

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for Fall 2021

○ **May faculty/instructors switch their courses to online?**

Faculty/instructors are required to teach each course as it is listed in the course catalog: traditional, online or web-assist. Faculty cannot unilaterally change the modality of a course. The only time faculty/instructors may switch their course to the online modality is if the university makes a decision to switch all instruction to online.

○ **May faculty/instructors require students to wear a mask?**

Yes, during times when the university has declared an official mask mandate. To start the fall 2021 semester, Arkansas State University has invoked a requirement for mask wearing indoors in any situation where physical distancing is not practical. This includes classrooms, meeting rooms, hallways and building entrances, and elevators. This is subject to future change to comply with ASU System or state of Arkansas guidance.

○ **Are faculty/instructors required to wear a face covering?**

Yes, with the following caveats. If they can maintain a minimum of 12-foot distance to students while lecturing in the classroom, they do not. If they wish, they can use a face shield while teaching instead of a face mask. Faculty/instructors are reminded in meetings and other indoor interactions, the A-State mask mandate applies to all on campus.

○ **May faculty/instructors ask students to socially distance within a classroom?**

Faculty/instructors may encourage students to be socially distant in the classroom if there is space/seating available to do so.

○ **May faculty/instructors ask others about their vaccination status or for proof of vaccination?**

No. Requiring proof of status or requiring vaccination is prohibited by state law. We recognize that third parties may ask or require (see question 26 for more detail).

○ **If a student states they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and must go into quarantine, what is the expectation of faculty/instructor and student?**

Faculty/instructors should provide the same type of service they would to the student as if it were any other illness or situation that would require the student to be out of the classroom.

○ **Will the university provide faculty/instructors the names of students who have been excused from class due to COVID?**

No. It will be the student's responsibility to notify the faculty/instructor if they will not be able to attend class for any reason.

- **Will instructors be required to provide recorded lectures, live Zoom, or another distance option if students request it due to a reluctance to be in the classroom due to COVID?**

If a student's request is based solely on their reluctance to be in the classroom due to COVID, instructors will not be required to provide recorded lectures, live Zoom, or another distance option. However, virtual learning options might be necessary in situations involving students who have been granted accommodations by the Access & Accommodations Office through the ADA process.

- **May faculty/instructors ask students for proof of COVID exposure?**

No.

- **What is the current university protocol for isolation and quarantine?**

The same as currently recommended by the United States Centers for Disease Control. Please consult this website.

- **What if a student is concerned about COVID and requests to attend class virtually?**

Absent a situation involving disability accommodations, you are not required to grant requests for virtual or Zoom participation in classes that are scheduled as on-campus or hybrid. Students may seek online course alternatives through their academic advisor. In situations involving students who have been granted accommodations by the Access & Accommodations Office through the ADA process, virtual learning options might be necessary.

- **Can students work with advisors for alternative learning arrangements if they are at high risk for COVID complications?**

Students at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should consult with the Access and Accommodations Office to explore what options might be available to them. This process might also include communicating with the student's academic advisor to explore whether online sections of the relevant course are available.

- **Will students, faculty and staff have access to free COVID testing?**

The university will collaborate with the NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine on providing on-campus testing of A-State students and employees.

- **Will the university continue contact tracing?**

Yes, A-State will continue contact tracing. Contact tracing is a strategy in which public health officials work with a patient to help them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the timeframe while they may have been infectious. A liaison from the university's medical team will be in contact, and it is important that students and employees respond to calls, emails or text messages from A-State.

○ **Are students, faculty and staff required to report symptoms and positive COVID results?**

Yes. This remains a requirement of all to continue to use the university's COVID-19 reporting form. This information is vital to the university's contact tracing.

○ **What should I do if I feel sick?**

Stay home. If you believe you have certain symptoms commonly associated with COVID-19 such as fever, body aches, runny nose, diarrhea, or shortness of breath, report those symptoms with the A-State COVID-19 reporting form. The current variants of COVID-19 may not evoke the previous tell-tale symptoms of loss of taste or smell. When in doubt, err on the side of caution and report, seek testing, and protect others.

○ **What if a member of the A-State community does not report?**

It is vitally important that anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 report that to the university and not expose other members of the campus community. When infected people continue to come into work or to attend classes, it puts others at risk. The statewide reporting system informs the university any time that a student or an employee tests positive for COVID. In the very rare situations where that has not been reported to the university, the non-reporters have faced disciplinary actions.

○ **Will members of the faculty and staff be required to use sick leave if they are required to quarantine or isolate?**

New guidance from the ASU System is expected soon related to the reinstatement of the "COVID leave" that was provided last academic year.

○ **If the university transitions to online class delivery, may faculty/instructors teach classes from an off-site location?**

Yes. If this situation arises faculty/instructors will be expected to teach their classes during the assigned date/time. On campus expectations for faculty will be no different than that of the 2020-2021 academic year.

○ **If we transition to online class delivery, can faculty/instructors elect to teach in a hybrid format if social distancing is observed?**

Only in the case of laboratories, clinical sessions, and hands-on experiential learning opportunities, and with approval of the respective dean and the provost.

○ **If the university transitions to online class delivery, in hybrid classes that have a significant hands-on experience, will the university provide resources to help run those classes as was done in the past?**

Yes, requests for needed resources should be made by the faculty member to the department chair, and then reported to the respective dean and provost for approval to continue on campus.

- **If a class is offered in a socially distant face-to-face format, will the university reinstate physical designation of social distancing in meeting spaces as was done in the past?**

In this scenario, it will be up to the instructor and/or individual leading the class to encourage social distancing.

- **Will the university supply masks for the fall semester?**

Cloth or paper masks will be supplied to any student, staff or faculty member who requests one. Students can locate additional masks at the Reng Student Union information desk (second floor, near the main stairs). Employees can request masks from the Environmental Health and Safety office.

- **What improvements have been made or are planned to add filtration and ventilation to clean air and protect our faculty, staff, and students in classrooms, hallways, rest rooms and offices on campus?**

Upgrades for several facilities are planned for this year utilizing ARPA funds, and more details will be forthcoming later this fall.

- **Is space available to be scheduled in a larger room where social distancing can take place?**

With the current university mask mandate, moving classes to larger rooms should not be necessary. If there is a need to meet with a student, faculty/instructors may request to schedule the meeting in a larger room where social distancing can take place or meet via Zoom.

- **Students are in clinical sites and educational settings that are requiring the vaccine, while others are considering this possibility. What are the implications for students?**

- While Arkansas State University encourages students and employees to get the vaccination for COVID-19, A-State does not require proof of vaccination for COVID-19 for students to receive educational services. However, many student activities may involve travel to other non-campus locations or participation in programs governed by rules that are not imposed by the university. For example, these may include participating in clinical rotations at off-campus health care sites, participation in internships or other experiential learning conducted on the property of a business, or participation in athletic events governed by conference rules. Students need to be aware that in addition to other requirements that may be imposed on them, these activities may require that students present proof that they are vaccinated against COVID-19 in order to participate.

Failure to comply with any site requirement may result in delay of program progression or graduation. The program is not obligated to find alternative placement sites due to a student's failure to follow site requirements.