

Faculty Questions Regarding Fall 2021 Teaching

What do I do if a student contracts COVID-19 or is contacted by COVID Ops Center and needs to isolate?

As we return to pre-COVID modalities for instruction, students experiencing personal injury or illness that is too severe for the student to attend class (including students isolating or quarantining due to COVID-19 protocols) qualify for an excused absence (See [Student Rule 7, Section 7.2.2.](#)) To receive an excused absence, students must comply with the documentation and notification guidelines outlined in Student Rule 7. Approved justification for an excused absence includes notification to isolate due to contracting COVID-19.

Do faculty/instructors of record have the right to implement Covid19 protocols for their courses?

No, individual faculty must follow university guidelines for instruction. However, faculty can use the approved syllabus statement (<https://facultysenate.tamu.edu/Quick-Links-Minimum-Syllabus-Requirements>) to *strongly encourage* students to follow all recognized and effective mitigation strategies such as *vaccination, wearing masks, physical distancing* as possible, hand sanitizer and other measures to keep everyone as safe as possible as the semester progresses.

Do certain clinical and experiential environments have additional mandatory requirements?

Yes, some university-approved clinics may have additional mandatory requirements for operations. Many of these will be customary to these venues, but particularly under the COVID19 public health declaration.

How can I help students who have tested positive for COVID-19 continue classes while they are in isolation/quarantine?

Faculty can decide to record their lectures and upload on the LMS system (Canvas). If faculty choose to record and post lecture materials, we suggest trying the technology in the classroom and Canvas upload ahead of time to get familiar with the process.

How do I record my class to share with students that have a documented accommodation?

The Office of Academic Innovation has created guidance for how to teach with Zoom, including information on how to record your class meeting. For reference, please visit the [Guide to Teaching with Zoom](#).

How do I share my Zoom recordings with students that have a documented accommodation?

The Office of Academic Innovation has created guidance for how to share Zoom Cloud Recording access to all students or to select students in your course. For reference, please visit [Sharing Class Recordings with Students](#).

What is the responsibility of a faculty member regarding reporting COVID-19 incidents if a student discloses positive results, exposure and/or signs and symptoms?

Students testing positive or exposed through close contact with someone testing positive or presumed positive for Covid should follow [university guidance](#) (see step 2) regarding quarantine. You can advise students to quarantine following exposure and not attend in-person classes. Students who test positive for Covid, whether symptomatic or not, may request an excused absence. Documentation must be consistent with Student [Rule 7](#). Students must report their positive test through the [report system](#). Students who are in quarantine due to a close contact are expected to keep up with course work in collaboration with the instructor of record. We have asked students to reach out to you to discuss access to course content and submission/completion of graded work.

Are faculty required to self-report if they test positive for COVID-10? What about exposure? Where?

Yes, if a faculty member has been exposed to or diagnosed with COVID-19, like students, they are required to report through the [reporting system](#). They should work with their department head and should follow this sequence of options:

- a) find a suitable substitute (another faculty member or a graduate student) to teach in their classes for the period of isolation (10-14 days for those unvaccinated and seven days for those vaccinated); or
- b) teach remotely into the classroom where a support instructor (e.g. TA) helps monitor the room; or
- c) teach remotely for the period of isolation.

Permission to offer instruction remotely (choice "c" above) will require approval by the Department Head and notice of the authorization including name of the faculty member, course number (and section), and end of the period of isolation (and thus remote teaching) be sent to academicservices@tamu.edu with copy to the Dean.

Should I ask for documentation or a physician's note if a student reports having COVID-19?

- Students who test positive for Covid, whether symptomatic or not, may request an excused absence. Documentation must be consistent with Student [Rule 7](#). Students must report their positive test through the [report system](#). *Falsification of these reports constitutes a violation of Student Rule [24.4.1](#) and the Aggie Honor Code.*
- Students exposed through close contact with someone testing positive or presumed positive for Covid should follow [university guidance](#) regarding quarantine. Those students who are advised to quarantine following exposure should not attend in-person classes but are expected to keep up with course work in collaboration with the instructor of record. Students should reach out to their instructors to discuss access to course content and submission/completion of graded work. Students must report their close contact through the [report system](#).

Can I keep online office hours instead of face to face?

Yes. These past 18 months have shown that online office hours are convenient to students, increase student access to instructors, and consequently promote both participation and inclusion.

During Fall 2021, faculty members will have the option of holding office hours online, face-to-face, or both. Regardless of the method, instructors should schedule an adequate amount of time for office hours so that students can get assistance. How you hold office hours (face-to-face, online, or on request) should both be indicated on the syllabus at the start of the semester. Directions for scheduling office hours through Zoom are available [here](#).

I, and/or members of my family, are at higher risk to develop complications from contracting COVID. How can I best encourage my students to wear masks and physically distance as possible?

Faculty and staff that are higher risk or may have family members that are high risk can use the following examples to encourage students to wear face coverings, *realizing that they cannot be compelled to mask or reveal their vaccination status*:

- “I have small children at home who are unable to be vaccinated. I’m asking you to please wear masks in this class in deference to them. I very much appreciate your help in keeping me and my children well.”
- “I live with a family member who is immunocompromised and has a higher risk of contracting COVID-19. I’m asking you to please wear masks in this class in deference to my family. I very much appreciate your efforts to help keep my family safe during a challenging time.”
- “There are faculty, staff and students on campus who are more highly vulnerable to COVID than many of you are. I’m asking you to please wear masks in this class in deference to them. I very much appreciate your help in keeping the Aggie family well.”

Can I incentivize wearing masks in classroom and social distancing?

Yes, you can provide an incentive that is similar to extra credit opportunities you may have provided in the past for other reasons. If those are for a graded activity then such incentives should be reasonable in terms of other work required for the class. Consideration should also be given to provide reasonable and equitable alternatives to students who elect not to wear a mask to avoid having a situation where students are treated differently academically based on mask wearing. Faculty can also ask students to follow the recommendation of the Executive Order that strongly encourages all Texans “as a matter of personal responsibility to consistently follow good hygiene and other mitigation practices”.

Is it against the rules or the law to do an anonymous survey in the classroom about vaccination rates?

Yes. Such a survey is against the directives of the Executive Order.

Is it against the rules or the law to forbid or discourage admission to a student without a mask in my office, like putting up a sign on the office door?

Yes. However, faculty are allowed to keep virtual office hours.

Will there be plexiglass shields in the classrooms?

Yes. All shields will be maintained in the classrooms. If your classroom is missing the plexiglass shield, inform the respective building proctor who can notify SSC.

Will there be a cleaning protocol of classrooms?

Transmission by surfaces has not been shown as a significant factor and the university has returned to its normal cleaning protocols for classrooms and discontinued the enhanced cleaning.

If a student is obviously ill, can they be asked to leave? What to do if a student refuses to leave and that the instructor is wrong in assessment?

Faculty should not presume they can diagnose symptoms or an illness. But students who are obviously showing signs of illness can be asked to leave the classroom and follow the guidance of their medical providers.

Will additional air purification be added to current HVAC?

In most locations, fresh air circulation has been increased and will continue in buildings and classrooms as appropriate, but in areas where that cannot be done then additional air filters may be used. Each building and campus is unique, so adjustments will vary by building. Additional office desktop air filters may be made available locally to faculty who request them.

If I used a flipped classroom or other online activities prior to COVID may I continue these practices?

Yes, we are slated to teach as close to normal as seen through Fall 2019, so any instruction that already incorporated technology support (e.g. flipped classroom and other online activities) is appropriate.

You may consider reviewing the [Best Practices in Instructional Design guide](#) to aid in designing a flipped course or add online activities.

Is there any information for access to vaccines and monoclonal antibody therapy?

There are two toll-free numbers that the chancellor gave us that may be useful.

Vaccine Hotline – groups of 5 or more may have a team come to you, say you are an A&M faculty/staff – 844-90T-EXAS.

Monoclonal antibody infusion for those testing positive – 800-742-5990

Is there a threshold of student absence due to COVID-19 that must be reached to move a class to the virtual/online environment?

There is a COVID-19 Contingency Council, chaired by Chief Operating Officer and Senior Vice President Greg Hartman. This committee, of which the Interim Provost is a member, meets on a regular basis and reviews international, national, state and local data along with guidance from the CDC, various governmental levels, and the Texas A&M University System to provide the best possible guidance for behavior and operations. *No set threshold has been predetermined to trigger remote instruction.* If that changes, the COVID Contingency Council will communicate that to the campus community.