

Faculty Frequently Asked Questions for Fall, 2021

Welcome to the 2021 Fall Semester! We are excited to be in full swing in our face-to-face as well as our online instructional formats.

As we are mid-way through our second week of classes for the fall semester, it is time to share some additional guidance with faculty about our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please visit [WCU's COVID-19 resources web site](#) for additional information.

COVID-19 Vaccinations, Testing, and Reporting

- 1) May I inquire about the vaccination status of my students, or peers, either individually or collectively?
 - a. No. Vaccination status is private and faculty members may not inquire about students' vaccination status.

- 2) May I encourage students to get a vaccine to help combat COVID-19?
 - a. Yes.

- 3) Will WCU publish or otherwise share the vaccination status of employees or students?
 - a. No. WCU will report vaccination status in the aggregate for these populations, but individual vaccination status is private information and will not be shared. Aggregate vaccination status data will be published to WCU's [COVID-19 dashboard](#).

- 4) Why was October 1 selected originally as the deadline to report vaccination status or begin mandatory testing?
 - a. October 1st was originally selected as the deadline to report vaccination status or be subject to mandatory testing to: 1) allow those who wish to be vaccinated, but had not yet done so, to complete a two-shot regimen and 2) provide the time needed to procure supplies for mandatory testing. As we see increases in reported vaccination status and testing capacity, the deadline to get vaccinated or be subject to mandatory testing has been moved to **September 15th**. Mandatory testing protocols are being finalized and will be announced soon.

- 5) What happens if a student submits a fake vaccination card?
 - a. At a minimum, falsifying a student record is a violation of the student code of conduct and subject to disciplinary action.

- 6) Does WCU still offer COVID-19 testing and vaccines?
 - a. Yes. Students and employees may be tested at [WCU Health Services](#) as well as receive the Johnson and Johnson or Pfizer vaccine series there.

- 7) What kind of COVID-19 tests are being offered at Health Services?
- This year we have both rapid antigen and rapid molecular testing.
 - Antigen testing is used for screening and surveillance
 - Molecular testing is used to diagnose symptomatic COVID-19 infectionsDuring the 2020-2021 academic year, we only had rapid antigen testing on campus. That meant that symptomatic individuals who tested negative with the antigen test had to isolate while awaiting a molecular test performed by an external lab. We hope to minimize this type of isolation this year by using our rapid molecular testing on site.
- 8) Does WCU and/or the State still track numbers of cases of COVID-19?
- Yes. WCU's [COVID-19 dashboard](#) has remained current with daily updates since July 2020.
The NC Department of Health and Human Services also maintains a public [website](#) with data on the number of new cases, deaths, positivity and hospitalization rates, and a [dashboard](#) with additional metrics.
- 9) Will I be notified if one of my students tests positive for COVID-19?
- No. However, faculty will receive a Student Absence Notification if a student is in quarantine or isolation for more than four consecutive days and follows the [Absence Notification Protocol](#).
- 10) What is a documented absence notification for COVID-19 from Health Services?
- Documented absence notifications are generated by medical providers at Health Services for students who have been counseled to self-quarantine or to self-isolate. These students either have been exposed to an active COVID-19 case, or they have an active COVID-19 infection, and therefore should not attend class to mitigate further spread of this contagious viral infection.
- 11) How do I know if a documented absence notification is for an active case of COVID-19 vs a student who is just quarantining?
- To comply with HIPPA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), Health Services does not disclose the reason for the absence notification. You will not be able to tell from the notification itself if the student is in quarantine due to exposure or isolation due to a confirmed infection.
- 12) Why does the length of absence notification vary from student to student?
- Unvaccinated students who have been exposed to an active case of COVID-19 are given guidance to quarantine. A full quarantine is 14 days: however, the CDC allows for an early release at day 7 if the exposed individual has no symptoms and

has a negative COVID-19 test. Students cleared for early release from quarantine will have a letter stating they are released from Health Services.

Per CDC guidelines, vaccinated students are only to be asked to quarantine if they have symptoms that are suspicious of an early COVID-19 infection. Vaccinated but exposed students should be tested 3-5 days after their exposure.

Students with active COVID-19 infections are instructed to self-isolate for 10 days from the start of their symptoms.

Some students do not contact Health Services until several days after their exposure, or several days into their illness. Therefore, the length of their remaining quarantine or isolation may vary.

- 13) What if a student emails directly to a faculty member that they were exposed to COVID-19 or have tested positive and no absence notification is received from student affairs?
- a. If a student directly emails their professors when they are unable to attend class due to COVID-19 related concerns, please guide them to the COVID-19 Self Reporting Form from MyWCU.
<https://home.my.wcu.edu/student/Pages/COVID-19-Self-Reporting.aspx>
This connects them to Health Services for additional medical guidance. This also allows us to ensure accurate information for campus safety measures, especially for students who may receive medical guidance off campus.
- 14) I still have questions about student absence reporting.
- a. Please contact Kellie Angelo Monteith at monteith@wcu.edu
- 15) How is contact tracing handled?
- a. Contact tracing is handled by the [Jackson County Public Health Department](#).

Classroom Operations

- 1) Are masks or facial coverings required to be worn in the classroom?
 - a. Yes. Facial coverings or masks are required to be worn in all instructional spaces including classrooms, labs, and Hunter Library, as well as all public indoor spaces in Cullowhee and our sites at Cherokee, Biltmore Park, and Highlands Biological Station. This requirement applies regardless of vaccination status.
- 2) Do I have the option to move my class(es) from a face-to-face to an online modality?
 - a. Instructional modality for each class has been established by the department head and dean of the corresponding discipline. Departures from that approved

format must be approved by the department head and dean and require appropriate documentation.

- 3) If students request an option to “zoom” into a class, either sporadically or for the semester, am I obligated to offer that option to them?
 - a. No. Instructional modality is already set for the semester and unless the University makes an institutional level decision to pivot to hybrid or all online classes, there is no expectation that faculty will accommodate individual requests from students—this reflects our practice just as in previous semesters.
- 4) Will WCU be making any changes to the classroom such as re-implementing social distancing?
 - a. No. Classrooms were returned to their original and pre-pandemic capacities earlier this year and unless guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the NC Department of Health and Human Services, or the UNC System advises otherwise, classrooms will remain in their current configurations.

General

- 1) Will outdoor tents like we had last year be available this fall?
 - a. We are in the process of procuring several large tents for class or general use during the fall semester.
- 2) How do people get to Hunter Library?
 - a. Follow the signage for pedestrian access to Hunter Library through Stillwell. As a reminder, masks are required when passing through any building on campus.
- 3) Are faculty meetings required to be held in-person?
 - a. No. Department heads and faculty may choose to hold meetings in physical or virtual formats or offer virtual participation to those faculty members who wish to meet remotely.
- 4) What resources are available for me as a faculty member to have alternative working arrangements?
 - a. Please review the WCU [employee resources website](#) and follow up with your department head.

FAQs compiled with input from Academic and Student Affairs.