



**lyit**

**Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Leitir Ceanainn**  
**Letterkenny Institute of Technology**

## **PANDEMIC INFLUENZA POLICY**



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## **1. Introduction**

Letterkenny Institute of Technology has developed the following policy based on the recommendations and guidance issued by the Health Service Executive, Higher Education Authority, Department of Education and Science, Department of Health and Children, and World Health Organisation. Please note that this policy document has been reviewed by the local Department of Public Health.

This policy informs staff and students of Letterkenny IT about the Influenza A(H1N1) virus and advises the actions the Institute has adopted to prevent the spread of the virus and provides instruction on the Institute's response during an influenza pandemic.

The institute will prevent the spread of the virus by two means:

- Raising awareness of influenza including how best to evade transmitting the virus from person to person and recognizing the symptoms of the Influenza A(H1N1) virus (see communication section 10).
- Increasing the hygiene and sanitising facilities provided to staff & students.

## **2. Description of Pandemic Influenza A(H1N1)**

Influenza A(H1N1) is a type of flu virus. In the past this virus affected pigs, and only occasionally affected people who had close contact with pigs. The virus has now changed and can spread easily from person to person. It is called Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 because people all over the world are being infected by it.

It can spread in the same manner as seasonal flus and colds through coughing and sneezing which releases droplets containing the virus. Inhaling the droplets can lead to infection. These droplets are also easily transferred to hands and surfaces, eg, handrails, door handles, etc. If you then touch these infected surfaces and touch your eyes, nose or mouth the virus can then enter your system and you may be infected.

## **3. Outline of Pandemic Phases**

The World Health Organization (WHO) uses six phases of pandemic alert as a system for informing the world of the seriousness of the threat. These phases reflect the progression of an influenza pandemic from the first appearance of a new flu virus to wide international spread.

<i>Phase 1</i>	No new influenza virus subtypes have been detected in humans. An influenza virus subtype that has caused human infection may be present in animals. If present in animals, the risk of human infection or disease is considered to be low.
<i>Phase 2</i>	No new influenza virus subtypes have been detected in humans. However, a circulating animal influenza subtype poses a substantial risk of human disease.
<i>Phase 3</i>	Human infection(s) with a new subtype, but no human to human spread (or, at most, are instances of spread to a close contact).
<i>Phase 4</i>	Small cluster(s) with limited human to human transmission, suggesting that the virus is not well adapted to humans.
<i>Phase 5</i>	Large cluster(s) but human to human spread still localised, suggesting that the virus is becoming better adapted to humans, but may not yet be fully transmissible. At this stage, there is a substantial risk of a pandemic.
<i>Phase 6</i>	Pandemic phase: increased and sustained transmission in human population.

The WHO has raised the influenza alert to pandemic phase 6 because there is sustained human to human community transmission of the virus in more than one region.

The designation of alert phases, including decisions on when to move from one phase to another, is made by the Director-General of the WHO. The transition between phases may be rapid and some phases may be skipped. Each alert phase coincides with a series of recommended activities to be undertaken by the WHO, the international community, Governments and industry.

Changes from one phase to another are triggered by several factors, which include the behaviour of the disease and the characteristics of circulating viruses. The WHO Plan allows for additional national sub-divisions for Phase 2 onwards depending on whether a country is affected itself, has extensive travel/trade links with an affected country, or is not affected.

The European Commission has published four levels of alert to be used in the European context during WHO Pandemic Phase 6:

<i>Level 1</i>	Applies when there are no confirmed human cases infected with the pandemic virus in any EU Member State.
<i>Level 2</i>	Applies when there is one or more confirmed human case in any EU Member State.
<i>Level 3</i>	Applies when there is a confirmed outbreak in any EU Member State.
<i>Level 4</i>	Applies when there is widespread transmission in the EU.

Specific Irish alert levels have also been developed for WHO Pandemic Phase 6:

<i>Irish Alert Level 1</i>	Cases only outside Ireland (in a country or countries with or without extensive Irish travel/trade links).
<i>Irish Alert Level 2</i>	New virus isolated in Ireland.
<i>Irish Alert Level 3</i>	Outbreaks in Ireland.

*Irish Alert Level 4*      Widespread activity in Ireland.

#### **4.      The Symptoms of Influenza A(H1N1)**

You will have the same symptoms as if you have the ordinary flu but they will be **sudden** and may be severe.

They may include:

- Temperature over 38°C/100.4°F and some of the following:
- Dry cough
- Headache
- Severe weakness and fatigue
- Aching muscles and joints
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Vomiting/diarrhoea (in some cases).

These can lead to complications, some of which may be severe.

#### **What are the Differences between Influenza A(H1N1) and the Common Cold?**

<b>Symptoms</b>	<b>Influenza A(H1N1)v</b>	<b>Common Cold</b>
Onset	Sudden	Slow
Fever	Characteristically High ( $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ or $100^{\circ}\text{F}$ )	Rare
Headache	Prominent	Rare
General aches and pains	Usual, often severe	Rare
Fatigue, weakness	Can be prolonged for a number of weeks	Quite mild
Extreme exhaustion	Early and prominent	Never
Runny nose	Common	Common
Sneezing	Common	Usual
Sore throat	Common	Common
Cough	Common, can be severe	Mild to moderate, hacking cough
Diarrhoea, vomiting	Sometimes	Not associated with the common cold in adults

## **5. What To Do If You Get Influenza or Flu-like Symptoms**

If you develop the above symptoms, you are advised to stay at home and contact the LYIT Medical Centre, your own doctor or the out-of-hours NowDoc service (after 6 pm) immediately, *by telephone*. Do not go into the GP's surgery or A&E Department but stay at home. If required you may be visited by your doctor at home. Make sure that a friend or a housemate knows that you are ill. Be aware that other infection with flu like symptoms can occur, e.g. meningitis. If you are concerned get medical advice.

- Contact your GP or the LYIT Medical Centre -  
Letterkenny campus 074 9186850, Killybegs campus 074 9186670.
- Alternatively, call the Flu Information Line 1800 941100.
- Stay at home for up to 7 days or until you fully recover. If symptoms persist contact numbers above.
- Discourage any visitors to limit spread of virus.

For further information on how to manage your symptoms see HSPC website on: <http://www.hpsc.ie/hpsc/A-Z/EmergencyPlanning/AvianPandemicInfluenza/SwineInfluenza/AdvicefortheGeneralPublic/>

## **6. Procedure to be Taken if a Person Develops Flu-like Symptoms while at the Institute**

If a student or staff member develops the flu like symptoms listed above while in the Institute the following steps should be taken:

- i. Arrangements should be made for that person to be sent home immediately.
- ii. The person should be advised to make contact with the LYIT Medical Centre or their GP as soon as possible by telephone. If the student is a minor (<18 years old) his/her parents should be contacted and advised about contacting their local GP as soon as is possible.
- iii. If the person cannot leave for home\*\* immediately and needs to wait on campus for travel arrangements then the student or staff member displaying symptoms should be brought to the Infection Control Point. This is located in An Dánlann for Letterkenny staff and students, and in Room OB232 (Counsellor's Office) for Killybegs staff and students. Signage will be erected indicating the Infection Control Points. The person will be checked regularly by the Institute Nurse to ensure that their health is not deteriorating.

*\*\* Students are requested to return to the family home as opposed to student accommodation where possible.*

## **7. Preventing the spread of Influenza A(H1N1)**

Preventing the introduction of Influenza A(H1N1) is the first and most important step. The Institute will provide advice on preventative measures to staff members/students and implement additional procedures as follows:

7(a) Advice will be provided as follows:

- Respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette - key measures which everyone should use at all times to prevent the transmission of respiratory infections.
- Highlight the importance of frequent and appropriate hand washing and use of hand sanitisation units at entrances.
- Inform staff and students to stay at home if they have developed the flu like symptoms mentioned earlier in the policy.

7(b) Procedures/measures will be implemented as follows:

- Provision of an Infection Control Point (located in An Dánlann) to isolate individuals who develop flu-like symptoms while at the Institute while arrangements are made to send the individual home.
- Provision of hand sanitisation units at all entrances and dining areas in addition to the normal soap and water to all wash rooms and toilet facilities.
- Ensure Cleaning Contractors and Catering Concession operators develop and implement suitable procedures to minimise the spread of the virus.

7(c) Vaccination Plan:

- Nationally plans are being put in place to vaccinate the population with pandemic flu vaccine.

## **8. Will the Institute Operate as usual?**

In educational establishments a pandemic virus may spread quickly due to the large volume and close proximity of people. However, the Institute will make every effort to continue to function during a pandemic virus. The Department of Education and Science advise that the Institute should continue to operate normally unless advised by the Department of Public Health to close.

To ensure that LYIT continues to operate during this pandemic flu, the LYIT Pandemic Flu Response Team will develop a Business Continuity Pandemic Flu Plan, and a Pandemic Flu Plan Coordinator has been appointed to oversee this plan.

## **9. Class Field Trips and Travel (within Ireland and Internationally)**

Staff members and students may continue to go on trips both in this country and abroad. It is strongly recommended that organisers of trips abroad adhere to the up-to-date travel information and advice on the Health Protection Surveillance Centre website - <http://www.hpsc.ie/hpsc/A-Z/EmergencyPlanning/AvianPandemicInfluenza/SwineInfluenza/TravelAdvice/File,3642,en.pdf>.

## **10. Communication**

The Institute will communicate with students and staff members on how to plan for an influenza pandemic, what to do if they suspect they have the influenza virus and how to access services if needed. This communication strategy will include:

- This Policy which will be updated as necessary by the Institute's Response Team.
- Email information circulated to staff and students.
- Information session for staff will be carried out after the Presidents welcome.
- Medical Centre and students union will meet with students during registration and hand out HSE information leaflet.
- Leaflet information and poster campaign throughout Letterkenny and Killybegs campus buildings.
- Student and staff magazine publications, eg, LUST and Staff Newsletter.
- Website updated regularly.
- Health and Safety/School noticeboards, posters and information notices.
- Students' Union and class representatives.
- Electronic flat screens in main building and An Dánlann.

## **11. Revision of the Institute's Pandemic Flu Plan**

The Institute has formed a Pandemic Flu Response Team to oversee and advise on the Institute's Pandemic Flu Plan and Policy. This Response Team will review and update the Policy to affect any changes that occur in the influenza outbreak and/or change in the Institute's work practices or in light of any changes to HSE guidance documents. Revisions to this document will be communicated to students and staff as this is a live document.

## 12. Further Information and Advice

24 hour HSE Flu Information Line:	1800 941100
Employee Well-being Programme – EAR Ireland:	1800 490390
LYIT Medical Centre:	
Letterkenny	074 9186850 or (087) 2052600
Killybegs	074 9186670 or (087) 1369194
LYIT Health and Safety Office:	074 9186114
Media enquiries at LYIT:	074 9186013

### *LYIT Website*

Please follow college website Influenza link which will connect to the following updated information:

- Influenza Information Leaflet
- Women who are Pregnant or Breastfeeding
- People with specific medical conditions
- People with Cystic fibrosis
- Key points for people with cystic fibrosis
- People with HIV or Aids
- Influenza A(H1N1) poster
- Alcohol Hand Rub Technique poster
- Hand Washing Technique poster
- Respiratory Hygiene & Cough Etiquette poster.

### *Public Information and Guidance Websites*

Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) - <http://www.hpsc.ie>

Swine Flu Website – <http://www.swineflu.ie/>

Health Service Executive (HSE) - <http://www.hse.ie>

Department of Health & Children - <http://www.dohc.ie>

World Health Organisation (WHO) - <http://who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>