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## 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this plan is to identify the services AFTRS provides and to develop methods by which these can be maintained should there be a pandemic, including the actions AFTRS will take to prevent the spread of disease.

*True pandemics, characterized by sharp increases in morbidity and mortality and rapid spread throughout the world, have been reliably documented since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Since then, each century has seen an average of three pandemics occurring at intervals ranging from 10 to 50 years.” (WHO, 2005)*

- 1.2 This plan has been developed in line with current government guidelines and will be reviewed bi-annually and/or updated as necessary should additional guidelines be issued.

## 2 SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy and procedure relates to:
- AFTRS staff (ongoing, fixed term, temporary and casual);
  - AFTRS students (both Award, Short Course and Industry);
  - Contractors and companies;
  - Volunteers; and
  - The general public accessing AFTRS premises or services

## 3 POLICY STATEMENT

- 3.1 A pandemic is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new virus emerges in the human population which no one has immunity to; the virus causes disease in humans, and the virus spreads easily from human to human worldwide.
- 3.2 This document outlines how AFTRS would manage a pandemic situation, providing clear guidelines for staff, students and the Pandemic Plan Management Team to minimise the spread of disease and ensure business continuity.

3.3 The implementation of the Plan is to be incremental depending on the status of the pandemic and the potential risks to the health of staff, students, volunteers, and the general public. In order to do this the following principles form the basis of the Plan:

- **Prevention:** to reduce the risk of catching the disease
- **Minimisation:** to reduce the risk of spreading the disease
- **Communication:** to keep all stakeholders informed
- **Service Provision:** to continue to meet our charter and ensure business continuity

3.4 All aspects of this plan are subject to review and approval by the Chief Executive Officer and the Executive Team. Any decisions regarding initiating any actions in this plan, including a decision to close premises or cease providing services, will be made by the Chief Executive Officer or delegate.

3.5 It is expected that most restrictive actions in this Plan will not be initiated until the World Health Organisation (WHO) declare Phase 6 (Pandemic) and/or unless instructed by the Commonwealth Government.

3.6 The Chief Executive Officer or delegate has responsibility for communicating with the AFTRS Council, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and other government bodies as appropriate in relation to this plan.

## 4 PROCEDURE

4.1 Pandemics usually spread to all parts of the globe in less than a year and more than a quarter of the population is affected. Each wave is likely to last between two and three months and there will generally be a second and third wave. The status of the pandemic will be assessed using the six phases as identified by the WHO:

Period	Phase	Description
Inter-pandemic	1	An animal infection where the risk of human infection or disease is considered low.
	2	An animal virus circulating among domesticated or wild animals is known to have caused infection in humans and is therefore considered a potential pandemic threat.
Outbreak	3	An animal or human-animal reassortant virus has caused sporadic cases or small clusters of disease in people but has not resulted in human-to-human transmission sufficient to sustain community-level outbreaks.
	4	Characterized by verified human-to-human transmission of an animal or human-animal reassortant virus able to cause “community-level outbreaks.”
Epidemic/Pandemic Alert	5	Characterized by human-to-human spread of the virus into at least two countries in one WHO region. While most countries will not be affected at this stage, the declaration of Phase 5 is a strong signal that a pandemic is imminent
Pandemic	6	Characterized by community level outbreaks in at least one other country in a different WHO region in addition to the criteria defined in Phase 5. Designation of this phase will indicate that a global pandemic is under way.
Recovery stage		

### Key Roles

4.2 There will be a number of key roles in the implementation of the plan which will need to be allocated to individuals who have not been impacted. These may be allocated to individuals or groups, but in all cases, there must be a “deputy” in case of absence:

- a) **Chief Executive Officer:** will be responsible for initiating each stage of the plan. It is extremely important that a “deputy” be nominated.
- b) **People & Performance:** will be responsible for overseeing the further development and review of the Pandemic Plan and liaising with the Department of Communications about changes as necessary.
- c) **Marketing, Student Engagement and People & Performance:** will be responsible for ensuring external stakeholders, clients, students and staff have up to date information gathered from relevant sources (CEO, Executive Team, Council, Government, TEQSA, Department of Health etc)

- d) **Awards, Student Engagement Team** – responsible for monitoring and liaising with Awards students and ensuring unwell students are supported, self-quarantined and are able to access support services; also in the event of school closure or quarantine. organising alternative ways of accessing learning.
- e) **Engagement** – responsible for monitoring and liaising with Short Course and Industry Certificate students and in the event of school closure or quarantine, organising refunds or alternatives.
- f) **School Resources:** will ensure that there are sufficient supplies of hygiene and cleaning supplies, monitor cleaning contracts, etc.
- g) **People & Performance:** will be responsible for monitoring illness, encouraging staff to return once well, referrals to support services, maintaining records of alternative employees etc.
- h) **Technology:** will be responsible for ensuring that all reasonable measures are taken to enable staff to work remotely and for students to study remotely.
- i) **Governance:** will be responsible for supporting staff in the collection and documentation of practices, procedures etc so that as much information as possible is available in an indexed, central store.

## Prevention and Minimisation

- 4.3 Under occupational health and safety legislation AFTRS has a responsibility to maintain a healthy and safe environment for all staff, students and visitors. The legislation also places a responsibility on staff to adhere to related guidelines and procedures, and to use whatever protective equipment is provided.

This section of the Plan has been developed on the basis of these principles and will be implemented incrementally depending on the phase of the pandemic and government and medical advice.

### Pre-Interventions (Inter-Pandemic Stage and BAU)

- 4.3.1 **Influenza Vaccination:** Staff are encouraged to maintain their typical influenza strain vaccination regime as suffering from the “normal” flu will weaken staff and place them in greater risk from any pandemic variety. The People and Performance team will arrange an annual influenza vaccination for AFTRS staff.
- 4.3.2 **Cleaning & Waste:** AFTRS will:
- make antiseptic cleaner available throughout the premises;
  - issue phone wipes and encourage staff to use them;
  - make “no touch” waste receptacles available as required; and,
  - clean workspaces should a staff member be required to absent themselves due to symptoms related to the pandemic.

### Stage 1 Interventions (Outbreak Stage)

- 4.3.3 **Coughing & Sneezing:** Coughing and sneezing are the most common methods of spreading airborne respiratory diseases and viruses. Mouths and noses should be covered when coughing or sneezing and hands should be thoroughly cleaned afterwards. Staff are encouraged to use tissues rather than handkerchiefs and to dispose of them appropriately immediately after use. It is suggested that staff keep tissues at their desk or on their person.
- 4.3.4 **Hand Hygiene:** It is very important that hands are regularly cleaned to reduce the likelihood of spreading infection. Hands should be washed thoroughly with soap and hot water (up to 60 seconds), fingernails scrubbed, and hands dried on a disposable towel after:
- Using the bathroom;
  - Coughing or sneezing;
  - Contact with other people or animals; and,
  - Removing a mask or gloves.

Hands should also be washed thoroughly prior to eating. It is also good practice to use disposable towels to turn off taps and open/close bathroom doors etc.

### Stage 2 Interventions (Epidemic/Pandemic Alert Stage)

- 4.3.5 **Flexible Working:** As many contagious viruses and strains of influenza are transmitted through close or direct personal contact it is important during a pandemic to reduce the number of situations where this could happen. Enabling staff

to work from home is a key factor in achieving this and ensures that we can keep the key functions operating. It may also prevent AFTRS from having to completely cease operations.

All staff now have laptops allocated, along with access to the VPN. Directors, Managers and Heads of Department should identify the types of ongoing and project work that can be undertaken remotely by their staff at this stage. For roles required at the School (e.g. Production and Teaching staff) full time working at home may not be possible at this stage, however leaders should consider how they can reduce the amount of time for these staff to be physically within the building.

In preparation for a pandemic students and short course attendees should be encouraged to utilise email and phone contacts for queries rather than entering the premises. Academic staff should also have a plan in place for students to access remote and online learning in the event they are unwell (see 4.3.6)

**4.3.6 Pre-recorded Lectures and Assignment Extensions:** Students, like staff, are likely to be affected by a pandemic in terms of absences related to their own illness or responsibilities towards others. AFTRS will work towards making online attendance at lectures possible to ensure that students can engage with the School. As much flexibility as possible will be provided by the School for completion of assignments under these circumstances. Should absences be prolonged, the approved methods of assessment for student absences will be implemented.

**4.3.7 Personal Contact:** As a pandemic progresses it will become more important for staff to distance themselves from personal contact with others. Measures may include:

- avoiding unnecessary mingling e.g. in the Café or other common areas;
- bringing lunch and eating it at your desk;
- refraining from personal contact such as handshakes;
- conducting business wherever possible by phone, video (Teams or Zoom) and email even if within the same building; and,
- avoiding public transport.

**4.3.8 General Cleanliness:** Desks, phones, keyboards, drawer handles, door handles etc all represent ideal disease transfer sites. Regular cleaning of these areas with alcohol-based wipes will minimise the spread of infection and is particularly important in public access areas. AFTRS will ensure wipes and hand sanitiser is easily available and accessible throughout the School.

It is also good practice to ensure any shared utensils, e.g. cups, dishes and cutlery, are thoroughly washed with hot water and detergent before use.

**4.3.9 Air Conditioning:** There is scientific and medical evidence to suggest that airborne respiratory diseases and viruses can spread in internal spaces that are not adequately ventilated. Influenza survives longer, and is more easily transmitted, in conditions of low temperature and low humidity.

The Facilities team will be responsible for ensuring that ventilation is adequate by:

- liaising with the landlord to ensure the air conditioning systems are maintained in accordance with Australian Standard AS 1668 Part 2;
- determining when it is appropriate and possible to ventilate with fresh air through opening doors and windows; and,
- advising staff of actions taken.

**4.3.10 Personal Protective Equipment:** PPE such as face masks may be provided to staff working in public areas such as the library and reception.

**4.3.11 Official International Travel:** Travel represents a high risk for acquiring airborne respiratory diseases and viruses. Itineraries may include areas with outbreaks or where a pandemic is being transmitted. Planes, lounges, other public transport and hotel lobbies are all high-risk areas for infection. As a result, official travel during a pandemic will be restricted. Travel will be limited during a pandemic both on the basis of health and government instructions.

On return to Australia from a pandemic affected region staff may not be permitted to return to duty at AFTRS until they present a medical clearance or 14 days have elapsed since their return and they have no symptoms. Full salary will be paid for the required quarantine period.

If staff are on official travel and are unable to return to Australia due to a pandemic outbreak or personal illness AFTRS will continue to pay their salary and reasonable expenses until they are able to return to Australia

4.3.12 **Personal International Travel:** Staff are discouraged from travelling to affected regions for any reason. If they do travel to affected areas and are unable to leave due to an outbreak, they may access personal or recreation leave to cover the period. The quarantine period outlined above will apply upon their return to Australia. Personal leave may be accessed for this period.

4.3.13 **Domestic Travel:** During a serious pandemic outbreak domestic travel will be severely limited and only essential travel will be permitted. If more than one staff member is travelling to the same destination, they will be encouraged to travel on different flights to reduce the chance of multiple infections.

### **Stage 3 Interventions (Pandemic Stage)**

4.3.14 **Organisational Social Distancing:** Depending on the phase of the pandemic, AFTRS may:

- remove magazines, newspapers etc from common areas;
- discourage or ban meetings being held in closed areas and require meetings to be held in open air;
- cancel or postpone non-essential meetings, gatherings, workshops etc.;
- only permit pre-approved essential meetings to occur; and,
- prohibit public access to facilities (e.g. library, reception and café),
- and/or close the premises.

It should be noted that only the Chief Executive Officer, or delegate, has the authority to close the premises to the public, staff or students.

4.3.15 **Cancelling Short and Industry Courses:** As the pandemic may not affect all areas of Australia simultaneously decisions as to whether each Industry course will continue to be offered will be made on a case by case basis by the Chief Executive Officer and the Director of Engagement.

4.3.16 **Immediate Professional Support:** All staff will be encouraged to download the EAP app and will be provided with email and phone contact details to ensure they have immediate access to professional support services. Students may suffer from many of the same concerns as staff. Students will be provided with contact details to access the Student Counselling services during this time.

4.3.17 **Alternate Premises:** AFTRS will consider what services can reasonably be relocated to alternate premises.

### **Managing Illness**

4.3.18 In the case of staff or students becoming ill at AFTRS during a serious pandemic the supervisor/lecturer/first aider will require them to wear a mask and not touch anyone to protect others from infection and absent themselves from School for 14 days or until they are medically cleared to return.

4.3.19 People who become unwell whilst at AFTRS will be required to wait in an isolated room until arrangements can be made for them to travel to their home. The supervisor/lecturer/first aider will then be required to advise the People & Performance (staff) or Student Engagement Team (students) that they have sent the unwell person home. Once the room has been vacated, it will be locked off until thoroughly cleaned.

4.3.20 Should a staff member believe that a member of the public is unwell they should ask them to leave the premises and suggest that they seek medical advice. If the member of the public refuses to leave the premises the School Resources team should be contacted.

4.3.21 The People & Performance Team and the Student Engagement Team will maintain contact with staff/students who are absent due to illness. They will provide assistance or information as required, and ensure they are absent for the required period. In the case of staff, regular phone contact from their supervisor is also encouraged.

4.3.22 Indications are that people who have suffered from the current airborne respiratory disease and/or virus recover and develop an immunity that protects them from further attacks. These staff should be encouraged to return to work and may be considered for essential roles.

## **Communication**

- 4.4 The importance of keeping staff and students fully and accurately informed during all stages of a pandemic cannot be overstated. The benefits include:
- Minimising rumours;
  - Maintaining morale;
  - Encouraging behaviour that will minimise the spread and impact of disease;
  - Ensuring staff are informed of entitlements;
  - Sharing government announcements re: the progress of the pandemic; and,
  - Keeping staff abreast of service levels being provided by AFTRS.

It is essential that staff and students are able to rely on the information provided. To ensure accuracy and consistency, all information going to staff and students will be developed in collaboration with the People and Performance Team and the Student Engagement Team.

A dedicated intranet page will be created relating specifically to the specific airborne respiratory disease/virus that is the cause of the pandemic. This will be updated regularly as new advice emerges and the contents shared via email with staff and students.

All external communication must go through the central point of the Marketing Team. Comms will only be issued on the approval of a member of the Executive Team.

As the pandemic progresses there will be an increasing need to inform the School's students, clients and other stakeholders of any potential impact.

The types of information which may be released include:

- advice to clients re: training and events;
- advice to the public re: limited services and physical access to premises;
- advice to Library members re: changes to service delivery;
- advice to creditors re: continuation of payments, and
- any advice or responses to government.

## **Service Provision: Ensuring Minimum Levels of Service**

- 4.5 The following functions are essential for AFTRS to maintain a minimum level of service. Each Divisional Director will be responsible for identifying which staff members can best fulfil these functions. Department Heads will then be responsible for ensuring other staff are trained as "back up" or alternate arrangements are made in case of absence:
- Technology
  - Payroll
  - Finance
  - Student Experience
  - Communications
  - Teaching

This list is developed on the basis that as many tasks/events as possible will be deferred until the recovery stage.

## **Knowledge Management**

- 4.5.1 A serious pandemic may impact on staff attendance very quickly and it cannot be predicted which staff will be affected. In addition, the infectious nature of airborne respiratory diseases and viruses may require staff to absent themselves with little or no warning. It is important that AFTRS still be able to provide services under these circumstances.

- 4.5.2 **Cross Training:** Both in preparation for and during a pandemic outbreak all staff will be encouraged to multi-skill and share information. Those staff performing duties deemed to be essential will be responsible for taking steps to train their identified replacement in how to perform at least the crucial functions of their role. Divisional Directors will be required to identify critical roles and report back to Executive on their plan and progress to cross train on a regular basis. This is critical to ensuring business continuity.
- 4.5.3 **Documenting Processes & Procedures:** This is already underway at AFTRS; however, each team will be encouraged to document their key processes for ease of sharing. The Knowledge Manager can provide support in this area and ensure that final documents are accessible and shared with staff.

## Monitoring Illness

- 4.6 Pandemics generally affect between 25%-30% of the population. In a serious pandemic staff and students may be absent due to:
- their own illness;
  - caring for others within their household;
  - closure of schools and childcare facilities;
  - caring for relatives or friends;
  - death of relatives or friends; and,
  - redistribution of staff based on government requirements or assisting emergency or medical services.
- 4.6.1 It is noted that pandemics can impact as much on emotional wellbeing and attendance, as a physical illness can. To attempt to alleviate emotional impacts, the People & Performance Team and Student Engagement Team will ensure that pandemic and medical related information is provided to staff and students regularly and that they are kept up to date on how AFTRS is managing the impact of the pandemic.
- 4.6.2 Staff and student contact details, including next of kin/emergency contact details, will be updated and distributed to the Pandemic Plan Management team.
- 4.6.3 The People & Performance Team will work with managers to identify staff who are unwell or who are emotionally impacted by the pandemic, and staff will be made aware of the various types of leave available as well as being encouraged to work flexibly if concerned about being in the building.
- 4.6.4 The Student Engagement Team will work with Heads of Departments, Course Leaders and Senior Lecturers to monitor student illness including ensuring students presenting with symptoms depart the School until they receive medical clearance and by contacting students who do not attend without prior notice.

## Staffing

- 4.6.5 AFTRS is in the fortunate position of relying on a large pool of expert staff who are already familiar with the School, its processes and teaching. These people will form the core of a temporary staff pool should the impact of a pandemic make it necessary.

Heads of Department will be responsible for providing and updating People and Performance team with the names, experience and contact details of relevant experts who can come in should it be necessary.

The People and Performance Team will also ensure that the master spreadsheet of tutors is kept up to date and is accessible to the Award and Engagement teams.

- 4.6.6 The People & Performance Team will ensure that the Temporary Agency register is kept up to date. This register relates to administrative, support and specialist roles at the School.
- 4.6.7 It is noted that staff at AFTRS have extensive personal and professional networks. The People and Performance team will actively encourage staff to suggest individuals who may be interested in working temporarily at AFTRS should a pandemic make this necessary. These names and contact details will be kept on a database.
- 4.6.8 In the event of a Stage 3 closure, it should be noted that AFTRS does not provide services that would be considered essential to the community in a state of emergency and is therefore in a position where, if necessary, the School could

be closed. This would also enable staff to be transferred to deliver essential services in other Government agencies should it be necessary. Given the potential for the community to suffer economic difficulties as a result of any pandemic it would, however, be important for AFTRS to ensure it retained the ability to pay all accounts, provide support to and maintain regular and ongoing communication with all staff and students.

## **5 RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Implementation, Compliance and Monitoring**

- 5.1 The Chief Executive Officer and the Managing Executive will have ultimate responsibility for the approval, review and execution of the plan.
- 5.2 Key roles will be allocated based on recommendations submitted by Divisional Directors.
- 5.3 Staff compliance with the plan will be monitored by the People and Performance team.
- 5.4 Student compliance with the plan will be monitored by the Student Engagement team.
- 5.5 Overall compliance with the plan will be monitored by the Executive Team and Council.

### **Delegations**

- 5.5.1 It is important that staff absences do not impact our ability to make decisions. For this reason, all “deputies” to the Key Roles nominated while implementing this policy will be granted the delegations of the identified positions to take effect should the occupant of the role be absent.
- 5.6 Current Financial and Human Resource delegations can be found on the Intranet.

### **Reporting**

- 5.7 The Executive team will report to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee / Council when interventions have been implemented. The CEO will ensure that Council are briefed once stage 2 and stage 3 interventions are in place.
- 5.8 The Pandemic Plan Management Team will debrief and review the strength of the implementation once the epidemic and/or pandemic has ceased. This review will be informed by staff and student feedback from across the School.

### **Records management**

- 5.9 All records relevant to administering this policy and procedure will be maintained by the Policy and Governance Officer.

## **6 RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS**

AFTRS Critical Incident Management Plan

## **7 REVIEW AND FEEDBACK**

- 7.1 The provisions of this plan will be reviewed:
  - on receipt of additional guidelines or advice from the Australian Government;
  - on receipt of medical information or advice from the Chief Medical Officer for the Commonwealth;
  - if there is information or an incident that exposes deficiencies in the Plan; or
  - in conjunction with the review of the Critical Incident Management Plan.
- 7.2 AFTRS staff and students may provide feedback about this document by emailing [policy@aftrs.edu.au](mailto:policy@aftrs.edu.au).



## 8 APPROVAL AND REVIEW DETAILS

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	CEO
Responsible Officer	Director People & Performance
Next Review Date	9 March 2021 (in-line with the annual review of the Critical Incident Plan)

Approval and Amendment History	Details
Original Approval Authority and Date	CEO 2006
Amendment Authority and Date	CEO 2011 CEO 9 March 2020
Notes	Supersedes; <i>Pandemic Plan 2011</i> - New version merges Policy and Procedures into single document dispensing with the plan. Template released in February 2020