Vaccine-Preventable Disease Procedures

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Work Health and Safety Policy

Work Health and Safety Management System

2. Purpose

These procedures outline the process for identifying requirements when undertaking work, study or research where there is a risk of exposure to vaccine-preventable disease.

3. Scope

a. These procedures apply to staff, students or others who, as part of their work, study, or research may be at risk of exposure to vaccine preventable diseases or toxins through work in biological laboratories, field work, clinical settings, working with animals or other tasks where they may be exposed to infectious or zoonotic disease.

b. Additional vaccination requirements not covered by these procedures:

   i. these procedures do not negate any requirements that a third party may impose regarding requirement for vaccination to enter or work on sites under their control (e.g. aged care or health sector)

   ii. for vaccination requirements related specifically to overseas travel – see the Travel Policy

   iii. any requirements determined for student placements as part of their Work Integrated Learning (WIL) activities

4. Definitions

Infectious disease	Infectious diseases are disorders caused by organisms — such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasites, prions, fungi, and fungal-like organisms that are infectious or potentially infectious to humans, plants, and terrestrial and aquatic animals.

Genetically Modified Organism (GMO)	As defined under the Gene Technology Act 2000: a. an organism that has been modified by gene technology; or b. an organism that has inherited particular traits from an organism (the initial organism), being traits that occurred in the initial organism because of gene technology; or c. anything declared by the Gene Technology Regulations 2001 to be a genetically modified organism, or that belongs to a class of things declared by the regulations to be genetically modified organisms; but does not include: d. a human being, if the human being is covered by paragraph (a) only because the human being has undergone somatic cell gene therapy; or e. an organism declared by the regulations not to be a genetically modified organism, or that belongs to a class of organisms declared by the regulations not to be genetically modified organisms.
Risk Group of Microorganisms	Microorganisms are classified into four risk groups based on the pathogenicity of the agent, the mode of transmission and host range of the agent, the availability of effective preventative measures, and the availability of effective treatment: Within Australia, Risk Groups are defined in AS/NZS 2243.3:2022
Vaccine-Preventable Disease (VPD)	Infectious diseases caused by organisms or toxins from organisms, that can be prevented, or their impact reduced, by being vaccinated.
Zoonotic disease	A disease that can be transmitted from animals to people or, more specifically, a disease that normally exists in animals but can infect humans.

5. Risk Management

a. The University seeks to minimise the risk of staff, students or others acquiring vaccine-preventable disease (VPD) whilst undertaking activities for the University. This is regardless of whether the source of the infectious organism is a Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) or Non-GMO.

b. The supervisor/manager has a responsibility to eliminate, or where elimination is not possible, minimise the risks of exposure to VPD as far as is reasonably practicable. The supervisor/manager, in consultation with relevant staff, students or others, must complete a risk assessment to identify workplace tasks, locations or other activities associated with an increased risk of acquiring and/or transmitting a VPD.

c. Risk assessments are to be completed before the work commences and include identifying sources of potential infection, including the Risk Grouping of organisms, work process, spills, decontamination and handling of waste.

d. The risk assessment must outline what controls will be in place to manage or reduce the likelihood of acquiring and transmitting a VPD in addition to vaccination.

e. The risk assessment must identify that if changes in a person's health status, such as pregnancy or becoming immunocompromised, occur then the supervisor/manager must review the risk assessment and associated procedures to identify if any changes are required to their work tasks.

f. Some activities or organisms of certain Risk Groups have been identified as increasing the risk of acquiring or transmitting of VPD, these include when:

i. handling or exposure to human body fluids, blood and blood products

ii. handling human faeces, urine or intestinal contents

iii. handling infectious organisms associated with vaccine preventable diseases

iv. exposure to mammalian foetuses, placentae or uterine contents

v. contact with animals, animal blood, tissues, products, carcases or animal waste

vi. exposure to zoonotic pathogens when working with animals

vii. exposure to wild caught or infected biting arthropods

viii. exposure to wildlife or wildlife products or carcasses

ix. working overseas especially in countries where it has been determined there is a risk of identified VPD infection

x. exposure to contaminated sharps, any other contaminated surfaces, materials or equipment

xi. exposure to wastewater or sewage facilities

xii. working as Mortuary Technicians, Embalmers or Histology workers

xiii. healthcare providers in remote Indigenous communities

xiv. exposure to infected soil or dusts

xv. any other group of persons where a risk assessment determines potential exposure warrants vaccination.

6. Controls for Preventing Infection and Transmission

a. Vaccination is not a substitute for good infection control practices also known as ***standard precautions***, as outlined in Australian Procedures for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare and information in AS/NZS 2243.3:2022.

b. Engineering and isolation controls such as working in containment facilities, biosafety cabinets, enclosed rotors etc. must be outlined in the risk assessment and implemented where required by legislation or where reasonably practicable to implement.

c. Where higher order engineering or isolation controls cannot be implemented e.g. in field work or remote community practice, then precautions such as sharps handling, sterile technique, personal protective equipment, training and any other relevant administrative controls must be implemented to reduce the likelihood of infection and transmission as far as reasonably practicable. This is to be in combination with vaccination where a VPD has been identified.

7. Vaccination Requirements

a. Staff, students and others must be informed of vaccination requirements if a risk assessment of the work/activity to be conducted has identified that they are at risk of a disease and a relevant vaccine exists. A list of vaccine-preventable diseases is available – see Australian Immunisation Handbook

b. Each person who may be exposed to an activity where there is an increased risk of acquisition or transmission of a vaccine-preventable disease, must be assessed by a medical practitioner to ensure all possible contraindications are also considered. This is particularly important if the individual may be pregnant or immunocompromised, as this may change their immunisation requirements – see Australian Immunisation Handbook.

c. Individuals must action vaccination requirements, including any boosters, or screening for immunity, with their medical practitioner or vaccination provider as soon as possible and prior to the potential exposure occurring.

d. Documented evidence of vaccination or immunity where relevant to a VPD must be provided to the University where a risk assessment has identified the need for vaccination (see Procedure 10).

8. Accident/Incidents Reporting

a. Any infection acquired as a result of work or study involving infectious organisms where this work or study is confirmed as the source, must be reported via FlinSafe.

b. If the incident involves a GMO, it must also be reported immediately to the Biosafety Officer as required by the Regulator.

c. Where there is an exposure to human blood or body fluid then the Blood & Body Fluid Exposure procedure must be followed.

9. Communicating Vaccination Requirements

a. It is the responsibility of the supervisor/manager to risk assess and communicate health and safety information including the risk of disease posed by the work or study conducted in their area to any relevant staff, students and others such as cleaning and maintenance staff.

b. Where a risk assessment indicates vaccination is a suitable control measure, it is the supervisors/ managers responsibility to inform relevant staff, students or others of this and provide them information around vaccination requirements prior to starting any work or study.

c. The provision of information about the relevant vaccine preventable diseases and the risk associated must be recorded on the Declaration of Informed Consent for VPD and must be provided to individuals as part of the communication process.

d. Any vaccination requirements identified prior to a worker commencing employment should be incorporated into pre-employment documentation.

10. Record Keeping

a. It is recommended that the individual maintains their own vaccination/immunisation records.

b. Where vaccination has been identified as a control measure for working in increased risk areas or tasks for VPD then any vaccination certificates, immunity confirmation, medical practitioner letters, declarations of consent or declined immunisation statements must be uploaded to Workday against the staff member's personnel file.

c. If evidence of prior vaccination is required, then the supervisor/manager may request to sight the records prior to the commencement of working on the identified VPD activity. They are not required to keep a copy if the staff member has uploaded the documentation to Workday.

d. For students undertaking WIL activities, the documentation is to be maintained against their record in InPlace.

e. For students not undertaking WIL activities, the documentation should be kept locally by the supervisor/manager.

f. Information provided to the University in compliance with these procedures will be stored securely and treated confidentially in accordance with relevant laws and the University's Privacy Policy.

11. Arranging and Cost of Vaccinations

a. Staff, students and others are responsible for sourcing vaccinations as required for their work or study. The University Health, Counselling and Disability Service or a person's General Practitioner should be contacted regarding vaccination information and availability.

b. For all new staff appointments where the University requires appropriate vaccinations as a pre-condition of employment for VPD activities, the staff member must obtain vaccinations at their own expense.

c. For current staff whose roles have been identified as requiring additional hazard controls (e.g. medical monitoring / further vaccines, boosters etc.) the College/local area will have a process for covering the cost of these measures.

d. HDR students are not classed as employees of the University. Colleges may decide if they will pay for, or contribute to, such expenses. This is a decision that should be made at the local level.

e. Researchers are encouraged to factor the cost of required vaccinations for their staff and students into their proposed project budget when applying for research grants.

12. Decline Vaccination for a VPD

a. Staff, students and others have the right to decline vaccinations. There may be medical reasons why individuals may not be able to be vaccinated.

b. Staff, students or others who decline vaccination and do not have immunity should be advised on the resultant health risks related to their work or study.

c. In the instances where staff, students or others are not protected by vaccination, the College/Portfolio must formalise this in writing by having the individual complete the Declined Vaccination Statement for a VPD, noting they may be at risk of acquiring the identified disease(s) for which a vaccine is available.

d. A further risk assessment must be completed in this instance where people working are not vaccinated, identifying how they will manage the risk, as far as reasonably practicable, noting this may include the person requiring alterations to their work or study tasks to reduce the potential risk of exposure to the infectious diseases.

e. Where the risk assessment identifies that alterations to work duties are required, further assessment of the University's ability to make reasonable accommodation of these alterations should be undertaken.

f. Where it has been determined that reasonable accommodation is not possible due to the inherent requirements of the work or study then failure to comply with immunisation requirements may lead to an unacceptable risk of serious illness occurring and will therefore result in the individual **not** being unable to undertake the work or study tasks that place them at risk of a VPD.

13. Responsibilities

College Vice-Presidents and Executive Deans and Portfolio Heads	Ensure that: i. the effective communication and implementation of these procedures within their areas of responsibility is undertaken. ii. sufficient resources are available to enable compliance with the requirements of these procedures.
Supervisors (including supervisors of students) and Managers	Ensure that: i. they identify and risk assess tasks and activities where vaccination requirements need to be considered alongside other control measures.

	ii. persons under their supervision are provided with adequate information and resources in relation to seeking appropriate vaccinations where VPD have been identified. iii. specific training and information is provided to contracted workers or others prior to entering a workplace where a risk of VPD transmission exists. iv. immunisation compliance status for individuals is recorded and requirements followed prior to exposure. v. where a person has declined to be vaccinated then the process for failure to comply in Procedure 12 is followed. vi. continually review immunisation requirements if the nature of work or research / study task is subject to change.
Staff (Workers)	i.Ensure that ongoing compliance and provision of associated records with vaccination / screening, including any booster requirements are kept up to date. ii.Provide records of vaccination documentation via WorkDay. iii.Comply with risk assessments and safe work procedures including infection control measures to protect themselves and others in the workplace. iv.Report any accident / incident, exposure or infection acquired in the workplace where work is the confirmed source to their supervisor, via FlinSafe, and to the Biosafety Officer (if a GMO).
Students and others	i.Ensure that ongoing compliance and provision of associated records with vaccination / screening requirements or boosters are kept up to date. ii.Comply with risk assessments and safe work procedures including infection control measures to protect themselves and others in the workplace. iii.Report any accident, exposure or infection acquired in the workplace where work is the confirmed source to their supervisor, via FlinSafe, and to the Biosafety Officer (if a GMO).

14. Related Procedures and Links

Work Health and Safety Policy

Work Health and Safety Management System

Travel Policy

Australian Immunisation Handbook

AS 2243.3:2022 *Safety in Laboratories: Part 3: Microbiological Safety and Containment*

Biosafety Manual

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