



**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO**  
**INFLUENZA PANDEMIC – CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS GUIDE**  
**Preparation, Monitoring, Management and Recovery**  
**Updated October 14, 2009**

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## **Objectives & Priorities**

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The objectives and priorities in establishing and implementing a University Plan for Continuity of Operations in the event of serious local effects of a Flu Pandemic are:

- 1. to protect the physical, mental and overall well-being of our students, faculty and staff; and**
- 2. to preserve the academic, research, physical, reputational and financial integrity of the University, in the delivery of its mission.**

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## **Context**

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Seasonal (or common) flu is a respiratory illness that can be transmitted person to person. Most people have some immunity and a vaccine is available. Approximately ten percent of the population can experience flu-like symptoms during peak flu season (October/November, February/March). Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore Throat
- Body Aches
- Headaches
- Chills and Fatigue
- Sometimes Diarrhea and Vomiting

Concern arises when absenteeism in the workplace begins to increase. Leaders should monitor absentee rates throughout the year to help identify a pandemic in any specific area. Pandemics are unpredictable; however, to facilitate planning efforts we must assume the following:

1. Efficient and sustained person-to-person transmission signals an imminent pandemic. There may be several weeks' lead-up time to pandemic status.
2. The disease attack rate will rise to 35% in the overall population during the pandemic. Absenteeism may reach higher levels because of illness, the need to care for ill family members, and fear of infection during the peak of the outbreak.
3. Some persons will become infected but not develop clinically significant symptoms. Nevertheless, minimally symptomatic individuals can transmit infection and develop immunity to subsequent infection.

4. Rates of serious illness, hospitalization, and death will depend on the virulence of the pandemic virus. Risk groups for severe and fatal infection cannot be predicted with certainty but are likely to include infants, pregnant women, the elderly and persons with chronic or immunosuppressive medical conditions. However, in the case of a new virus to which humans have not developed immunity, a flu—such as the current H1N1—can prove fatal to the young and healthy.
5. The typical incubation period (interval between infection and onset of symptoms) for influenza is approximately two days. Staff, Faculty and Students who provide direct patient care and contract influenza should stay at home for 7 days minimally and only return to work when fever and other symptoms have resolved and they feel better. All non-health care staff, faculty and students who become ill should return to work/University when their fever has resolved and they feel better.
6. On average, infected persons will transmit infection to approximately two other people.
7. Epidemics will last up to eight weeks in affected communities.
8. Multiple waves of illness are likely to occur, with each wave lasting two to three months. Historically, the largest waves have occurred in the fall and winter, but the seasonality of a pandemic cannot be predicted with certainty.

Disease containment/control strategies within the workplace may include posting infection control guidelines, staying home if ill, and using social distancing measures—e.g. modifying the frequency and type of face-to-face employee/student encounters, placing moratoriums on hand-shaking, substituting teleconferences for face-to-face meetings, staggering breaks, establishing flexible work hours or worksite, maintaining six feet spatial separation.

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## **Plan Working Assumptions & Priorities**

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The following planning assumptions have been determined by examining risk scenarios of reduced capacity and potential shut down of University operations and their impact on the plan objectives, due-diligence and relationships with external partners.

### **Plan Parameters**

- The University’s Continuity of Operations Plan should address the immediate preventive stage, the initial monitoring phase when early indicators of a pandemic are emerging, the actual pandemic phase, and the recovery phase.
- Any plan must respond to two possible risk scenarios: a substantially reduced workforce or student attendance condition (35% reduction), and an imposed shut down, with the exception of essential services, leading to possible closure.
  - The influenza will likely arrive in multiple waves during the academic year
  - Each wave may last up to eight weeks.
- Our fundamental priority is to protect the physical and mental well being of all faculty, staff and students so that they can continue to pursue the University’s mission of creation, application and dissemination of knowledge through its teaching programs and through its research activity.
- Upon declaration of the University plan activation by the Emergency Operations Control Group (EOCG), the University will operate in an emergency mode. In this mode, the EOCG, in consultation with P-VP, will reserve the right to suspend certain policy and other decision-making conditions which could negatively affect the objectives of the Continuity of Operations Plan.
- Each area must identify their highest priority services so that essential functions can be determined.
- Measures to minimize the University’s financial liability in all business risk scenarios should be examined.

### **Communicating**

- Community communications must be early, regular, and frequent.

- Information about stages in the planning and response process, identifying a continuum from normal to crisis accompanied by prevention, resources and response measures and strategies will be widely circulated.
- The University will be proactive and as transparent and open as possible in the timely delivery of information to the Western community, and beyond. We want members of the community to hear news about Western *from* Western first.
- The Department of Communications & Public Affairs will take the lead in and the responsibility for internal and external communications.
- Decisions and updates will be communicated centrally through the ***Pandemic website***
- The University will not be a source of medical information, but will direct members of the community to existing Public Health and Foreign Affairs expertise.

### **Preserving the University Mandate and Community Care**

- An approach to academic program continuity, such as ***encouraging faculty to enable enhanced self study or course/term extensions*** should be explored.
- It is unlikely that the student residences could be completely closed and therefore measures must be put in place to provide services to the students who remain in our residences which will require external services such as public utilities and delivery of food to support student needs. However, if feasible, all efforts will be made to send students home to their families or other safe refuges, in the event of a shutdown or closure of the campus. An emergency management plan for addressing students in residences including out of province or international students has been established.
- Students may stay in their placements where the integrity of the learning experience is not compromised, and where their ongoing health and well being is not compromised.
- Current requirements and processes for students reporting absences due to illness must be streamlined to reduce administrative barriers in a University crisis declaration condition.
- Critical external professional associations, examination Boards etc., which currently control graduating students' requirements for professional licensing, certifications, registrations, etc. should be identified and, where possible, alternative means for accommodating the achievement of such requirements should be negotiated on behalf of the students.
- Essential services will be defined, and must preserve community care and continuity of organizational priorities during all stages of the plan or of the pandemic.

### **External Considerations**

- There is likely to be high absenteeism in both classroom and practicum experiences throughout the University.
- Many community agencies may close because of absenteeism, causing disruption in placements for many students doing their practicum experiences.
- The closure of placements and differing policies various organizations may put in place regarding students will cause inconsistency about completion of required practice placement hours. This may result in some students having the opportunity to complete required placement hours while some are excluded. The impact of such inequities will be addressed in the recovery phase.
- Loss of income may be significant for some students trying to meet the cost of education.
- The larger southwestern Ontario region will be experiencing the same scenario as the University so we will not be able to rely on hiring contract personnel or external service providers for essential services.

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## **Roles and Responsibilities**

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### **■ President & Vice Presidents**

Provost/V.P. Resources & Operations make decisions on class cancellations.

V.P. Resources & Operations, chair of EOCG

President and VPs – consultation and determining directions/decisions as necessary

President - voice of the university to the external community

### ■ **Vice-Provosts, Deans and AVPs**

Vice-Provosts, Deans and AVPs are responsible for ensuring the implementation of University pandemic procedures and practices affecting their students, faculty, staff, guests and visitors, and for the development of local plans to support the delivery of essential academic, research and administrative services.

Their role is to monitor conditions which could affect the delivery of essential services to students, faculty and staff in their Faculty or department and advising the Provost and Vice-President (Resources & Operations) respectively, of these conditions.

### ■ **Chairs, Directors, Administrative Officers and Managers**

Chairs, Directors, Administrative Officers and Managers are responsible for implementing University and department specific pandemic procedures and practices.

Their role is to monitor and advise the respective Vice-Provost, Dean or AVP of any lapses or changing conditions affecting the delivery of essential academic, research and administrative services to their students, faculty and staff.

### ■ **Faculty and Staff**

The responsibility of faculty and staff is to support the delivery of academic and research programs and essential services to students, *as directed by the University through the EOCG*.

Their role is to implement pandemic related measures and procedures outlined as directed by the appropriate persons.

### ■ **Emergency Operations Control Group (EOCG)**

The EOCG is responsible for declaring the activation of the University Flu Pandemic Continuity of Operations Plan and for decisions related to its integrity and continued implementation.

The role of the EOCG is to receive information from internal and external sources regarding changing conditions for their on-going review of factors which could lead through various stages of escalation and to their decision to declare interruption or suspension of academic activity, partial shut down, or ultimate closure of University facilities.

### ■ **Emergency Response Committee (ERC)**

The ERC is responsible for continuing to gather operational information, meet regularly to determine the most current risk and operational strategies, and act in an advisory role to the EOCG.

## ■ Continuity of Operations Planning Committee (COOP)

Assume leadership responsibility for Continuity of Operations planning efforts with a major focus on assuring the adequacy of budget unit continuity plans for critical business areas, functions and applications.

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## Organizational Priorities

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In the event of a disruption, shut down or closure, the University recognizes the need to support the following organizational priorities and critical functions:

- communications;
- mitigating risk relating to health and safety;
- *where feasible*, delivery of the teaching/learning process and essential student related services;
- continuation and maintenance of research activity;
- preservation of buildings and facilities;
- maintenance of critical security services and first-line medical response;
- financial and human resource management, including the delivery of payroll and benefits, and procurement and payments to critical suppliers.

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## Communications

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The AVP (Communications & Public Affairs) is responsible for the establishment of a Flu Pandemic Communications strategy and implementation plan.

This plan will include measures for:

1. building community awareness in the pre-pandemic phase,
2. assisting in the development of community communications messaging and education strategy,
3. communicating the activation of the University Flu Pandemic Plan,
4. maintaining community communications through all phases of the University Flu Pandemic Continuity of Operations Plan, and
5. maintaining external communications.

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## Business Continuity

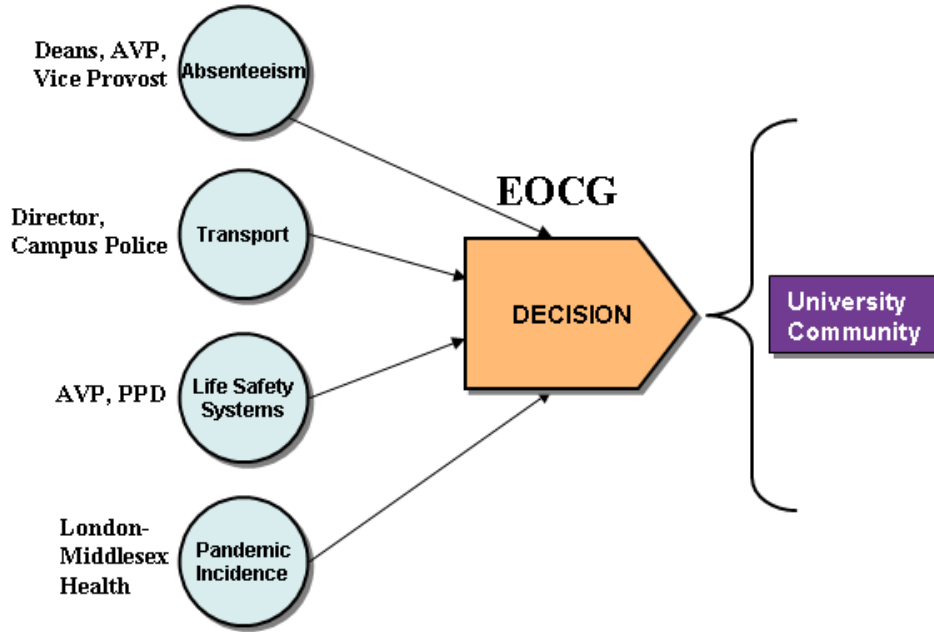
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### ■ Decision to Close University Facilities

The decision by the EOCG to close University facilities or suspend academic operations will be based on the status of critical internal and external conditions affecting the health, safety and security of the Western community and the capacity of the University to continue to deliver essential services on campus.

As outlined in Figure 1, these conditions include absenteeism levels, availability of transportation systems, sustainability of life safety and security infrastructure and pandemic flu incident rates in the Middlesex-London area.

*In all likelihood, closure of the University would result in suspension of the delivery of academic programs.*



**Figure 1 University Closure Decision Making Factors**

*While University facilities may close, continuity of research activity on campus, where feasible, may proceed pending the approval of the EOCG, in consultation with P-VP.*

#### ■ Maintaining Essential Functions and Services

The University’s organizational priorities will be supported by the following essential functions and services:

- ▶ the presence of University executive decision-making capability;
- ▶ essential communications vehicles;
- ▶ ITS support for the integrity of essential services, including telecommunications;
- ▶ an emergency communications system, with off site capabilities;
- ▶ an emergency operations communications centre;
- ▶ essential staff to operate Health Services for essential student and staff care;
- ▶ Campus Police, including Fire Safety and access control of facilities;
- ▶ Physical Plant (PPD) staff to maintain life safety and heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems;
- ▶ residence staff and operations support, including provision of food and water;
- ▶ caretaking for hygiene services and infection control;
- ▶ payroll, and benefits for employees; continuity of financial aid for students;
- ▶ procurement and payment to critical suppliers;
- ▶ Animal Care and Veterinary Services (ACVS);
- ▶ support for preservation of vulnerable research activity; and
- ▶ notification of cancellation of classes will be handled by a combination of department or faculty member as is currently our practice.

## ■ **Maintaining Essential Care for Faculty, Staff and Students**

A Continuity of Operations Plan for addressing essential services of Health Services, Student Development Centre, Rehabilitation Safety, and Housing has been developed.

Health Services is responsible for providing health care treatment and guidance, emotional support, and advice, and for creating and communicating health information. Housing is responsible for maintaining accommodations for residence students unable to return home.

Specifically, these units will:

1. through the Health Services, provide medical care;
2. maintain residences for students unable to return home;
3. telecommunications will provide recorded telephone options;
4. through Rehabilitation Services, provide faculty and staff with access to support and advice for returning to work.

## ■ **Ensuring Academic Integrity**

Discussion or resolution of matters of academic integrity and course management shall be deferred to the recovery phase.

To help Western monitor a potential pandemic situation, and to help facilitate academic accommodation, a self-service tool for absence notification has been created for students to self-report their flu-like symptoms. This is consistent with Western's goals to minimize physical contact by ill students, to ease the burden on the health care system, and to monitor student absentee rates.

Notification of cancellation of classes will be handled by a combination of department or faculty member as is currently our practice.

## ■ **Ensuring Financial Integrity**

The University will continue to manage its financial affairs in a responsible manner during a pandemic event.

This includes as a minimum:

1. maintaining accurate financial records,
2. recording payments made to the University from government agencies and other sources,
3. ensuring there are sufficient funds available to cover payroll costs,
4. procuring goods and paying critical suppliers.
5. continuity of student financial aid

## ■ **Human Resource Management**

Human Resources will provide advice and consultation on matters relating to the establishment and maintenance of core essential functions during all pandemic phases.

In the event of a pandemic, the University will continue to manage essential human resource activity, which will include, as a minimum, the delivery of payroll and facilitation of benefits and pension administration, to the extent that related external providers and systems can support.

To help Western monitor a potential pandemic situation, the University has begun tracking all faculty, staff and student employees' flu-related absences using a self-service absence notification tool. This

initiative is being undertaken to assist Western’s Emergency Operations Control Group and the Middlesex-London Health Unit in protecting the safety and health of our campus and local community, and in helping to ensure the continuity of university operations in the event of a potential influenza pandemic.

During a pandemic event, any matters of policy, regulatory affairs and labour/employee relations not addressed in the Pandemic Human Resource Policies, will be deferred to the pandemic recovery phase.

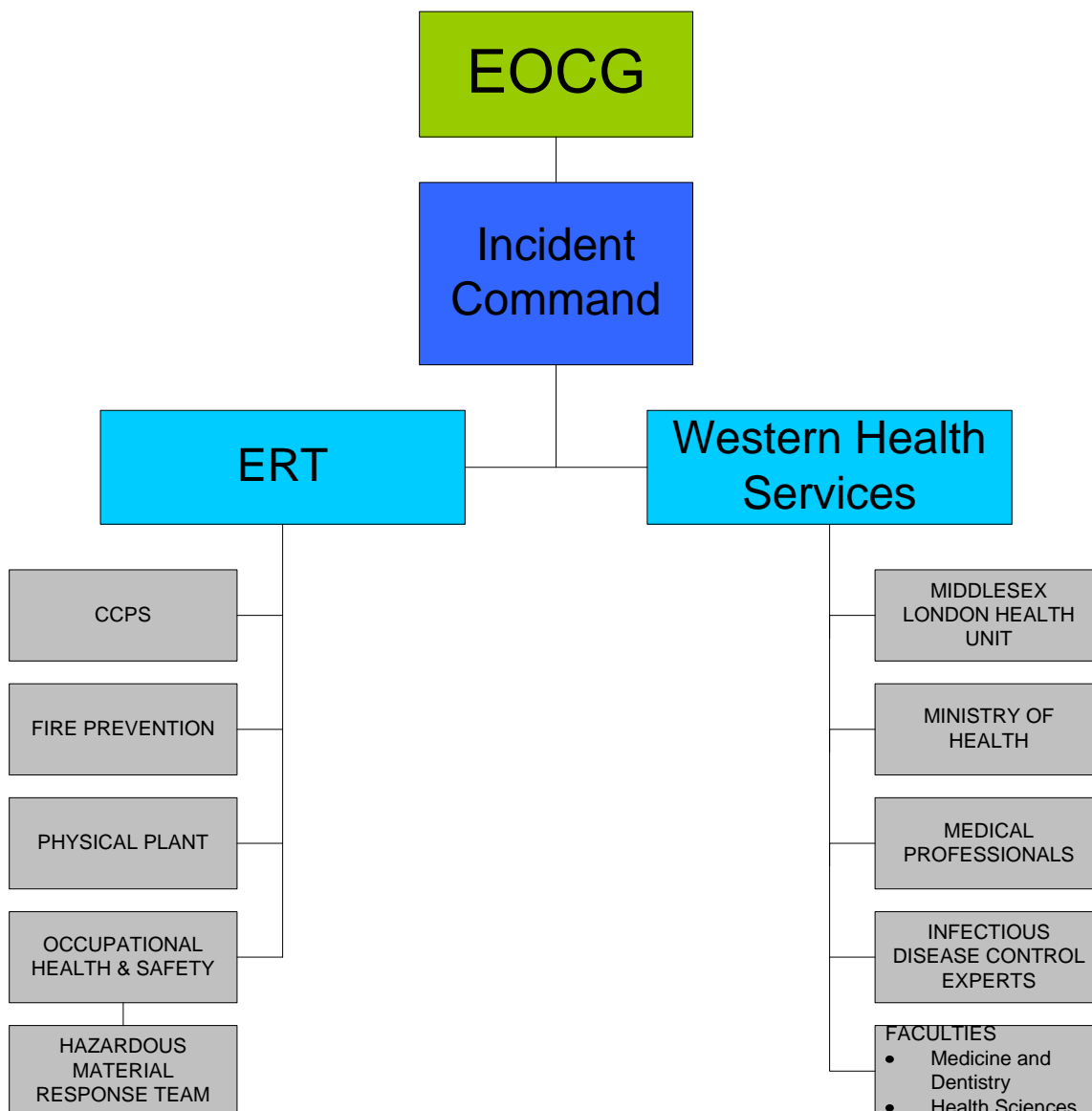
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## Pandemic Phase Management Process

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Western’s Emergency Response Process, led by the Vice-President (Resources & Operations) would be used in the event of a Pandemic.

### Western Pandemic Plan; Command and Control Organizational Chart



## Preparation, Monitoring, Management and Recovery Process

The following table outlines the activities and accountability for implementing each phase of the University Flu Pandemic Continuity of Operations Plan.

<b>Prevention and Planning Phase</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
1. Development and launch of community awareness and wellness campaign	Director, Health Services and Communications	Done
2. Development of Contingency Plans for Maintaining Essential Functions:		
■ Board and Senate Decision Making Process	University Secretariat	
■ Executive Group Decision Making Process	P-VP, EOCG	
■ Human Resource Management	AVP	
■ Financial Services	AVP	
■ Institutional Planning & Budgeting	AVP	
■ Information Technology Services	AVP/Director	
■ Registrar	Vice-Provost/Associate Registrar	
■ Campus & Community Police Service	Director	
■ Physical Plant and Capital Planning Services	AVP	
■ Communications and Public Affairs	AVP	
■ Maintaining Research Integrity	Vice-President/AVP	
■ Housing & Hospitality Services	Vice-President	
■ AVP	AVP	
3. Tracking of conditions for predicting a pandemic event or taking pre-pandemic action by the EOCG	EOCG, ERC	In Progress
■ WHO, Public Health Agencies of Canada and Middlesex-London Health Unit	Director, Health Services	On-going
■ Internal Absenteeism Levels	Vice-Provosts, Deans, AVPs	On-going
4. Development of local continuity plans: Pandemic procedures and practices in support of essential functions		
1. Faculties	Deans/Administrative Officers	On-going
2. Departments	AVPs/Directors	
5. Coordinate plans with External partners: Affiliates, Health, Education, Business, EMS,	COOP VP (Resources & Operations)	On-going

<b>Prevention and Planning Phase</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
MLHU, Academic/Professional Associations and Boards		
6. Plan performance review (through table top exercise) and enhancements	Emergency Response Committee	On-going

<b>Phase 2: Monitoring</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
1. Monitor critical internal & external conditions affecting health, safety and security	EOCG	
2. Monitor and report to HR significant employee absenteeism rates (above the normal 10% in any given week)	Chairs, Unit Leaders	
3. Monitor and report to Registrarial services abnormal student absenteeism rates	Deans' Offices (Academic Counselors)	
4. Monitor and Report to Provost and VP (R&O) any conditions affecting their ability to deliver essential services to faculty, staff & students	Vice-Provosts, Deans, AVPs	
5. Assess the capacity of the University to deliver essential services by reviewing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Absenteeism levels</li> <li>■ Availability of transportation systems</li> <li>■ Sustainability of life safety and security infrastructure</li> <li>■ Pandemic flu incident rates in Middlesex-London</li> </ul>		
6. Consult with local EMS representatives on Influenza Pandemic Plans; maintain communications with Middlesex London Health Unit		

## Phase 3: Pandemic Management

Activity	Accountability	Timeline
1. Declaration of Pandemic Phase and Plan Activation	EOCG	Event may last 3 months
2. Community Communication	AVP (Communications & Public Affairs)	
3. Implementation of local Continuity Plans	Vice-Provosts, Deans, AVPs	
4. Tracking of Conditions for Continuity Planning		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ WHO and MLHU communications</li> <li>■ Absenteeism Levels</li> <li>■ Life Safety and Security</li> </ul>	Director, Health Services Vice-Provosts, Deans, AVPs AVP (PPD)	
5. Assessment of conditions and decision to close University facilities or suspend academic activity	EOCG supported by the ERC, in collaboration with P-VP	
6. Issuing of regular updates to the Western community	AVP (Communications & Public Affairs)	
7. Community communications on declaration of University closure or suspension of academic activity and subsequent opening and resumption.	AVP (Communications & Public Affairs)	
<p>8. Provision of essential functions and services under closure <i>or reduced capacity</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Student residences</li> <li>■ Research activity integrity</li> <li>■ Central communications</li> <li>■ Campus Police and Security</li> <li>■ Essential maintenance of physical infrastructure</li> <li>■ Continuity of payroll, student financial aid, procurement and payment to critical suppliers.</li> <li>■ ITS</li> </ul>	<p>AVP VP/AVP AVP Director AVP AVP AVP/Director</p>	

<b>Phase 4: Recovery</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
1. Declaration of transition to recovery phase mode	EOCG	
2. Community communications	AVP	
3. Pandemic Plan debrief coordination	EOCG/ERC/COOP	
4. Identification of impacts	EOCG	
5. Assessment of impacts and required response/actions	EOCG	

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### **External Partnerships**

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■ **Emergency Management**

During the pre-pandemic phase, the University will consult with local EMS representatives, to review their respective Flu Pandemic Continuity of Operations Plans to clarify expectations and determine opportunities to enhance response.

■ **Public Health**

The University will partner with Middlesex-London Health Unit to proactively identify university-specific pandemic related issues, needs and mutual emergency response and communication measures.

■ **Academic/Professional Associations and Boards**

Critical external professional associations, examination Boards, and other external bodies which currently control graduating students’ requirements for professional licensing, certifications, registrations, etc should be identified and where possible, alternative means for accommodating the achievement of such requirements should be negotiated on behalf of the students.

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### **Plan Performance**

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To ensure its on-going currency and relevance, the plan shall be reviewed by the Emergency Response Committee on Flu Pandemic Continuity of Operations Planning through yearly table-top exercises and in consultation with the Vice President (Resources & Operations).

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### **Support**

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The University Pandemic Website at <http://communications.uwo.ca/influenza-microsite/> will be the main source of information during the planning process and in the event of a Pandemic.

Planning or software questions should be directed to [coop\\_questions@uwo.ca](mailto:coop_questions@uwo.ca)

To support units in the preparation of plans, the University will be using a planning tool developed by the University of California – Berkeley. The Continuity of Operations software tool will be available commencing July 15, 2009 and can be accessed by a link from the University Pandemic Website or at the following: <https://berkeley-dev.vm.its.uwo.pri>

## APPENDIX 1

### Questions for Leaders:

**Given the priorities and planning assumptions above, please consider the following questions:**

1. How would your faculty/unit be affected by pandemic conditions?
2. What are your area's top critical/essential functions?
3. Who are the key staff, with the crucial knowledge and skills, required to maintain essential functions in each area?
4. Who are the staff who will back up these key staff in a "three-deep" pattern (i.e. the primary person, the first back-up and the second back-up)?
5. If classes are cancelled, what work from your area can be done at home?
6. How many employees have the tools and system access to work from home?
7. What equipment and supplies do you need to help employees work from home? (e.g. computers, home internet access, phone lists, cell phones, office supplies)
8. What works needs to be completed in the event of a University closure and who needs to remain on campus in order to complete this work?
9. How will you protect the integrity of information and information technology?
10. How do those employees required to work on campus during a pandemic need to be supported?
11. What records are required to restart critical functions during the Recovery phase?
12. How will you communicate this plan to your area before we are critically affected by the current pandemic?

When the Plan is completed it should be made available electronically to the staff identified in your 'three deep' groups.

Documents that have been uploaded should be checked for accuracy periodically, i.e. every month.

**The Continuity Plan for your operation must be ready by this year's flu season (Sept. 30, 2009).**