

## *Guideline for JCU Staff Attendance at Health Emergency Incidents/Events (including Surge Workforce)*

### **Purpose**

This guideline provides JCU Management and Staff with a process to approve requests to deploy expert human and technical resources (staff or students) for rapid identification, confirmation and response to outbreaks, whether epidemic or pandemic, of national importance as coordinated by the Australian or State Government Departments of Health.

In particular, it is anticipated that as the COVID-19 pandemic increases pressure on the health systems, there may be a need to supplement the health workforce as it comes under pressure.

JCU staff and students may be called on, at times, to assist in both public and private organisations external to JCU. It is anticipated that staff and students could be engaged to support a surge workforce under a number of different models including:

- Employees of the External Organisation
- Volunteers (unpaid)
- JCU Students on Placement
- JCU Contract Workforce

The model of engagement that is used is important in clearly-defining the responsibilities that JCU maintains for the person (staff/student), and the responsibilities that rest with the external organisation. In the case of students, the model of engagement may also be influenced by the work that the student is to undertake while supporting the surge workforce, and the extent to which this is relevant to their course learning outcomes.

JCU recognises the humanitarian importance for applicable staff to choose to contribute to these incidents/events. This guideline is to be read in conjunction with the [JCU Leave Procedure](#).

### **Eligibility**

Continuing and Fixed Term Academic and Professional and Technical Staff who meet specific criteria to attend national health emergency incidents due to expertise in their field, particularly in our health-related programs.

Undergraduate or Postgraduate Students (including Higher Degree by Research Students) may be eligible for consideration to the surge workforce as part of their course of study, where applicable, as long as it does not adversely affect their study plans.

This guideline does not apply to Casual staff or other affiliates i.e. adjuncts, conjoints, contractors and volunteers etc.

## Definitions

### Australian Medical Assistance Teams (AUSMAT):

AUSMAT are multi-disciplinary health teams incorporating doctors, nurses, paramedics, fire-fighters (logisticians) and allied health staff such as environmental health staff, radiographers and pharmacists, designed to be self-sufficient, experienced teams that can rapidly respond to a disaster zone to provide life saving treatment to casualties, in support of the local health response. Teams assist with humanitarian responses and strengthen both local and international health systems of countries in our region. AUSMAT is one of the few World Health Organisation (WHO) globally-verified Emergency Medical Teams. AUSMAT members are leading contributors to WHO activities to establish global standards on medical assistance during disasters.

### COVID-19:

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause respiratory infections. These can range from the common cold to more serious diseases. COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new form of coronavirus. It was first reported in December 2019 in Wuhan City in China. Due to its transmission across multiple countries and continents, it is considered a pandemic disease.

### External Organisations:

Organisations external to JCU including but not limited to hospitals (public and private), private aged care providers, pharmacies, “expert in field” organisations/foundations, volunteer organisations etc.

### Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN):

A network of institutions coordinated through WHO including non-governmental organisations, academic and research institutions, United Nations agencies, and other specialised public health institutions and organisations capable to provide human and technical resources for alert, risk assessment and response to public health emergencies of international importance.

### GOARN Primary Focal Point:

A JCU Staff Member who is an existing Network member authorised to receive and distribute communication from the Network. In JCU, this Staff Member may ordinarily be attached to the Discipline of Public Health.

### International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC):

ICRC protects the lives and dignity of people affected by conflict. It can reach people in need in the most difficult environments by protecting and assisting civilians affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence; promoting and strengthening adherence to international humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles through training and advocacy; delivering emergency medical assistance, food, water and shelter for millions affected by conflict and violence.

### International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent:

Australian Red Cross is one of Australia's most trusted and effective partners in disaster preparedness and response. Through the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies the Australian Red Cross is part of largest humanitarian network in the world, with links to 190 National Societies around the world. Australia's partnership with the Australian Red Cross helps strengthen disaster preparedness, builds resilience and increases public awareness.

## Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF):

MSF is the leading private international association for medical humanitarian aid. The association is made up mainly of doctors and health sector workers and is also open to all other professions which might help in achieving its aims. MSF provides assistance to populations in distress, to victims of natural or man-made disasters and to victims of armed conflict.

## Surge Workforce:

A 'surge' workforce refers to a cohort of staff who are brought in to an organisation to care for a markedly increased volume of patients—one that challenges or exceeds normal operating capacity, and who are willing to quickly transition to undertake a job role considered critical for our response.

## Incident/Health Emergency:

A public health or other event of significant national importance as determined and advised by the Australian or State Government Departments of Health or the World Health Organisation.

## Pandemic v Epidemic v Endemic v Outbreak:

An OUTBREAK is a greater-than-anticipated increase in the number of endemic cases. It can also be a single case in a new area. If it's not quickly controlled, an outbreak can become an epidemic.

An EPIDEMIC is a disease that affects a large number of people within a community, population, or region.

A PANDEMIC is an epidemic that's spread over multiple countries or continents.

ENDEMIC is something that belongs to a particular people or country.

## WHO:

The World Health Organisation's primary role is to direct and coordinate international health within the United Nations system. The main areas of work are health systems; health through the life-course; non-communicable and communicable diseases; preparedness, surveillance and response; and corporate services. WHO maintains the GOARN Operational Support Team to ensure the development and operations of the network and that the right technical expertise and skills are on the ground where and when they are needed most.

## Nomination Procedures

It is generally considered that an external organisation will approach the associated JCU College to request Expressions of Interest from JCU staff and/or students to participate in their particular need.

JCU staff, who may also be employed by other organisations concurrently, may also become aware of opportunities. They should advise their Dean, through their Supervisor, of the opportunity to assess whether JCU will participate in such incident/event.

## Emergency Notification/Advice from GOARN for Australian-based incidents/events

WHO will issue an alert email to the Network Primary Focal Points to identify experts who could be called upon for potential deployment to support preparedness and readiness, generally with short notice.

Depending on the nature of the request, the Network Primary Focal Point Staff Member may communicate advice to other Divisions across the University to determine staff suitability/availability, based on the identified need.

JCU (through its GOARN Network members) assesses available staff with the necessary requirements as stipulated in the alert advice. Further important information is available for staff through the GOARN Request for Assistance Response document issued at the time.

If a JCU Staff Member is deemed suitable and can be released from their current duties, the Staff Member shall upload their CV, availability date range, maximum duration for deployment and position(s) applied for, to WHO via the GOARN knowledge online platform in a timely manner.

The link will be available on the respective alert notification. Staff Member offers to support can only be submitted through this platform.

WHO will advise whether the Staff Member is accepted for deployment.

If accepted, WHO will issue the Staff Member with a contract outlining expectations and responsibilities for the identified period.

## Other Volunteer Organisations

JCU staff can apply on their own accord to become members of volunteer organisations based on their area of expertise and willingness to assist in public health and/or other emergencies around Australia. This is considered a voluntary personal decision of the Staff Member and not a requirement or expectation of their JCU employment.

A Staff Member could receive advice of an emergency event directly as part of their membership with that volunteer organisation. If the Staff Member wishes to attend an emergency event, they should firstly speak with their Supervisor to determine availability and approval.

## Considerations when Staff/Students seek to engage in Surge Workforce

### Safety

If a JCU Staff Member or student wishes to become involved in surge workforce arrangements, they should be advised to:

- Give due consideration to their own health status, and the risk that their involvement may pose to others to whom they are exposed (e.g., children or older people with whom they have regular personal contact or interaction).
- Ensure that the organisation that is engaging them to carry out the work, provides them with induction, training, supervision and access to necessary PPE, to the level that they feel equipped to be able to perform the role that is expected of them.
- Ensure they clearly understand the voluntary 'at own risk' nature of the deployment. Any questions should be directed to the relevant organisation for direct clarification.
- Seek independent advice regarding whether individual travel/health insurance may be required due to the circumstances of some deployments. This is strongly encouraged.

### University approval process in the event of impact on study or work commitments

University approval will be required for current **JCU staff (continuing and fixed-term staff)** who wish to engage as an **employee** of an external organisation to support surge workforce arrangements. Approval will

be given by the relevant Dean/Director. Casual JCU staff are free to take up appointments with other external organisations as long as this appointment does not adversely impact their work with JCU.

The University reserves the right to approve a **JCU Staff Member or student** being engaged as a **volunteer** if this engagement is likely to impact on the Staff Member's ability to continue to carry out their role within the University or on the student's ability to undertake their studies. Approval will be given by the relevant Dean/Director.

## Matters to consider regarding impact on JCU staff work commitments

Staff (continuing and fixed-term staff) who are seeking to engage as a **paid employee** or **volunteer** of an external organisation to support surge workforce arrangements will be expected to apply for applicable **leave or leave without pay** types from JCU for the time that they are seeking to be released from JCU to work for the external organisation. Please also refer to the [JCU Leave Procedure](#).

Leave arrangements available include:

- **Health Emergency Special Leave** - HESL shall be made available as either paid or unpaid leave – The decision to approve Paid HESL and Unpaid HESW will be dependent on the agreement with the external organisation and the Dean/Director. The Dean/Director will determine whether Paid HESL is warranted. There are good reasons why JCU would want to support some of this type of work, not only that it shows that we are a good community citizen, but it will build significant goodwill in the local professional community, further strengthen our reputation as experts, and likely lead to research and possible enrolments in coursework or HDR programs.
  - **Paid (HESL)** – For staff who have the necessary expertise to provide human health services in response to domestic public health emergencies, to assist with surge capacity in their field. The length of term (used in exceptional short term circumstances once Engagement allocation percentage has been utilised) will be determined as the situation demands and will be approved by the Dean/Director. The granting of paid leave would require **JCU to continue to employ the Staff Member** (which may include arrangements where the external organisation agrees to cover, or contribute to, the costs incurred by JCU in releasing the Staff Member. JCU may also agree to cover the salary costs pro bono depending on the external organisation's financial circumstances). The JCU Staff Member will apply for HESL to undertake this work.
  - **Without Pay (HESW)** - For staff who have the necessary expertise to provide human health services in response to domestic public health emergencies, to assist with surge capacity in their field. The granting of this unpaid leave would require the **external organisation to agree to employ the JCU Staff Member** directly and the JCU Staff Member will apply for HESW.
- **Global Emergency Leave** (up to 4 weeks and then case by case if required). This leave is for international deployments and only if activated by an applicable international volunteer organisation with appropriate approval documentation and as approved by the Dean/Director.
- **Australian Defence Reserves Leave** (up to 4 weeks) – only if they are an existing member and are activated by that organisation with appropriate approval documentation.
- **State Emergency Services Leave** (5 days) – only if they are an existing member and are activated by that organisation with appropriate approval documentation.
- **Volunteering Leave** (2 days deducted from Personal/Carers Leave).

When staff engage in a surge workforce arrangement, a range of matters are likely to need to be considered including:

- **Managing workload/fatigue** of staff who are working out of normal working hours (e.g.,

- ‘moonlighting’).
- Can the Staff Member be spared without putting at risk the **capacity of the University to continue to deliver core business activities** (e.g., teaching programs)?
  - Can this work be considered under the Academic Staff Member’s existing or a revised agreed work profile, how it may contribute to their Engagement activity, if the external organisation does not have funding available and there is capacity to assist?
  - Will the **Staff Member’s JCU role need to be backfilled** while they are working for the external organisation? If yes, how will this be resourced?

## Matters to consider regarding impact on JCU student study commitments

The overriding interests of the University are that our students remain safe, are supported to continue to learn in their chosen discipline, and ideally graduate within their expected timeframe.

It is acknowledged that in unusual circumstances (such as epidemic/pandemic), normal student placement arrangements are likely to be disrupted, and health organisations may seek involvement of students to support critical functions in the workplace. While challenging, these situations present a range of positive benefits both for the health system and for students including:

- Freeing-up other health professionals to engage in higher-level duties;
- Assisting students in developing work-readiness; and
- Building relationships and connections that will facilitate retention as graduates.

When students engage in a surge workforce arrangement, a range of matters are likely to need to be considered including:

- **Approval to defer assessments;**
- **Exemption from participation in classes;**
- **Mechanism for recording experiences.**

All students who are participating in a surge workforce response should be instructed to complete **placement log books** in which they record evidence/details of the experiences they have gained. Disciplines should ensure that students are provided with an appropriate log book format in which to record any relevant experiences they have in order that the information they collect will be able to be considered as counting towards their degree requirements.

**Appendix 2 Clinical Learning Record (CLR) template** may help to inform the development of a placement log book for use within the discipline. It is recognised that the ability for students to count experiences towards formal course requirements when they have been acting as a paid employee or volunteer, may be a change from normal arrangements in which learning is typically only counted from unpaid Student on Placement experiences.

The functions that students are engaged to perform within a surge workforce may have a greater or lesser relevance to the students’ course learning outcomes.

## Students undertaking work that is directly relevant to their course learning outcomes

Some of the functions that health organisations wish students to perform will align closely with the learning requirements of the students’ degrees, and **can be counted towards meeting formal course learning**

**outcomes.** This is clearly the preferred arrangement for the University, and in this instance, it may be appropriate for students to be engaged by the external organisation as either:

- Employee (paid);
- Volunteer; or
- JCU Student on Placement

### Students undertaking work that is of limited relevance to their course learning outcomes

Other functions that health organisations wish students to perform in support of a surge workforce may be more task-focussed and of limited relevance to the students' course learning requirements (and may therefore be **difficult to count towards formal course learning outcomes**). In this instance, students should be engaged by the external organisation as either:

- Employee (paid); or
- Volunteer.

### Course Accreditation Requirements - Student Course Progression

Academic Disciplines (Deans/Academic Heads) should remain in close contact with their respective Councils of Deans (or equivalent) and course accreditation authorities to ensure that the interests of students continue to be represented, students' ability to complete their course on time is protected wherever possible, and any changes or flexibility introduced by accreditation bodies in response to the pandemic is communicated to relevant staff and students.

## Models of Engaging Staff and Students in Surge Workforce

### Employees of the external organisation

If JCU staff or students are engaged as a paid employee (e.g., fixed-term or casual) of an external organisation, the external organisation would assume a range of responsibilities for them as outlined in the **'Employer Responsibilities'** statement (Appendix 1). JCU would not bear legal responsibility for the actions or welfare of these staff or students while they are employed by the external organisation.

### Volunteers

If students or staff volunteer for an external organisation, the responsibilities of the external organisation to the volunteer would be similar to those of employer (refer to the **'Employer Responsibilities'** statement Appendix 1) with the exception that payment of wages, on-costs and superannuation would not be expected.

### JCU Students on Placement

If students are to be engaged to support surge workforce in the capacity as students on placement, then the following considerations would apply for JCU:

- The University's standard placement protocols would apply. This would include:
  - The placement would be undertaken under the terms of a formal placement agreement;
  - There would need to be agreed learning outcomes for the placement and assurance given by the placement organisation that students would complete the body of work/learning required of their placement, recognising that during an unusual situation such as a pandemic, a level of flexibility may be needed by all parties in defining reasonable learning outcomes that can be achieved;

- Students would need to be given the expected level of placement supervision, and the placement organisation would be expected to provide all tools and equipment (including PPE) needed by the student to safely perform their placement tasks;
- Students would need to be regarded as supernumerary to the workforce of the external organisation, and not engaged to take on the roles of employees.
- JCU would be liable for providing insurance (e.g., public liability) to cover the actions of its students on placement.
- Risk assessments of the placement site may need to be undertaken (as per standard JCU operating procedures). Risk assessment should be undertaken in the event that students are to be exposed to obvious risk on the placement (e.g., expected exposure to infected patients).

### JCU Contract Workforce

In this situation, JCU would assign current University staff to work on a paid basis for JCU, to provide services under contract to the external organisation. In this instance, JCU would be responsible for items a, b, c and d in the '**Employer Responsibilities**' statement (Appendix 1), and the remaining Employer Responsibilities would be expected to be provided by the host external organisation. The Staff Member would also be required to apply for Health Emergency Special Leave (Paid HESL) unless the work could be accommodated as part of the Staff Member's existing work profile or a revised work profile was agreed.

### Applying for Health Emergency Special Leave

The Staff Member shall apply for Health Emergency Special leave either Paid (HESL) or Unpaid (HESW) as directed, through MyHROnline for the duration of approved specified period/s. The paid leave will include payment of all allowances currently being received by the Staff Member and both paid and unpaid leave types will be considered continuous service for leave purposes.

This could generally be up to 4 weeks however sometimes longer periods may be requested. The relevant Dean/Director/PVC would approve this leave along with any subsequent leave approvals for the same event.

*For note:*

- If member is activated for a health emergency by another organisation where leave entitlements are already specified, the appropriate leave should be applied for under the relevant leave category.
- Any staff member taking paid leave (Paid HESL or annual leave) who also receives payment from the external organisation will be responsible for declaring this income in their annual tax return, and should recognise that tax implications associated with working for two employers will apply. This is a matter for the staff member to manage through the ATO.

### Academic Workload Considerations (where applicable)

For Academic Staff, although this deployment could be viewed as Teaching and Learning activities (professional experience/development) under the academic workload model, it is acknowledged that the time spent away could skew the percentage of time needed for other activities required in the workload model for that year.

Where approved, this deployment period will be shown as health emergency special leave paid (HESL) or unpaid (HESW) as applicable, and work profile hours adjusted to meet the revised agreed workload model and reflect absence from the workplace.

Alternatively, where JCU has agreed to absorb the salary costs for the external organisation possibly due to financial considerations, this deployment period may be included as normal working time and the Staff Member’s work profile hours adjusted to meet the revised agreed workload model for the academic year.

The experience will still count as evidence for promotional opportunities regardless of how the time is shown.

## Communications

The Staff Member shall provide their Supervisor with contact details of a relevant representative from the organisation, in the event of an individual emergency affecting the JCU Staff Member whilst on deployment.

During the deployment, the Staff Member shall make arrangements to keep in regular contact, by an agreed method, with the Dean/Director/PVC and/or their direct Supervisor as directed.

The relevant Dean/Director/PVC shall inform the Head, Media and Communications Unit, regarding JCU’s commitment to the domestic health emergency incident/event and provide updates as necessary.

## Supporting Documentation

Please refer to the [JCU Leave Procedure](#) web page for further information on applying for this leave.

Appendix 1 Employer Responsibilities

Appendix 2 Clinical Training Record (CLR)

## Administration

### Approval Details

Policy Sponsor and approver of guidelines	Director, Divisional Operations, Division of Tropical Health and Medicine
Date for next review	01/05/2023

## Revision History

Version	Approval date	Implementation date	Details	Author
1.0	01/05/2020	01/03/2020	Original Guideline established	Peter Westwood

## Appendix 1

### Employer Responsibilities

An organisation that is employing staff will assume the following responsibilities:

- a. Engaging the employee through an appropriate work contract. Note, the employment contract may include leave provisions (e.g., sick leave, annual leave) depending on the nature of the engagement such as whether the appointment is made on a casual or fixed-term basis.
- b. Payment of wages, and statutory on-cost payments including superannuation.
- c. Reimbursement of personal expenses (if this is offered in accordance with the standard protocols of the organisation).
- d. Provision of Workcover (workers' compensation insurance) for the employee.
- e. Provision of insurance as required (e.g., public liability; professional indemnity; medical malpractice as applicable) to cover the actions of the employee whilst performing services for the employer.
- f. Managing workplace health and safety, including:
  - i. providing a WHS policy framework for the workplace;
  - ii. taking responsibility for the conditions under which the employee is working;
  - iii. defining the scope of practice that the employee will undertake (commensurate with their level of skills/knowledge/experience);
  - iv. making available Employee Assistance support services (which may include access to mental health support services);
  - v. providing employee induction and training as required; and
  - vi. providing necessary PPE.
- g. Provision of supervision/management/oversight as appropriate for the employee.
- h. Provision of the tools and equipment needed to carry out the role.
- i. Provision of any specific training that the employee requires in order to safely and competently undertake the role.
- j. Any employee travel and accommodation arrangements and costs will be provided and communicated direct with the employee.

Appendix 2

Clinical Learning Record (CLR)

Date	Activity details	Reflection	Learning need identified?	Subject and Subject Learning Outcome (SLO)	Professional standard code or guideline	Evidence of completion	Time
<i>State the date</i>	<i>State the activity</i>	<i>Describe your experience and the learning and outcomes you achieved from undertaking this activity</i>	<i>Did you identify a further learning need?</i> <b>YES:</b> List it here and what you intend to do to address your learning need. <b>NO:</b> indicate not applicable (NA)	<i>List the Subject and SLO that this activity addresses or aligns (Refer Subject Outline)</i>	<i>Identify the relevant Professional standard, code or guideline this activity aligns. Ensure you note specific criteria.</i>	<i>What and where can the evidence of completion be found (Portfolio Appendix)</i>	<i>State the time it took you to undertake this activity</i>

