

Instructor & Academic Support Staff FAQ for Post-Spring Break 2022

1. What is changing in UWM's Interim COVID Health and Safety Policy?

Starting March 19, 2022, UWM is rescinding its requirement that students, staff and visitors to UWM facilities must wear face coverings while indoors. UWM strongly recommends that everyone wear masks indoors, but it will no longer be required.

UWM has approved continuing the required wearing of masks in certain areas, including Norris Health Center, the Children's Learning Center, UWM shuttles and certain health care professional training programs.

Mandatory testing of unvaccinated students and staff continues for the remainder of the semester. Anyone is free to voluntarily test even if not required.

2. Why is UWM changing its mask mandate now?

In mid-February, UW System issued a directive that all UW campuses will rescind their respective mask requirements sometime between March 1 and each institution's spring break. UWM is removing its mask mandate to coincide with the start of spring break, March 19.

In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently published [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) guidance that uses local conditions to determine risk levels and recommended prevention strategies like masking, screening testing, etc.. At the time of this writing, all three UWM counties have a low community level and masking is not an individual- or community-level prevention strategy. CDC isolation and quarantine recommendations remain in place for those who test positive or are exposed to COVID-19.

The City of Milwaukee's mask mandate expired on March 1. Waukesha and Washington counties have not had mask mandates in place this year.

3. Can I ask students to wear masks while in class, lab, instructional environment or office?

Yes, instructors and academic support staff *can ask* students to wear masks while in class or participating in some UWM event. However, instructors *cannot require* students to wear masks and *cannot prevent* unmasked students from participating in UWM instructional or extra-curricular activities.

Instructors and staff may post university-provided signs requesting that masks be worn in a classroom or office. Updated signage [can be downloaded on the COVID-19 site](#).

Masks may still be required for instructional activities that are connected to or governed by third-party requirements (e.g., health care training programs).

4. What do I tell my students about the change in masking policy? How do I talk to my students about masking while attending my class?

Students have received messages informing them of the change in mask-wearing policy taking effect during spring break. At the same time, it is recommended that instructors talk to their students about the changing mask guidance and your masking preference for after spring break.

Students (and colleagues with whom we work) may have concerns about exposing themselves or others to COVID-19. It is important to remind students that wearing an N95/KN95 mask protects the wearer even when others are unmasked.

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning has created [useful suggestions](#) that may help foster in-person classroom climates characterized by mutual trust, responsibility and care for each other.

5. Has there been a change in the process for requesting a temporary or permanent shift in the modality of a course?

No. Academic Affairs' [Guidelines for Considering a Change in Instructional Modality from In-Person to Online-Only or Hybrid](#) are still in effect. If an instructor is considering changing their course modality after spring break, instructors will want to first speak to their department chair/associate dean/dean about a possible change. Academic Support Staff should speak to their supervisors about any desired remote-work assignments.

6. Can I change classrooms after spring break to a larger-capacity room?

Yes, if a larger room is available, you can change classrooms after spring break. Contact your department or unit [schedule builder](#) to initiate that conversation.

UWM analyzed section enrollments and room capacity. More than half of the in-person sections (53%) are in spaces that are filled at 1-50% capacity. Twenty-nine percent of this semester's in-person sections are at 51-74% capacity. And, 18% of sections are in spaces where capacity is at or above 75%. The Registrar's Office has provided a list of the highest-capacity occupancy courses to schedule builders in an effort to expedite any needed reassignments.

7. What if I want to keep my course in-person after spring break, but some students are asking that it go online?

It is recommended that instructors talk with their class about the change in masking guidance. Students may realize the entire class will mask for the common good. Students may understand that wearing an N95/KN95 mask provides considerable protection for the wearer, especially if the student is current with their vaccinations.

Instructors are not required to offer hy-flex options (synchronous streaming or lecture capture) for students who do not want to attend an in-person class. At the same time, students will appreciate any flexibilities that can be offered.

As we continue to live with COVID-19, instructors should treat students' illness with COVID-19, including students in quarantine, like they have treated student illnesses prior to COVID-19. Have students take notes for others, or have the absent student make up work for the assignments missed.

8. What resources are available for students?

Resources available to students are listed on the Dean of Students website. Students requesting accommodations should contact the Accessibility Resource Center (MKE: archelp@uwm.edu, 414-229-6287; CGS: sjthor@uwm.edu, 414-251-6087). If a student has a concern this is not resolved by the instructor, or if the student has other concerns, they can contact the Dean of Students Office (dos@uwm.edu).

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