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pharmacy
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APC Response to Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic

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Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
Coronavirus	Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronavirus infects peoples and spreads between people. An outbreak of respiratory illness first reported in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China is caused by a new (novel) coronavirus.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term
APC	Australian Pharmacy Council
CAOP	Competency Assessment of Overseas Pharmacists
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
KAPS	Knowledge Assessment of Pharmaceutical Sciences
IAS	Independent Assurance Solutions
IWE	Intern Written Examination
PHEIC	Public Health Emergency of International Concern
MCQ(s)	Multiple Choice Question(s)
WHO	World Health Organisation

APC Response to Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Pandemic

1. Purpose

To outline the Australian Pharmacy Council's response to the global outbreak of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

2. Scope

This policy applies to candidates who will be sitting for APC examinations at testing centres within and outside Australia. This includes the following examinations that are developed by the APC and those that are delivered by the APC on behalf of other health professionals.

- The Knowledge Assessment of Pharmaceutical Sciences (KAPS)
- The Competency Assessment of Overseas Pharmacists (CAOP)
- The Intern Written Examination (IWE) for Australian Pharmacist graduates
- Independent Assurance Solutions (IAS) Examinations for Medical Scientists, Dietitians, Osteopaths and Nuclear Medicine Specialists.

3. Overview

The World Health Organization's (WHO) International Health Regulations Emergency Committee declared an outbreak of Novel Coronavirus (2019 nCoV) a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020¹. On 12 March 2020 the WHO classified the coronavirus outbreak now known as COVID-19 disease as a pandemic². The current outbreak was first reported in Wuhan, China on 31 December 2019 and since then health authorities worldwide including Australia have reported cases of coronavirus disease COVID-19³.

COVID-19 is spread from person-person among close contacts (within about 2 metres). The virus is thought to spread via respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes similar to influenza. Symptoms may appear in 2-14 days and include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Severity has been reported to range from low to being severely ill and even death.

APC examinations bring people from all over the world together which increases the risk of exposure to COVID-19. The APC is responding to this global emergency in line with our risk management framework.

4. APC Examination Schedule for 2020

APC examination schedule is as follows:

- Three sittings of the KAPS in 24 locations in up to 18 countries overseas
- Five sittings of the CAOP in 5 locations in 3 countries overseas and capital cities in Australia
- Seven sittings of the IWE in capital cities across Australia

¹ Statement on the second meeting of the International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee regarding the outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). WHO website. Accessed on 30 January 2020 at <https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2020/01/30/default-calendar/international-health-regulations-emergency-committee-on-novel-coronavirus-in-china>.

² WHO website. Accessed on 17 March 2020 at <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2020/3/who-announces-covid-19-outbreak-a-pandemic>

³ Coronavirus disease (COVID-2019) situation reports. . WHO website. Accessed 17 March 2020 at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>.

- Two sittings of IAS Examinations in March and September in Australia and up to 10 countries overseas.

The examinations are handwritten or computer-based multiple-choice questions (MCQ) and short answer tests that are delivered over 3-4 hours. There are no clinical assessments. Candidates and examination proctors have minimal interaction (for example talking, eating together) with one another although the total time spent in close proximity in the test centre may be up to 5 hours.

Examination centre availability will be dependent on local government policy around COVID-19 following advice from the relevant local health administrations⁴.

5. Risk Assessment

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) the risk of infection with coronavirus is depended on exposure and people are thought to be most contagious when symptomatic⁵. The table below summaries CDC exposure risk categories for COVID-19.

Table 1: Exposure Risk Categories for COVID-19 infection⁶.

Category	Criteria
High Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in the same household as, being intimate an intimate partner of or providing care in a nonhealthcare setting (such as a home) for a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection without using recommended precautions for home care and home isolation • Travel from Hubei Province China
Medium Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close contact with a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 • On an aircraft, being seated within 6 feet (two meters) of a traveller with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection • Living in the same household as, an intimate partner of, or caring for a person in a non-healthcare setting (such as a home) to a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection while consistently using recommended precautions for home care and home isolation • Travel from a country with widespread sustained transmission, other than China or Iran or Italy • Travel from a country with sustained community transmission.
Low Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being in the same indoor environment (e.g. a classroom, a hospital waiting room) as a person with symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection for a prolonged period of time but not meeting the definition of close contact • Travel from any other country
No identifiable Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactions with a person with symptomatic laboratory confirmed COVID-19 infection that does not meet high, medium or low risk conditions above, such as walking by the person or being briefly in the same room.

⁴ Pearson VUE test delivery information pertaining to COVID-19 (coronavirus), accessed 13 March 2020 at <https://home.pearsonvue.com/coronavirus-update>.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed 6 February 2020 at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

⁶ Source. CDC. Website. Accessed 6 February 2020 from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html>.

In countries where the risk of infection is high, local authorities have issued public health orders on prevention, treatment, quarantine of infected persons, controlled travel and closure of public places which has included closure of some test sites where APC examinations are held.

While it is unlikely that a person who is ill from any condition would register for an examination, it is possible that people who do not have severe symptoms from COVID-19 and who may therefore NOT be aware that they are infected, may sit for an examination. In the event of that occurring, the risk of exposure for other candidates would not be higher than the CDC “Low Risk” category.

6. Policy Statement

1.1. Our assessment of risk to candidates based on the CDC risk assessment categories is that there is minimal risk, not higher, than the CDC low risk category.

1.2. APC will not provide specific guidance e.g. the use of masks, to candidates as this is not our mandate or area of expertise. There is sufficient information that is publicly available to the public from appropriate sources such as the WHO, CDC and candidates sitting examinations would have access to this information. As part of our corporate responsibility to our clients and the global community, however, the APC will be open and transparent about our expectations and will endeavour to provide clear communication to candidates and our examination providers.

1.3. Due to the rapidly changing global situation on the COVID-19 pandemic, the APC will be guided by information that is publicly available on the websites of the WHO and the Australian Government’s Department of Health.

1.4. Candidates sitting APC examinations will be advised to comply with information provided by the government and or responsible authority in the country that they will be sitting an APC examination.

1.5. In the absence of information from the responsible local authority candidates will be advised to refer to publicly available information on the WHO website.

1.6. To reinforce prevention strategies, the APC will advise our contracted test providers to ‘sign post’ test centres with information on basic protective measures against the coronavirus as published by the local authority or by the WHO. It is expected that this will include provision of alcohol-based hand rubs in test centres.

1.7. APC will work with contracted test providers to ensure that any candidates affected by the current COVID-19 pandemic can reschedule their examination.

1.8 Where justified, refunds to candidates will be allowed. This decision will be made by the Executive Director Professional Services on a case by case basis.

1.9. APC will release statements on its website to advise candidates on the APC response and to maintain currency of information.

2.0. This policy will cease to be in effect when the WHO has declared that the spread of COVID-19 is no longer a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.



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