



University Operational Framework

Note: This is a working document that is updated as needed

Background

This document summarizes the State System's approach to engaging in face-to-face instruction during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The State System and its institutions continue to learn from each other and collaborate as a system, sharing knowledge gained and engaging in on-going reviews of each other's plans and ideas. As with the Fall 2020 semester, the universities' operational plans are expected to differ in ways that reflect the institutions' unique local circumstances and the particular needs of the students and communities they serve.

This Framework has been developed by the Office of the Chancellor with input from the university presidents and other leaders as well as input from stakeholders such as union leadership. This is a living document that may be updated as needed to respond to changing circumstances. The Framework is intentionally designed to provide flexibility for universities to plan locally while doing so in a coordinated fashion that meets systemwide standards.

Overview

University presidents will determine whether, how, and to what extent their universities will engage in face-to-face instruction. University plans for operations will be maintained publicly on each university's website. The universities have been provided a common outline to follow for presenting their plans online so that there is consistency across the State System.

University plans and related implementation details will be developed by university presidents in consultation with local stakeholders including faculty and staff. State System universities' plans will differ in ways that reflect local institutional needs; despite differences, the plans of every State System university will:

- Support all students' progress towards their degrees while mitigating health and safety risks that exists for students, employees, and our host communities;
- Adhere to health and safety standards provided by federal and state agencies, and follow guidelines from the Pennsylvania Department of Education;
- Include contingency plans for alternate modes of operation should the pandemic evolve in such a way to require it; and

- Comply with the State System’s collective bargaining agreements and its academic, operational, and organizational policies, procedures, and standards. They will also comply with any new guidelines that are developed in consultation with the universities to take account of unique circumstances occasioned by the pandemic.

System-specific Guidance

While the Framework requires State System institutions to follow the guidance provided by state and federal agencies, it also provides the following system-specific guidance that has been developed to complement the state and federal guidance:

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Implementation of critical health and safety measures

Under this Framework, the State System universities are updating their plans for engaging in face-to-face instruction based upon the following mutual responsibilities:

- Of universities to produce and implement a plan for engaging face-to-face instruction that adheres to relevant federal, state, and State System guidelines; and
- Of students, employees, and visitors to adopt behaviors recommended by the above guidelines as a means of mitigating spread of infection.

With this approach, the State System universities seek to:

- Enable students to continue in their progress;
- Mitigate risk for our institutions by following federal and state guidelines;
- Be respectful of employee concerns;
- Provide consistency in practice—where possible given university facility and resource constraints—in meeting university operational needs; and
- Comply with all legal requirements.

Students, employees, and visitors must help to mitigate infection and spread of COVID19 by observing the following rules of conduct that should be considered work rules or directives for employees and standards of conduct for students. Visitors and guests not complying with university rules, may be asked to leave campus. Enforcement of requirements will be accomplished according to university-developed protocol(s) in alignment with collective bargaining agreements and student codes of conduct.

2. All individuals must adhere to the following health and safety rules

- Follow university guidance regarding wearing face coverings in all buildings, public shared spaces on campus, and in areas where social distancing cannot be observed, or as otherwise directed by university administration. Individuals unable to wear face coverings due to a documented health condition or disability must request an exception to this requirement as directed by university administration;
- Observe social distancing guidance such as tape on floors or sidewalks and practice social distancing wherever possible, including when using bathrooms, showers, and locker room facilities; and

- Not congregate in communal areas or gather on campus in groups that exceed official local, state, or federal guidance for non-instructional activities.

3. Students and employees must follow published protocols for reporting exposures, cases, and outbreaks of COVID-19 on campus

For individuals exhibiting symptoms:

- Must not report to work; class; clinical assignments; or attend or participate in institution-sponsored activities or events;
- Must not enter campus buildings except for students who shall only enter campus buildings that are designated as their place of isolation (e.g. residence hall);
- Are expected to self-isolate in accordance with current state and federal guidance;
- Are expected to self-report symptoms and exposure to the appropriate health agency and university personnel; and
- Are advised to consult with their medical provider about options for testing and necessary treatment.

For individuals who may have been exposed to COVID-19

- Report if you have visited an area of high prevalence (domestic or international) in the previous 14 days;
- Report if you know you have been exposed to anyone, within the previous 14 days, who has tested positive for COVID-19; and
- Self-quarantine in accordance with current state and federal guidance.

4. Requirements of employees

Where, when, and through which modality employees perform their duties is at the discretion of the university president or appropriate designee, unless otherwise set forth in applicable collective bargaining agreements or policy. Any request for a departure from the assigned work function, schedule, location or modality may be considered only when the procedures below are followed:

1. Faculty and staff who wish to seek an accommodation or a modification of their current accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are directed to submit their request to Human Resources. Employees are urged to contact Human Resources as soon as possible. As required by the ADA, if a medical condition is deemed a disability as defined under ADA, then a reasonable accommodation, if available, should be provided.

Faculty and staff who do not have a disability as defined under the ADA may seek a flexible work arrangement if the employee is at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19 as defined by CDC guidance.

- a. Faculty and staff are directed to submit a request for a flexible work arrangement to Human Resources by a date determined by the university.
- b. Human Resources will validate requests in writing for flexible work arrangements, which shall include review of relevant medical and/or other relevant documentation to be submitted by the employee.

- c. Human Resources will send validated requests for flexible work arrangements to designated university official(s) to determine the impact on the university's operational capabilities and whether a flexible work arrangement in duties, schedule, location or modality will be granted.
2. If a flexible work arrangement is not granted under 1 above, the regular leave rule shall apply. Accordingly, faculty or staff may request a leave option or options as provided in the relevant collective bargaining agreement/memorandum of understanding, or university/system policy

For faculty, none of the above shall preclude the requests for flexibility in time, location, and/or modality of alternate workload and/or teaching assignment that are typically made based on academic considerations and preference and not on disability or other health considerations. Such requests will be made and considered in the usual interactive manner with department chairs and deans. If faculty preference does not align with the plans or schedule, per Article VI.A. of the faculty collective bargaining agreement the dean makes the final decision about allowances within the operational needs of the university, but there is no obligation to change the delivery method of the faculty member's course(s).

5. Requirements of all visitors to campus

All visitors and guests must comply with the following rules. Noncompliance may result in being asked to leave and/or being barred from all campus grounds and facilities:

- Follow university guidance regarding wearing face coverings in all buildings, public shared spaces on campus, or in areas where social distancing cannot be observed, or as otherwise directed by university administration. Individuals unable to wear face coverings due to a documented health condition or disability must request an accommodation as directed by university administration;
- Observe social distancing guidance such as tape on floors or sidewalks and practice social distancing wherever possible, including when using bathroom, shower, and locker room facilities;
- Follow university guidance regarding access to residence halls;
- Do not congregate in communal areas or gather in groups exceeding official local, state, or federal guidance for non-instructional activities;
- Visitors exhibiting symptoms are not permitted on campus for any reason; and
- Visitors who have been exposed or have visited an area of high prevalence (domestic or international) in the previous 14 days are not allowed on campus.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Recommendations for students

- Be familiar with all of the university's COVID-19 protocols and requirements and attend mandatory trainings if required by the university;
- Use *remote* methods to host student group events, gatherings, or meetings, to the extent possible;
- Utilize student service offices by appointment only (e.g., financial aid, registrar, etc.) for non-emergency issues;
- Limit visitors entering on-campus living quarters, as directed by university administration; and
- Follow published protocols for in-person counseling and healthcare visits and utilize telehealth services when possible.

2. Recommendations for students and employees

- Practice recommended protocols for hygiene, hand washing, use of hand sanitizer, and social distancing, per CDC guidance;
- Abide by federal, state and local COVID-19 mitigation guidance and orders regarding congregation sizes;
- Utilize alternative methods of contact such as email, chat, and telephone;
- Limit non-essential staff and visitors in living quarters on campus, as directed by university administration;
- Avoid non-essential (non-university) travel; and
- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media, when feeling overwhelmed.

3. Recommendation for managing non-essential business-related travel

All university-sponsored international or out-of-state travel for students, faculty, or staff should be curtailed unless approved by the university president (or designee). The university's standard processes for travel authorization should require the signature of the president (or designee) for travel to be authorized.

- Travel within Pennsylvania should be done with caution and awareness of the pandemic conditions at the planned destination and in the communities en route to the destination;
- Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and the Commonwealth should be followed when travelling; and
- If an approved traveler is exposed to COVID-19 while participating in university-sponsored travel, the traveler must follow the self-isolation protocols established by the university upon return.