



2.15 INFECTIOUS AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASES POLICY

Responsible Officer	Master
Review Date	2024

1. Purpose

To outline the strategies to prevent and control the transmission of infectious diseases within the College community that originate either from within or outside its premises, and actions that New College will take to quickly reduce the impact of any communicable diseases within the College community.

2. Overview

Infectious and communicable diseases can spread readily to others in a residential community. Under the Public Health Act 2010 medical practitioners must notify authorities of certain communicable diseases which have been declared Notifiable Diseases as they present a serious threat to the community.

Preventing the spread of these infectious and communicable diseases from a person, animal or research material to others, is an essential control strategy for the College to meet its duty of care towards all staff and residents. This policy will be kept updated to include changes to Health Alerts and Exclusions and ensure the College complies, as far as practicable, with recommended best practices.

From time to time, infectious diseases develop into epidemics or pandemics and create increased risks for the community. These occasions require specific procedures targeted at the particular disease in question.

3. Scope

This policy will apply to the College staff, residents, contractors and visitors (and volunteers) who may be exposed to or contract an infectious or communicable disease or be exposed to human blood or bodily fluids while in our buildings or when taking part in our community activities.

4. Definitions

College or New College Communities	General terms for New College and New College Postgraduate Village as separate but related companies limited by guarantee under the control of the Board and Master
College Community	College Board, staff, residents, families of residents and alumni of New College and New College Postgraduate Village
Communicable Diseases	Illnesses that spread from one person, animal or the environment to another susceptible person through direct contact with blood and bodily fluids or indirectly through contaminated food, water or surfaces.
Infectious Diseases	Illnesses caused by infectious agents including bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi and their toxic products. Many infectious diseases are also communicable diseases.
Master	The chief executive officer of New College and New College Postgraduate Village appointed by the Board
Notifiable Disease	A communicable disease which poses a serious threat to public health.
Resident	Any student, (undergraduate or postgraduate), visiting academics to UNSW, or other educational institutions, or members of staff or families, living on site at New College and New College Postgraduate Village
Staff	Any person on the College payroll including senior residents and academic tutors

5. Policy statement

The College will, as far as possible, plan for and make advance preparations to prevent the spread of infectious and communicable diseases and take all reasonable steps to provide a safe environment and ensure the health and safety of its workers, the residential community, and all other persons on the College premises.

5.1 Principles

- 5.1.1 The College will implement measures to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, the transmission of infectious and communicable diseases being passed on from a person, animals, or from any research material to any other person.

- 5.1.2 The College will notify the College community of any outbreak and keep the community regularly informed of its response in line with medical and/or government advice.
- 5.1.3 The College recognises the importance of providing the following protections for people with a communicable disease:
- The right to confidentiality of all information relating to their health status and any medical tests carried out,
 - A study or work environment free from discrimination and/or harassment, and
 - Access to additional supports and clearly defined grievance processes where required.
- 5.1.4 The College will comply with all directions from authorised public health officers and recognised medical authorities in relation to epidemics or a pandemic.
- 5.1.5 The College will endeavour to maintain its service and operations through the period of concern.

5.2 Preparation measures

Measures to prevent and control infectious diseases may include:

- Support of immunisation and vaccination programs,
- Implementation of hand and personal hygiene protocols, including education and visual reminders alongside provision of soap and hand sanitizer to support good hand hygiene,
- Training of key staff in the use of personal protective equipment, such as face masks and gloves, safe handling and disposal of 'sharps', and respiratory hygiene, and
- Appropriate training for staff in safe food handling practices.

5.3 Incident response

In the event of an outbreak the College will, where possible:

- Assist staff, residents and others to minimise their exposure to the illness concerned;

- Encourage and assist those who have reason to believe they are at risk of contracting the disease to obtain a diagnosis and seek treatment where appropriate;
- Support staff, residents and others to take reasonable precautions to prevent infection or contagion;
- Provide personal protective equipment as needed;
- Implement physical distancing and/or isolation procedures as appropriate for affected individuals while ensuring their physical safety and psychological wellbeing.

5.4 Notifications

The College will ensure the NSW Department of Health is informed of any notifiable disease as required at <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/Pages/notification.aspx>

6. Legal and Policy Framework

Under the *Public Health Act 2010* medical practitioners, hospitals and pathology laboratories are required and authorised to confidentially notify NSW Health if they believe a patient is suffering from a medical condition or disease that may pose a significant risk to public health.

The *Public Health Regulation 2022* further requires the College, as a public authority, to notify the relevant Public Health Unit of a suspected outbreak of a notifiable or communicable disease in which the community is likely to be at risk.

A list of Notifiable Diseases is located in Schedule 2 of the *Public Health Act 2010*.

The *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* and *Health Records Information Privacy Act 2002*, permit the use or disclosure of health information where it is required or authorised by law.

Should the Department of Health need to inform the College that a member of the College community has contracted an infectious or communicable disease, the Master will be informed who will in turn keep the College Board apprised.

On receiving notification, the required response and actions recommended by the Department of Health will be implemented in coordination with the Master, and all



members of the College community must follow instructions given by the Department of Health. The decision to share information is made on a case-by-case basis, with the Master making the final decision in consultation with the Department of Health.

An outbreak of an infectious or communicable disease within the College community may also constitute a critical incident, where the College's *2.7 Critical Incidents Policy* and its associated procedures will apply.

7. Implementation and Responsibilities

7.1 Board

The College Board has ultimate responsibility for providing a safe and healthy working environment for College staff, residents, visitors, volunteers and contractors and for setting strategic objectives and delegations for the Master's actions in response to incidents or threats to the communities.

In the event that immediate action is required due to an imminent threat to the health and safety of the College community, the Board will seek urgent briefings on steps the College is taking to address concerns and mitigate risk.

The Board's role in response to an ongoing crisis will be to:

- Prioritise employee and resident safety first,
- Ensure clear roles and lines of decision-making are established,
- Oversee a comprehensive internal and external communications strategy,
- Monitor for overall trends and plan for future risk mitigation,
- Ensure business continuity planning, and
- Prepare for recovery.

7.2 Master

The Board requires the Master (and through him the staff) to:

- Develop Procedures necessary to satisfy the requirements of this policy.
- Exercise due diligence to ensure that New College responds promptly to incident reports and complies with all the appropriate infectious and communicable disease protocols;

- Adopt and update as necessary practices, procedures and training to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees, residents, visitors and any other people who may be present in the College or involved with the College;

Monitor all incidents and ensure they are reviewed so a continuous improvement approach with a priority on safety for when the next infectious or communicable disease incident occurs;

- Submit in the WHS reporting any incidents at every board meeting and keep the Board well informed of any serious infectious or communicable disease incidents within the College communities or take note if there are no issues to report.

7.3 Deans of Residents and Supervisors

It is their responsibility to meet the objectives and targets set by the Master, communicate the standards and expectations and respond appropriately to any infectious and communicable disease issues and concerns within the communities and the workplace environment, including by informing the Master.

7.4 Staff, Tutors and Senior Residents

Each worker has a duty of care and obligation to understand and commit to safe work practices and follow the College's policies and procedures—reporting any communicable disease and identifying potential risks to the health of residents, staff and visitors—when an infectious or communicable disease incident is detected.

The responsibilities include (but are not limited to):

- Assisting in the identification of the causative agent and modes of transmission,
- Complying with specific measures to combat any disease in cooperation with relevant health workers and authorities,
- Protecting others from contamination,
- Minimising the exposure of susceptible individuals to contagious individuals,
- Eliminating as far as is practicable any environmental factors likely to cause the transmission of infectious and communicable diseases,
- Preventing discrimination against and harassment of persons with an infectious and communicable disease, and
- Implementing all procedures necessary to fulfil the intent of this policy.

7.5 Residents

Residents share responsibility for following all policies and procedures, reporting potential infectious and communicable disease incidents and ensuring that their conduct does not endanger themselves, others or their environment according to this policy and associated procedures.

8. Review & History

Superseded Documents		2.15 Infectious and Communicable Diseases Policy 2009		
Associated Documents		2.7 Critical Incidents Policy <i>Emergency Control Procedures for COVID-19 for New College and New College Postgraduate Village, Approved 12 Jan 2022</i>		
Version	Authorised By	Sections Modified	Approval Date	Effective Date
1	The Board	ALL	30 August 2023	

9. Acknowledgements

- a. *Public Health Act 2010*, (NSW Government), 'Schedule 2 Notifiable diseases'.
<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2010-127#sch.2>
- b. *Immunisation Programs*, (NSW Government, Health).
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/default.aspx>
- c. *Disease Notification*, (NSW Government, Health).
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/Pages/notification.aspx#3>
- d. *Infectious Diseases*, (NSW Government, Health)
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/Pages/default.aspx>
- e. *Communicable Diseases Factsheet, 2016* (NSW Govt, Health), 'Notification of Scheduled Medical Conditions and Australian Privacy Principles'.
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/Documents/notification-of-scheduled-medical-conditions.pdf>

- f. *Infectious Diseases – Infection Prevention and Control, Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network (NSW Government, Education)*. <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/leadership/resource-library/infectious-diseases>
- g. Safe Work Australia. <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/>
- h. *Communicable Diseases*, (Australian Government, Dept of Health and Aged Care). <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/communicable-diseases#:~:text=Communicable%20diseases%20are%20diseases%20that,monitor%20these%20diseases%20in%20Australia.>
- i. *Infectious and Communicable Diseases, 2022*, (Australian Government, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare). <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/infectious-and-communicable-diseases>
- j. *Infectious and Communicable Diseases FAQs, 2020*. The University of Adelaide. <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/hr/hsw/hsw-faqs/infectious-and-communicable-diseases-faqs>