. Minimise transmission, disease and death from the pandemic in the population
2. Inform, engage and empower the public, health professionals and other agencies to assist in the response
3. Minimise the burden on the health system and partner agencies
4. Ensure coordination and timeliness in cross-agency response
5. Maintain effective functioning across essential services

The objectives of the College's pandemic response is to actively work towards maintaining student and staff wellbeing while minimising the impact of the virus on the school community.

Advice from the NSW Government is that public health measures remain effective in reducing the impacts of COVID-19 by slowing the spread and reducing the burden on the health system.

2. PHASES OF THE ACTION PLAN

The following four phases must be considered when preparing for an outbreak, as detailed in the diagram below.



As at 11 March 2020, COVID-19 is still being contained by NSW Health through early identification of cases and implementation of exclusion strategies for confirmed cases. As such, NSW Health and NSW Department of Education advise that schools, similar to other organisations, are in a preparedness phase and should be undertaking immediate and targeted action to contain COVID-19.

As an immediate priority, NSW Health recommends that schools increase the frequency of good hygiene practice and isolate and send home any student or staff member who has cold or flu-like symptoms. Where in previous years some individuals may have attended school when they are less than well, any individual demonstrating any contagious symptoms should not attend school.

Managing Suspected Cases

As at 11 March 2020, it is recommended by NSW Health that individuals with cold or flu-like symptoms are not to attend school and be tested for COVID-19. If tested positive for COVID-19, individuals are to be isolated in accordance with NSW Health requirements.

Individuals who are close contacts of confirmed cases of COVID-19 are also to be isolated in accordance with NSW Health requirements. A close contact is a person who has spent significant time either face to face (15 minutes) or in an enclosed space (2 hours or more) as someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. NSW Health is advising close contacts about not attending work, school or early childhood and childcare services.

Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

If a school student or staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19, the College will be notified by NSW Health.

The local NSW Health public health unit will provide information to the College about the appropriate response, including identification of contacts and advice to the school community.

School Closure

NSW Health has the power under the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 and the Public Health Act 2010 to direct a school to close. It is extremely unlikely that these powers will be used to direct a school to close.

During the containment phase, if a student or staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19, the College may choose to voluntarily cease operations while NSW Health identifies close contacts of the diagnosed individual.

The College may also choose to voluntarily cease operations if NSW Health information identifies that the school is in a localised contagion hotspot.

3. AMITY COLLEGE KEY ACTION AREAS (PHASE 1)

Amity College has prepared an Action Plan for Phase 1 which identifies in detail the specific actions required and the progress of development to monitor progress and activity. The action plan is a working document which is constantly updated to ensure it is up to date with the new and emerging issues as they arise.

OVERVIEW

The College's response will be proportionate to the actual risk of the coronavirus within NSW. The table below presents early planning that the College will be adopting. The order and action of this approach may change as the situation and circumstances evolve.

NSW Health has advised that NSW is currently in Phase 1 and containment activities should take precedence, whilst planning for future outbreak developments.

Item	Action
School & Workplace Operations	
High Risk and Vulnerable Groups	Students and staff members with compromised immunity or complex health care needs will be identified. Based on identified risk, students' families will be contacted to provide educational material for students to complete at home and implement alternative working arrangements for staff.
Individuals with Symptoms	Students, staff or community members with cold or flu-like or contagious symptoms (e.g. cough, sneezing, fever) will be isolated and asked to return home with confirmation of School Management.
	Students who may be showing cold or flu-like or contagious symptoms will be isolated in the sick bay, to await pick up by parent/carer. Other students will not be permitted to use the sick bay at this time. The sick bay will be sanitised after the student has left.
Continuity of Learning	Casual staff will be audited for availability in the event of critical staff absences and alternative strategies will be sought to access additional staff where the current list of casuals is limited.
	Staff will prepare and expand alternative education delivery options to distance learning if required, including reviewing technology capabilities and staff capacity to deliver remote lessons if required. Entire school (K-12): Utilise the Seesaw online platform Primary (K-6): will additionally use Reading Eggs and Mathletics High School (7-12): will additionally use Moodle and Education Perfect.
	Education material and resources will be provided regularly during the closure period.
	Major academic assessments and educational events will be identified to determine impact and consider appropriate plans.
	Consultations with NESA will take place on relevant issues as appropriate.

Item	Action
School & Workplace Operations (cont.)	
Risk Management of School Activities	Upcoming trips will be reviewed and considerations will be made to cancel or postpone any overseas excursions or work-related travel.
	Any outreach programs that engage with vulnerable members of the broader community, particularly the elderly or sick, will be ceased.
Infection Control	First Aid kits will be audited and restocked as necessary. Additional antibacterial cleaning agents for classrooms are to be distributed. Cleaning arrangements will also be reviewed with the cleaning contractor and this will include daily sanitisation.
	First aid response and infection control procedures to be reviewed within school.
	Locations where sick students and staff have been, (e.g. sick bay, classroom desks) will be sanitised after they have gone home.
Vaccinations	Communicate with families about the importance of the influenza vaccination.
	Encourage all staff to receive the influenza vaccination.
Hygiene Practices	Promote healthy hygiene practices to all staff and students, including reminders that handwashing with soap and running water is the single most effective way to reduce the spread of germs that cause respiratory disease.
	Particular focus on hand hygiene during excursions and hands-on/practical learning tasks such as art, music, physical activities and food technology subjects.
	Use posters to promote the best ways to reduce the risk of acquiring and spreading respiratory infections.
	Display signage reminding staff and students to wash hands, coughing and sneezing etiquette and social distancing etc.
Decision Making	School Executive team is to ensure strategies and actions are appropriate and support the needs of the school.
	Put in place a communication strategy to regularly keep staff and other relevant groups informed of strategies and progress.
Absence Management: Students	Ensure student absences are accurately recorded.
	Students who are absent due the school's requests will be marked using the F code. (The F code will not negatively affect attendance records).
	If a student is diagnosed with COVID-19 the code to be used in this instance is M for the period he/she is absent due to the virus.
	Where a student remains without symptoms during the 14 days self-isolation period, NSW Health do not require a medical certificate for the student to return to school. The College will request a note from parents/carers to explain the absence from school in the usual way.
	If a student has become unwell within 14 days of returning from countries listed as high risk by NSW Health, or if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19, they will need a medical certificate confirming they are able to return to school.

Item	Action
School & Workplace Operations (cont.)	
Absence Management: Staff	Where staff have travelled and are required to self-isolate, they must not attend school during the isolation period.
	If a staff member becomes symptomatic, they should see their doctor and get tested for COVID-19.
	Where a staff member remains without symptoms during the 14-day self- isolation period, they do not require a medical clearance to return to school. However, normal sick leave protocols will apply.
	If a staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19, they will need a medical certificate confirming they are able to return to school (once they recover).
Use of School Facilities	
Facilities Management	Review First Aid and infection control procedures within the school and school providers such as before and after school care services.
	Review procedures for school community and other organisations' use of facilities.
	Review cleaning processes.
Student & Family Support	
Student Wellbeing	Develop resources to provide assistance and have appropriate conversation with students and provide reassurance.
	Establish processes to monitor student wellbeing while students are absent from school due to illness or self-isolation.
	Support students back to school after completing self-isolation or recovering from illness.
	Communicate with vulnerable students and their families to ensure confidence in Amity College's management strategy.
Staff Support	
Staff Wellbeing	Assist staff in understanding the facts and informing them on the current risk and relevant school strategies.
	Keep staff up to date on issues as they arise and options which may assist them balance their work and family responsibilities.
	Promote wellbeing programs to support healthy lifestyle activities to support good mental and physical health.
Communication Strategy	
Communication	Review and ensure communication pathways for the sharing of information on COVID-19, within school staff and to all families. Review and update all parents'/caregivers' contact details including email addresses and update the school website with current messages regarding COVID-19.
External Communication	Consult, communicate and collaborate with relevant authorities during all phases of the response.

