



August 13, 2021

Update to Pandemic Related Teaching and Classroom Guidance

The Office of the Provost has updated pandemic-related guidance pertaining to in-person classroom instruction, as provided herein. Much of the previous guidance available on Provost office webpages as “Academic Affairs Resources and Information for Covid-19 Response” is deactivated and is superseded by this updated guidance. Building- and facilities-specific information may be stated elsewhere by the [Operations Division](#) or the respective college or school. These updates as of August 2021 take into consideration President Schovanec’s and Provost Hendrick’s message of July 19 regarding [COVID-19 vaccination recommendations](#), the Office of Emergency Management’s recent messages with [new guidance to faculty, staff, and students](#) announcing [COVID-19 vaccination incentives](#). The University continues to monitor federal and state guidelines as they may change in light of the Delta variant and will further update teaching and classroom guidance as warranted.

Students

- Although COVID-19 vaccinations are not mandated, Texas Tech is **strongly recommending that all students be vaccinated for COVID-19**. The vaccines are [safe and effective](#) and will protect the student and other members of the Texas Tech community.
- **Masks will not be required for either indoor or outdoor activities on campus, however, all visitors to the Student Health Clinic will be required to wear a mask.** The wearing of masks while in public indoor settings and frequently washing your hands has proven to be effective at preventing the spread of COVID-19.
- The CDC recommends that both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals wear a face mask indoors after a known exposure.
- Prior to arrival on campus, all **unvaccinated students** in university housing should develop an action plan in the event they are required to self-isolate or quarantine due to a positive COVID-19 diagnosis or exposure. This plan should include a location to complete the self-isolation/quarantine period, access to groceries/meal delivery, access to necessary medications, numbers of emergency contacts, and contact information for their preferred healthcare provider.
- **Fully vaccinated students (including those with medical or religious exemptions)** who aren’t experiencing symptoms will not be required to [quarantine](#) following an exposure to a COVID-19 positive person, including roommates. Following a known exposure, students should monitor for [symptoms](#) over the course of 14 days and quarantine if symptoms develop.
- **Fully vaccinated students** who receive a positive diagnosis for COVID-19 will be required to [self-isolate](#). Students that are vaccinated, including those with medical and religious exemptions, and live in university housing will be provided with a location to complete the self-

isolation period. If an off-campus location is necessary, the university will cover the associated housing expenses.

- **Unvaccinated or undisclosed students** who have been identified as having a known exposure to a COVID-19 positive person will be required to [quarantine](#) for a minimum of 7 days or longer depending upon testing. If a student is unvaccinated and can prove a COVID-19 diagnosis and recovery in the last three months, quarantine will not be required.
- **Unvaccinated or undisclosed students** who receive a positive diagnosis for COVID-19 will be required to [self-isolate](#). The university will offer information regarding off-campus options for unvaccinated students that reside in university housing to complete the self-isolation period but will not cover any associated expenses.
- **Any student** who has a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 must use this [link](#) to report.
- Students who have a high-risk exposure to someone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 in the last 2 weeks should access the online reporting platform to take a “quick assessment” or “full self-screening.” Based on responses, automated messages provide contact information for campus/clinic resources, emergency room precautions, or planning observation.
- **Students who are fully vaccinated and want to participate in the vaccination incentive opportunity may submit their vaccination record to Student Health Services using the Submit Vaccination Record button at <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/communications/emergency/coronavirus/>.**

Faculty

- **Texas Tech is strongly recommending that all faculty and staff be vaccinated for COVID-19.** The vaccines are [safe and effective](#) and will protect the employee and other members of the Texas Tech community.
- The CDC recommends that both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals wear a face mask indoors after a known exposure.
- **Fully-vaccinated faculty and staff members (including those with medical or religious exemptions)** who aren't experiencing symptoms will NOT be required to [quarantine](#) or seek testing following an exposure to a COVID-19 positive person, including colleagues that work together in close proximity. Following a known exposure, faculty and staff should monitor for [symptoms](#) over the course of 14 days and quarantine if symptoms develop.
- **Unvaccinated or undisclosed faculty and staff members** who have been identified as having a known exposure to a COVID-19 positive person will be required to [quarantine](#) for a minimum of 7 days or longer depending upon testing. If an employee is unvaccinated and can prove a COVID-19 diagnosis and recovery in the last three months, quarantine will not be required. All employees will utilize [sick and/or vacation leave](#) through the entirety of the quarantine period, regardless if the quarantine period is the minimum 7 days or the maximum of 14 days. Employees may work remotely only if requested and approved through the university's [Change of Duty Point](#) process. For faculty, the Dean's approval will be sufficient for COVID-related changes to duty point, but this approval is to utilize the ePEF application and route through the Provost's office for record-keeping.
- **Self-isolation will be required for all employees (vaccinated or unvaccinated)** who test positive for COVID-19. All employees will utilize [sick and or vacation leave](#) through the entirety of the self-isolation. Employees may work remotely only if requested and approved through the university's [Change of Duty Point](#) process. For faculty, the Dean's approval will be sufficient for

COVID-related changes to duty point, but this approval is to utilize the ePEF application and route through the Provost's office for record-keeping.

- Should an employee test positive for COVID-19, the department supervisor should notify custodial services to arrange for a deep clean/EMist of the employee work area and any other areas in which they might have come in contact.
- If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, they must report the diagnosis at <https://ttuocovid19.ttu.edu/User/Consent>.
- Faculty who have a high-risk exposure to someone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 in the last 2 weeks should access the online reporting platform to take a "quick assessment" or "full self-screening." Based on responses, automated messages provide contact information for campus/clinic resources, emergency room precautions, or planning observation.
- Faculty should plan for temporarily pivoting to remote instruction or instructional activities (to be synchronous on the same schedule as the in-person class), and departments should plan for assignment of substitute instructors in the event an instructor of record has to quarantine or self-isolate. Contact eLearning about assigning substitute teachers as secondary instructors in Blackboard classes.

Classrooms, Absences, Modality, Other

- Face coverings, although optional, are recommended and welcome; students, faculty, and staff who wish to wear them are encouraged to do so. Instructors of record may encourage (but not require) their classes to wear face masks.
- Plans remain to deliver a more normal schedule of courses in face-to-face modality with up to 100% capacity. However, Deans may authorize lower enrollment caps or moves to larger teaching spaces for courses and classrooms under their direct jurisdiction, but generally, concerns about large class capacities and closer social distancing should be addressed by encouraging (but not requiring) wearing face coverings.
- Generally, student absences due to illness are to be considered as they were prior to the pandemic, with consideration given to the fact that students who are isolating with COVID-19 and students who are quarantining for symptoms or direct exposure may have extended days of absence. Makeup opportunities should be provided in a reasonable timeframe.
- Students who test positive for COVID-19 are to report the diagnosis at <https://ttuocovid19.ttu.edu/User/Consent>. Doing so will generate a letter that students may present to their instructors as documentation in support of absences and will also trigger notification to the Dean of Students office, which in turn will notify the student's dean's office.
- Contact tracers will identify and advise other students who may have been directly exposed to a positive-reporting student and provide those students with appropriate documentation in support of absences, if needed. As noted above, vaccinated students (including those with medical or religious exceptions) that have been directly exposed to a positive-reporting student are not required to quarantine and can continue with normal activities while monitoring for any symptoms.
- Students who directly inform their instructors of having a known exposure to a COVID-19 positive person should be directed by the instructor to contact Student Health Services at 806-743-2848.
- There is no expectation that courses scheduled as face-to-face must provide an online option to students who report testing positive for COVID-19 or who are isolating or quarantining for exposure to someone with COVID-19. However, plans should be made to provide remote

options or makeup opportunities in case instructors or students test positive or must quarantine during final exams or scheduled defenses.

- Currently, there is no provision for changing course modalities from face-to-face to hybrid or online. Instructors and students are encouraged to wear face masks. Should an increasing number of students report a positive test in the same class and timeframe, the instructor will confer with the department chair and dean who may then discuss it with the Provost's office.
- Faculty and staff should prepare for the possibility that a rapid pivot to online instruction may be required. Advise students (e.g., in the course syllabus) of technical and equipment requirements, such as web cam, microphone, and remote proctoring software, should a temporary or longer pivot be necessary.
- Students in academic programs and service activities involving small children (<12 years of age per the CDC) on campus are strongly encouraged to wear face masks while with the children.
- Students in off-campus internships, practicums, student teaching, and service learning engagements are expected to adhere to the protocols in place by the hosting third party.

What do I need to communicate to students before the start of classes?

At least a couple of days before the start of classes, e-mail your students to highlight class expectations. Introduce yourself, be positive about the upcoming term and the content and objectives of your course, inform them of required textbooks or other course materials they need to acquire, and that you would like to outline a few expectations for everyone to have as they come to the first class period. Point students to the University's recent announcement of [COVID-19 vaccination incentives](#) and encourage any who have not been vaccinated to please consider doing so. Remind students that face coverings, although optional, are recommended and welcome, especially for those who have not been vaccinated for COVID-19 or who may have susceptibilities to the virus. It is also important to stress to students that CDC guidelines require riders of Citibus and other public transportation systems to wear face masks. Let students know that Texas Tech University [Operations Division](#) will continue to provide sanitization stations across campus along with enhanced facilities cleaning practices.

What about student appointments and meetings?

We expect to have more normal activity in in-person advising, office hours, and academic support interactions. Face masks will be optional but may be recommended, and social distancing may be applicable where feasible and conducive to interaction. All virtual interactions should only take place via TTU approved and supported [online meeting technologies](#).

What new information should I provide in my course syllabi?

Vaccinations: Texas Tech University strongly recommends students adhere to CDC guidelines on COVID-19, including obtaining COVID-19 vaccinations. If you were unable to obtain a vaccination prior to your arrival on campus, the COVID-19 vaccine is available at Student Health Services by appointment. You can find additional information about the vaccine [here](#), and about the recently announced incentive program [here](#).

Face Covering Policy: As of May 19, 2021, face coverings are optional in TTU facilities and classrooms but, based on CDC guidelines, are recommended and welcome, especially for those who have not been vaccinated for COVID-19 or who may have susceptibilities to the virus. Face coverings are required in public transportation (e.g., Citibus) and in the Student Health Clinic.

[Also, as may be applicable to a course, note the earlier bullet points about face coverings while working with small children and in third-party off-campus placements.]

Seating Charts and Social Distancing: There is no longer a mandated social distancing protocol for classroom seating, but using a seating chart and taking attendance are recommended in support of campus contact tracers if needed. Social distancing is recommended in rooms that will enable it.

Illness-related Absences: [IoRs may provide their own statement here keeping in mind that, generally, student absences due to illness are to be considered as they were prior to the pandemic, with consideration given to the fact that students who are isolating with COVID-19 and students who are quarantining for symptoms or direct exposure may have extended days of absence. Makeup opportunities should be provided in a reasonable timeframe. Direct students to the guidance for students at <https://ttucovid19.ttu.edu/User/Consent.>]

In-Person Office Hours: [IoRs may provide their own statement here with a provision that, for in-person office hours, masks are optional and welcome. IoRs concerned about the relative close proximity of in-office visits may request (but not require) students to wear masks when attending in-office visits, utilize social distancing as feasible, or arrange for office visits in large spaces (e.g., vacant classrooms). Virtual office hours may also be offered but should not be wholly in lieu of in-person opportunities.]

Personal Hygiene: We all should continue to practice frequent hand washing, use hand sanitizers after touching high-touch points (e.g., door handles, shared keyboards, etc.), and cover faces when coughing or sneezing.

Potential Changes: The University will continue to monitor CDC, State, and TTU System guidelines in continuing to manage the campus implications of COVID-19. Any changes affecting class policies or delivery modality will be in accordance with those guidelines and announced as soon as possible. If Texas Tech University campus operations are required to change because of health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is possible that this course will move to a fully online delivery format. Should that be necessary, students will be advised of technical and equipment requirements, such as web cam, microphone, and remote proctoring software.

Comments and questions about implementing and communicating Fall 2021 classroom instruction protocols may be directed to Senior Vice Provost [Rob Stewart \(rob.stewart@ttu.edu\)](mailto:rob.stewart@ttu.edu) or Interim Vice Provost [Mitzi Lauderdale \(mitzi.lauderdale@ttu.edu\)](mailto:mitzi.lauderdale@ttu.edu).