



ANU COVID PATHWAY

ISSUE REQUIRING DECISION – ANU VACCINATION POLICY

ISSUE: The University is required to give guidance to staff and students on COVID-19 vaccination requirement for University activities

BACKGROUND:

Vaccination is one of a suite of measures (a 'hierarchy of controls') that reduce the risk associated with the COVID-19. Vaccination reduces the risk of spread of the of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 and the development of severe disease, hospitalisation, and other complications. As such, adequate vaccination to maximise individual immunity is arguably the most important of all COVID safe measure that can be applied at this time.

While some jurisdictions have mandated vaccination for sectors or activities such as higher education, the ACT Government is not taking this approach for universities. However, businesses are free to mandate vaccination where they deem appropriate.

In the ACT, the University of Canberra is requiring vaccination for all residential students in 2022, and Charles Sturt University is mandating vaccination across all their campuses, including the ACT campus.

There is demand from ANU staff and students to have clarity around the University's position on COVID-19 vaccination. We have developed a framework to identify high risk activities where COVID-19 vaccination would be an expected risk control to mitigate the COVID-19 risks.

DISCUSSION:

A Vaccination Guidance/policy paper is attached below. The overarching key principle is that, while ANU will not mandate vaccination except in specific circumstances, the University expects that all members of the ANU community are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. This includes the requirement to have a booster (or third) dose when eligible, as this provides additional protection against the Omicron variant.

Other key principles include:

- Government vaccination mandates will be adhered to. This includes the [requirement for all health care workers to be fully vaccinated](#).
- Where government mandates do not apply, the University may still mandate vaccination based on the assessment of risk. Circumstances include, but are not limited to:
 - Living in ANU residences
 - Working with primarily unvaccinated population, such as children, who are not eligible for vaccination or in areas where vaccination rate is low

- Travel and work in remote communities
- Working with individuals who are more vulnerable to COVID-19
- Travel, both domestic and international

A formal Work Health and Safety Hazard and Risk Assessment of ANU residential accommodation has validated the requirement for a vaccine mandate for individuals living in student accommodation in 2022 due to the high-risk nature of communal living. This risk assessment was reviewed by ANU Legal. The approach was socialised with ACT Government representations at ACT University Working Group meetings in Dec 21 and is consistent with guidance provided on the ACT Health [Vaccination status guidance for business](#) webpage.

Following discussion at the last COVID Pathway Steering Committee meeting, the following sentence has been added to the document:

In accordance with [Chapter 3.1. Hazard Management](#) of the WHS handbook, local areas will need to undertake and document relevant stakeholder consultation on the risk assessment for mandating vaccination.

OPTIONS

Option 1:

Endorse and publish the Vaccination Guidance (see below) as an attachment to the ANU COVID-safe Guidelines 2022.

Option 2:

Do not publish the Vaccination Guidance but respond to individual queries based on the framework in the Vaccination Guidance paper

RECOMMENDATION:

Option 1 is recommended as it gives transparency and clarity to the ANU community.

Working Group Name: Public Health

Sponsor: Prof Tracy Smart, Public Health Lead - COVID Response Office

Date: 18 JAN 22

Supported by stream lead: Mark Mulligan/Ingrid Krauss. Consultation: Ian Anderson

Steering Committee: reviewed/approved/escalated to SMG [Nicki to complete]

ANU COVID Pathway: Vaccination Guidance

Version 1.1

18 January 2022

Background

Vaccination is one of a suite of measures (a hierarchy of controls) that reduce the risk associated with the COVID-19. Vaccination reduces the risk of spread of the of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 and the development of severe disease, hospitalisation, and other complications. With the emergence of the Omicron variant, it has become apparent that individuals who are double vaccinated are still at risk of developing COVID-19, although still have very good protection against severe disease. There is strong evidence that booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines enhance protection against symptomatic disease due to the Omicron variant¹.

While some jurisdictions have mandated vaccination for certain sectors or activities such as higher education, the ACT Government is not taking this approach for universities. However, businesses are free to mandate vaccination where they deem appropriate. In the ACT, the University of Canberra is requiring vaccination for anyone on campus in 2021 and Charles Sturt University is mandating vaccination across all their campuses, including the ACT campus.

This document outlines the activities for which vaccination is expected as a control measure to ensure the safety of the ANU community and collaborators.

Scope

All University related activity performed by staff, students, volunteers, or contractors where COVID-19 is an identified hazard.

Guiding Principles

1. The University is committed to the safety of all staff and students
2. The University expects all staff and students to comply with any mandatory vaccination requirements of the State, Territory or Country. This includes the [requirement for all health care workers to be fully vaccinated](#).
3. Vaccination is just one control in a hierarchy of controls to mitigate COVID-19 risks but is arguably the single most important risk mitigator.
4. The University expects that all members of the ANU community are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. This includes a booster (or third) dose when eligible.
5. While vaccination is not mandatory across all activities, there are some circumstances where other risk control measures such as masks, social distancing, and increased hygiene are not sufficient to reduce the risk of COVID-19 impacts without the use of vaccination.

¹ ATAGI Statement on the Omicron variant and the timing of COVID-19 booster vaccination. Available at: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/atagi-statement-on-the-omicron-variant-and-the-timing-of-covid-19-booster-vaccination>

This will be determined by a formal Work Health and Safety Hazard and Risk Assessment (see paragraph below). This is consistent with [ACT Government guidance](#).

6. If an individual is unable to be vaccinated for medical reasons and the activity is key to their employment or learning, a full risk assessment must be undertaken and approved by HR.

Situations where vaccination may be mandated

Where government mandates do not apply, the University may still expect vaccination based on a formal Work Health and Safety Hazard and Risk Assessment. In these circumstances, consideration could be given to making vaccination mandatory if all other control measures are unable to adequately mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. The decision maker in each circumstance will be the risk owner.

Potential higher risk situations may include, but are not limited to:

1. Living in ANU residences – full vaccination will be compulsory for individuals living in student accommodation in 2022 due to the high-risk nature of communal living
2. Working with primarily unvaccinated population, such as children, who are not eligible for vaccination or in areas where vaccination rate is low
3. Teaching spaces
4. Travel and work in remote communities
5. Working with individuals who are more vulnerable to COVID-19
6. Travel, both domestic and international

In accordance with [Chapter 3.1. Hazard Management](#) of the WHS handbook, local areas will need to undertake and document relevant stakeholder consultation on the risk assessment for mandating vaccination.