

Information and Resources for Faculty for Preparing for Fall 2021

Mask Requirement

In order to protect all members of our community, face coverings must be worn in all University buildings in non-private enclosed settings (e.g., common workspaces, workstations, meeting rooms, classrooms, etc.). This means that instructors and students will be required to wear masks during in-person class meetings.

The University has posted information on proper masks and the proper way to wear them:

<https://coronavirus.rutgers.edu/health-and-safety/community-safety-practices/>

This information follows the Center for Disease Control guidelines:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

Masks must always fully cover the wearer's mouth and nose.

Given the current increased risk of infection due to the Delta variant, masks must be worn by instructors even in settings where 6-foot social distancing is possible.

Teaching while wearing a mask does present challenges. An article published in Inside Higher Ed last summer offers some helpful tips for teaching while wearing a mask:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/08/26/effective-ways-teach-person-mask-opinion>

Faculty are also encouraged to consult with Digital Classroom Services (DCS) to explore how classroom technology can assist in their teaching.

<https://dcs.rutgers.edu/classrooms/in-class-technology>

Clear masks:

Instructors may need to wear clear masks to accommodate students with hearing impairments who need to read lips. The Office of Disability Services will contact instructors who have students who need such accommodations and provide information on the types of clear masks that are available.



Enforcement of the mask requirement

In situations where a student (or any member of the University community) is not in compliance with COVID-19 protocols, the goals should always be to educate and de-escalate.

1. First, inform the students about the mandate and why it is important

- Put a statement on your syllabus and Canvas/Sakai site. (See below for an example.)
- Send out an announcement before the first class meeting informing students about the policy and explaining why it is important.
- Discuss the mask mandate during the first class meeting and how it is the responsibility of all members of the community to comply and encourage others to comply.

2. Offer masks to students who arrive to your class/office without a mask

- General purpose classrooms will have a supply of masks for students who arrive without one. (DCS will regularly check classrooms and replenish the mask supply as needed. Instructors can contact DCS if more masks are needed.)
- Departments should consider providing supplies of masks for their restricted classrooms and common areas.

3. If a student refuses to wear an acceptable mask after being offered one, or refuses to wear a mask properly after being reminded, the student should be asked to leave class.

- Instructors should make clear on their syllabi, Canvas/Sakai sites, and on the first day of class, what the consequences will be for refusing to wear a mask during class.

4. Students who are disruptive and habitually refuse to wear acceptable masks, or persist in wearing them incorrectly, should be reported to Student Conduct.¹

- Reporting a student to Student Conduct should be the last resort; the goal should be to educate the student about the importance of wearing masks to ensure the health and safety of all the members of the University community. To achieve this goal, it will be important to enlist the support of other students.

¹ Students in violation of the mask requirement or other COVID-19 protocols should be reported to Student Conduct rather than to the COVID Observation Reporting Form monitored by Public Safety. Public Safety will refer any reports regarding student behavior to the Office of Student Conduct.



Syllabi and LMS Statements of Requirements

Instructors should include explicit statements on their course syllabi and/or LMS sites outlining the mask mandate and all other COVID-19 protocols in place for class meetings and other class activities.

Here is an example syllabus statement:

In order to protect the health and well-being of all members of the University community, masks must be worn by all persons on campus when in the presence of others (within six feet) and in buildings in non-private enclosed settings (e.g., common workspaces, workstations, meeting rooms, classrooms, etc.). Masks must be worn during class meetings; any student not wearing a mask will be asked to leave.

Masks should conform to CDC guidelines and should completely cover the nose and mouth:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

Each day before you arrive on campus or leave your residence hall, you must complete the brief survey on the [My Campus Pass symptom checker](#) self-screening app.

Course absence policies – Students

We want to encourage students who have been told to quarantine, or are experiencing symptoms of any transmittable disease, to remain at home and not attend in-person class meetings. Instructors should provide explicit statements on their course syllabi and LMS sites explaining how such absences will be handled.

Instructors should not require documentation from students to excuse absences. Such documentation will be difficult to secure and requiring it may lead to potentially infected students coming to campus to avoid academic penalties. Requiring documentation can also have inequitable consequences; students with private health insurance will have an easier time getting doctors' notes than those with only the University insurance. (Please note that Hurtado will not provide doctors' notes.)

Only students who must be absent for an extended period of time (over one week) should be referred to the Dean of Students.

<http://deanofstudents.rutgers.edu/>

Instructors should also refer students whom they believe are in crisis (personal, financial, etc.) to the Dean of Students.

Instructors should be prepared to offer alternate assignments or other accommodations to students who cannot attend class because of their own illness or their need to quarantine after having been exposed to someone with Covid-19.

Instructors may be able to allow a student who is quarantined, and not themselves ill, to participate in the class through online tools. Some of our classrooms are explicitly set up for this. Our instructional designers and technology specialists and in the Schools and in TLT may be able to suggest other options for rooms that are not so equipped.

Please note that at the beginning of the semester, there will be some students, mostly international students, who will not be able to attend in-person courses because they only were able to start their vaccination regimen in August when they arrived in New Jersey. Instructors should make accommodations for these students without requiring documentation from the Dean of Students.

Course absence policies – Instructors

Instructors who are experiencing symptoms of any transmittable illness such as colds or the flu as well as Covid-19, or have been told to quarantine, should remain at home and not teach in-person. Instructors should promptly inform their department chair. As always, it is up to the instructor and the department as to how to handle such an absence; it would be wise to begin thinking about contingency plans now.

Given the experience our faculty now have with remote instruction, in the case of quarantine or mild illness, one option would be to temporarily teach the class virtually either synchronously at the regularly scheduled time or asynchronously.

For incapacitating illnesses, best practices include instructors identifying a colleague to add to their Canvas/Sakai site who can step in and email the students if necessary. Instructors may want to consider creating back-up plans in advance, such as arranging for an emergency guest lecture; creating alternate asynchronous assignments; storing some recorded lectures (possibly



previously recorded class sessions) on Canvas/Sakai, unpublished, to be turned on as needed; or identifying an appropriate movie/documentary that could be assigned.

Any resulting change in course delivery or assignments should be communicated to the students as soon as possible, in writing, through Canvas/Sakai. Great care should be taken to ensure that any changes are not seen as punitive or disadvantaging students, particularly in regards to grading.

Students with exemptions to the vaccination requirement:

Students with exemptions to the vaccination requirement will not be allowed to live on campus, but they will otherwise have full access to campus facilities. With a few exceptions, exempted students will be allowed to participate fully in in-person class meetings. The exceptions are only for classes held in clinical settings and for classes that require students to remove their face coverings (like playing a wind instrument).

Faculty and staff may not ask students about their exemption status unless there is a legitimate reason to know, like being in a setting where face coverings cannot be worn.

Faculty and staff should remember that only a small fraction (less than 2%) of all Rutgers students have received an exemption from the vaccination requirement.

Other safety considerations

The University continues to recommend frequent handwashing, the use of hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available, and avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth at all times.

Papers and other artifacts may be passed around in the classroom and instruments may be shared among students in laboratories, but it is recommended that hand sanitizer and/or sanitizing wipes be made available.