

INSTRUCTIONAL ISSUES FOR RETURN TO RESIDENT INSTRUCTION

(DRAFT UPDATED JUNE 18, 2020)

This guidance is current as of the date listed herein and is subject to change. We expect that this document will be regularly revised and updated.

A high-quality academic experience for students is one of the constant and essential instructional missions of the University. For many students, a large part of such an experience is taking classes in face-to-face settings and experiencing all of the opportunities to meet and engage with their peers and with instructors in settings outside of the classroom. With an abundance of caution and an emphasis on the health and safety of all students, faculty, and staff, Penn State is carefully constructing such an experience. Instruction in Fall 2020 will be delivered with a robust mix of in-residence, online, remote, and hybrid modalities to best meet the needs and constraints of our students and instructors. Students who cannot be in residence (e.g., those living outside the U.S. or students with health issues) will have a high-quality online/remote experience that includes courses critical for them to begin or continue their Penn State education and engagement with the University. Students returning to their campus will learn through a mix of instructional types that allow for social distancing to protect the health of students, instructors, and staff. With adherence to health and safety protocols, including required face coverings, hygiene, and physical distancing, we seek to continue to “slow the spread.” We will strive to maintain low infection levels in our population, which we will verify through our testing program. This can only be achieved through a careful embrace of compliance by our entire Penn State community.

All courses with enrollment over 250 will be delivered online. To support the need for some instructors (i.e., all faculty and graduate students involved in instruction either as teaching assistants or instructors of record) to remain off campus for the semester for health reasons, other courses also may be moved to remote or online delivery. The University will provide guidance for decision-making about the teaching assignments for instructors and the pedagogical considerations that would indicate that certain types of courses should be offered in-residence. We will accommodate these changes and make adjustments that will free up classrooms, which in turn will enable physical distancing. We also are investigating ways in which non-instructional spaces, such as large auditoriums, gyms, and athletic facilities, might be suitable to accommodate larger classes. Academic units should consider whether course sections could be added during non-peak times to take advantage of larger teaching spaces available then.

Students and instructors will be required to maintain a six-foot social distancing in classrooms, which will significantly reduce capacity in our classrooms (this reduction is typically 20% to 45% of normal). These changes will require a major revision of fall classroom assignments. The Office of Physical Plant (OPP) has provided classroom capacity information to the Registrar to use for this purpose. OPP will move furniture and/or provide signage/tape on seats to limit capacity to approved levels. The University

will provide units with a variety of options that instructors might find useful in deciding how to integrate the classroom and remote experience for students.

Instructors will need to consider which pedagogies and instructional approaches best enable the achievement of the learning outcomes of the course and student success. This may range from traditional in-person lectures that are then recorded for delivery to students who cannot attend due to illness or quarantine, to courses that are fully developed and delivered in a remote asynchronous learning environment. Penn State has a wealth of learning design professionals who will work with instructors to assess what approaches best meet the pedagogical approaches of the course and the needs of students. Many resources are available and will be updated to support instructors to teach classes across the continuum of modalities from in-person to remote delivery, including guidance using tools such as Canvas, Kaltura, and Zoom. Look for the existing and new resources at the updated site keep-teaching.psu.edu (formerly remote-teaching.psu.edu). Similarly, resources and learning support for students will be updated and available at keep-learning.psu.edu (formerly remote-learning.psu.edu).

Our priority will remain the health and safety of instructors and students in the learning environment. Relying on the guidance of Penn State health science experts, as well as federal and state health authority guidance and requirements, we will maintain a strong commitment to appropriate social distancing, reinforced through a plan for comprehensive testing, tracing, and isolation. These decisions will be based on a broad set of measures designed to track and monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 on campuses and in our communities; the performance and compliance of mitigation activities; and assessments of available community healthcare capacity. Should it be possible, the details of how classroom capacities might be increased, while maintaining key health protections protocols, will be shared as part of a larger framework that will apply to all aspects of Penn State operations.

Other considerations directly impacting the in-person teaching environment:

- Face coverings are required for all instructors and students, as well as staff and visitors, in all University buildings including instructional spaces (e.g., classrooms, studios, and laboratories). Forthcoming guidance will build upon mechanisms already in place and address how instructors can enforce wearing face coverings among students. Refusal to wear a mask will be considered a violation of the Student Code of Conduct. The guidance will provide details about how instructors can set clear standards of behavior, encourage shared responsibility, and hold students accountable.
- Physical distancing of six-feet must be maintained in classrooms and all classroom capacities are being adjusted so that this is possible. Instructors will need to adjust any in-class student engagement activities to ensure that this distancing can be maintained. In addition, instructors may shift student-to-student engagement to online work outside of class.

- Instructors should minimize the distribution of paper during class to reduce the risk of contact-spreading.
- The University will provide syllabus language for instructors on safety protocols and guidance for managing the classroom.
- Hybrid teaching approaches are critical to allow students to make academic progress even if they need to quarantine or isolate. This dual-modality instruction is important.
- These general considerations apply to typical lecture-based instruction. Plans for instruction in labs and other skills-focused or studio settings must adhere to specially-designed requirements and guidelines provided to academic units. Specific safety plans for instruction of these courses must be approved by the executive for the unit in which they will be offered.
- Students whose circumstances necessitate that they engage remotely for the entire semester will be able to enroll either in online courses designed for remote learners or remote synchronous or remote asynchronous courses with their current class. However, there may be cases, especially for upper-division courses, where an online option is not viable. In this case, students will need to access, remotely, the in-residence version of these courses. Units will work directly with students in ensuring their access to this instruction.
- OPP will supply hand sanitizers for instructional areas managed by the University and other common areas for instructional activity and support on campuses. In addition, details of their updated cleaning and disinfecting programs are available at <https://ehs.psu.edu/sites/ehs/files/cleaningguidance-oppcleaning.pdf>.
- The full capacity of Penn State's instructional design community is being mobilized to support instructors with adapting to various modalities. A team with expertise from across Penn State is creating options, guidelines, and recommendations to help units prepare for fall. The team will provide evidence-based models that units may tailor to their instructional needs. The group is focusing efforts on learning design, experiential learning, faculty and instructor development, classroom technology, academic integrity, and student success. It is also creating a strong online, semester-long experience for remote learners, underserved populations, graduate education, and international students.

Graduate students involved in the instructional mission, research, and/or who are on assistantships with activities other than the instructional mission and research should

refer to [information on The Graduate School's website for the latest information](#). In regard to graduate students who are involved in instruction either as teaching assistants or instructors of record, those who feel that they are part of a vulnerable population and are unable to perform their assigned duties should work with supervisors to determine how adjustments can be made to their regular duties.