

N4 INFECTIOUS, NOTIFIABLE AND REPORTABLE DISEASES

Purpose and scope

- 4.1 This section of the Consolidated Academic Policies and Regulations explains what 'infectious, notifiable and reportable diseases' are, how to notify the College of them and how the College will deal with notifications.
- 4.2 This policy applies to cases of infectious diseases in current staff and students reported to the College on or after 01 June 2017, regardless of the date of the illness giving rise to the notification.
- 4.3 This policy applies to both infectious and notifiable diseases. When the College refer to 'infectious diseases', the College means both notifiable and non-notifiable diseases.
- 4.4 In particular it refers to diseases that are either:
 - a) notifiable under the Health Protection (Notification) Regulation (2010), as amended; or
 - b) reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases & Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (2010), as amended.

Definitions

- 4.5 'Infectious diseases' means a disease or illness caused by such organisms as bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites. They are transmitted in various ways, have various degrees of infectivity, and cause various harmful effects. Those such as meningitis, malaria and influenza can spread directly or indirectly from one (1) person to another. Infectious diseases are also known as communicable diseases.
- 4.6 'Notifiable disease' means an infectious disease whose confirmed diagnosis must be informed to the local Health Protection Unit of Public Health England. The medical professional who diagnoses the condition must notify the appropriate authority. On being notified, Public Health England may require the College to take certain actions.

Introduction

Overview

- 4.7 The College's staff and students often live and work close together, and many travel abroad regularly. The numerous opportunities for close physical contact among them raise the risk that a serious disease or bout of illness may break out on campus.
- 4.8 Major outbreaks and serious diseases are rare, but the College has both legal and moral responsibilities to respond suitably and efficiently while being highly sensitive to affected students or staff.
- 4.9 The College are responsible for providing a safe and healthy study and work environment for all its students, staff and visitors. The College's responsibilities include:
 - a) education and information about the effects of infectious diseases and any recommended vaccination programme;
 - b) giving suitable support and referring people to external sources of help if the College thinks this is appropriate; and
 - c) taking action under the relevant policies or regulations including the student disciplinary regulations, if necessary.

Principles

- 4.10 Under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases & Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (2010), as amended, the College has to report certain work-related accidents, certain injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences.
- 4.11 Under the Health Protection (Notification) Regulation (2010), as amended, several diseases must be reported to the proper authorities. These include cholera, malaria, measles, meningitis, mumps, SARS, Tuberculosis and whooping cough.
- 4.12 Every infectious disease is different. Many, such as meningitis or SARS, are rare but can have serious consequences. Infectious diseases are more likely to occur in young people and in close-knit communities. So universities are among the most likely places where an outbreak may occur.
- 4.13 The College's policy on infectious diseases is to respond immediately in an appropriate, effective and efficient way that at all times is sensitive to and supportive of staff and students.
- 4.14 The College have a duty to help the authorities:
- minimise the number of incidents;
 - reduce the severity of their impact; and
 - minimise spread.
- 4.15 The College's response to infectious disease will involve colleagues from across organisations in London and from the College's national and international partners and educational agents.
- 4.16 The College must deal with any notification of an notifiable or reportable illness by:
- following clear lines of responsibility to support a set of coherent contributions by College staff and students in response to the notification;
 - observing legal formalities to protect the College's interests; and
 - taking a suitable duty of care towards all staff and students.
- 4.17 This will seek to ensure that:
- the College informs appropriate people inside and outside the College and involve them in responding suitably to the notification; and
 - those the College charge with its management of and response to the situation act responsibly, reasonably, compassionately and sensitively.
- 4.18 The principle of all communications must be that in a notification, no illness or case is known until confirmed by a relevant Health Protection Agency or medical practitioner.

NOTE: It is important that everyone in the College understands this and does not say anything (even in private) that pre-empts the Health Protection Agency or medical practitioners. All College statements must be factual. No case or diagnosis should be discussed even in private.

- 4.19 For example, the College should say 'A member of the academic community has become ill', but not 'has meningitis'.

Procedures

Overview

- 4.20 There are four (4) phases to the College's response notifiable and reportable diseases:
- Phase 1: Preventative measures.
 - Phase 2: Notification of infectious diseases.
 - Phase 3: Initial response and aftercare.
 - Phase 4: Long-term support and care.
- 4.21 The College may be notified of a notifiable or reportable disease by the next of kin, or a member of its community may discover the presence of such a disease on campus. If the College is notified of such a disease away from the College, it must move immediately to Phase 2.

Phase 1: Preventative measures

- 4.22 To support the College's response to notifiable and reportable diseases, the College will strongly recommend that all new students and staff joining the College receive vaccination against a number of conditions.
- 4.23 The conditions on the College's list will depend on current guidance from the Department of Health and the Health Protection Agency. The College will review its list every year.
- 4.24 Further, the College will actively promote the health and wellbeing of its students and the wider community by:
- giving details of infectious diseases and all its wellbeing services in widely used student areas such as the Student Common Rooms;
 - organising College-wide awareness-raising events by internal and external facilitators;
 - giving accessible information about help and support – in and outside the College – about a range of ways to prevent infectious diseases.
- 4.25 Each year the College will review its awareness-raising programmes and the training available to students on infectious and reportable diseases. It will also prepare an annual review of health-promotion materials and health-related events for the coming academic year, in coordination with the Students' Union as appropriate.

Phase 2: Notification of infectious diseases

- 4.26 Notification may come from various external sources, including Public Health England. In addition, it is vital that staff and students alert the College to any suspected cases of infectious or reportable disease as soon as possible, rather than waiting for the public health authorities to contact the College.
- If in doubt, do not wait: alert the College.
- 4.27 All staff and students are expected to contact Learning Support and Wellbeing for further advice if they know or suspect a student has an infectious disease.
- 4.28 Any information received will be immediately reported to a Senior Officer, who will decide on the next steps. The College's response will be led by a case conference. This will coordinate the College's actions after the College have been notified that an infectious disease has been diagnosed in a student. At a suitable later date, the College will have a case review to consider any lessons it can learn from its response.

- 4.29 Outside normal office hours, the information should be given to Security. Security will notify Learning Support and Wellbeing in due course. More details of the internal College notification process are available in the relevant 'When to refer' section.

NOTE: This policy should be read alongside College policies and procedures on notifiable incidents. These set out the senior-level notifications required when major incidents occur. In addition, if an incident is serious enough (say an outbreak cannot be contained through normal College protocols and liaison with Public Health England), the College-level Incident Management Team should be notified.

Phase 3: Initial response and aftercare

- 4.30 After receiving a confirmation or strong probability that a student has an infectious disease, the incident response manager will call a case conference to manage the College's response, and notify all the people listed below. The members of the case conference meeting will depend on the circumstances and the disease:
- a) The Chief Executive Officer.
 - b) The Provost.
 - c) The College Secretary or the College's legal counsel.
 - d) The Director of Marketing and Recruitment
 - e) The Dean of the relevant Faculty.
 - f) The President of the Students' Union.

NOTE: The case conference may have to consider the death of a student from the disease. If so, it will need to take account of both this policy and the College's policy on the Death of a Member of the Academic Community. The decision on the make-up of the case conference will rest with the responsible Senior Officer. But as a minimum it should include representatives of those listed above.

- 4.31 The case conference should meet within 24 hours and will decide on at least the following:
- a) Communication to the College community.
 - b) Interaction with professional or statutory bodies.
 - c) Procedures for dealing with suspected cases.
 - d) Information for all members of the community to help limit the disease.
 - e) Support required by the College.
- 4.32 The case conference will ensure all students have clear instructions on how to seek medical attention if they feel ill and have symptoms of the disease.
- 4.33 The case conference will ensure all students have access to clear information about how to recognise the symptoms of the disease. The College will publish information through the College website, social media, direct emails and notice boards as appropriate. The induction packs that new students receive already include general information on what to do if they have symptoms.
- 4.34 The Chair of the case conference will ensure a record is taken of the actions it agrees.
- 4.35 If a College-wide incident group has been convened, this will supersede the case conference and conduct all its responsibilities.
- 4.36 Phase 3 is when responsibility for responding to the incident shifts from the case conference to a Senior Officer, and designated operational College teams are directed to follow up agreed actions.

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4.37 The College, led by the case conference (or incident group), will ensure that Public Health England has all the support it needs to contain the disease. In most cases the case conference will do this by supplying any required information. If asked for any information from the case conference, staff are expected to give it urgently.

4.38 The 'Student Infectious Diseases – Procedures' document lists actions to be taken and staff responsibilities during Phase 3.

Phase 4 – Long-term support and care

4.39 Phase 4 is the College's longer-term response to those affected by the infectious disease. It begins when the first student returns to the College after any period of exclusion.

4.40 The 'Student Infectious Diseases – Procedures' document lists actions to be taken and staff responsibilities during Phase 4.

Advice and support

4.41 Students can also visit the GSM London Students' Union (GSMSU) support service for confidential signposting to the services available regarding infectious or reportable diseases.

4.42 Advice for students on infectious and reportable diseases, and the associated lower-level College rules, is available from the Learning Support and Wellbeing Office (wellbeing@gsm london.ac.uk). More complex queries may be referred to appropriate individuals.

4.43 Advice for staff on infectious and reportable diseases is available from their Head of Department or from the Human Resources Team.

4.44 If any staff development needs are identified, they may be discussed with members of the Staff and Educational Development Team.

Fees

4.45 No additional fees or charges are associated with these regulations.

4.46 The College is not liable for financial or other consequences arising from action under this policy.

Legal and regulatory context

4.47 Legislation underpins the College's response to the outbreak of infectious diseases, specifically those that are notifiable. The Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010 cover prompt investigation of and response to public health risks.

4.48 They require registered medical practitioners and laboratories to notify Public Health England on discovery of a range of infectious diseases. This is why the College's policy outlines:

- a) how the College will support its staff and students; and
- b) how the College will help the local health services to meet their responsibilities.

4.49 Compliance with this policy can enhance the College's reputation. More important, though, is that handling the problem sensitively and successfully may minimise harm among those infected and the rest of the College community.

- 4.50 The College may not be bound by the principles in this legislation, and the policy alone may not provide the complete solution to the problem. The College uses the principles as guidance only, to help it deal soundly with these matters.

Enforcement, monitoring and review

- 4.51 If any person or body in the College refuses to comply with a request or decision made to enforce this policy, their refusal must be reported to the Academic Registrar, who will take such action to enforce this policy as they think necessary.
- 4.52 Each year, the College must receive a report that enables it to monitor, identify and act on any shortfalls in how this policy is interpreted and applied.
- 4.53 Every two (2) years, the College must review these regulations to ensure that:
- a) they remain up to date and continue to meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code, applicable legislation or guidance;
 - b) areas of improvement, or any concerns, raised by students, external examiners, or professional bodies have been addressed; and
 - c) opportunities to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy have been taken.

Schedule (not part of the policies or regulations):

Responsible Officer: Head of Advisory and Engagement

Approved by: Board of Directors and Academic Board

Version: 1.0

Date: 24 February 2016

Monitoring and Review Body: Academic Regulations and Awards Committee

Effective From: 01/06/2017

Next Scheduled Review: April 2019