

Guidelines for In-person Classroom Discussions as UWM Moves to Recommending rather than Requiring Masks

UWM is updating its [Interim COVID-Related Health and Safety Policy](#) with a change to the mask-wearing policy effective March 19, 2022. Most pertinent to in-person classrooms, UWM policy will no longer require all individuals to wear masks while indoors at UWM facilities (except for Norris Health Center, the Children's Learning Center, UWM shuttles and certain health care professional training programs). However, UWM strongly recommends that masks continue to be worn indoors at UWM.

Wearing a mask indoors in public spaces such as classrooms:

- reduces risk for students, instructors, and staff who have medical conditions or encounter others with medical conditions that may make them especially vulnerable to complications from COVID-19, and
- provides peace of mind to those with COVID-19 concerns.

The following guidelines may help foster in-person classroom climates characterized by mutual trust, responsibility, and care for each other.

1. Discuss why UWM recommends that all members of the UWM community wear a mask in classrooms and other UWM public indoor spaces. Make time during a class session before spring break to *discuss the reasons for the mask recommendation* and *address student questions*. Let students know if you will continue to wear a mask in the classroom and other UWM public indoor spaces to support the health and safety of all members of the UWM community.

2. Invite students to discuss privately with you if they have concerns about successfully completing the course given the updated policy recommending rather than requiring masks. Avoid minimizing student concerns or asking for reasons or proof to support their desire not to attend class with unmasked individuals. Consider ways to be flexible and accommodating to concerned students so they can complete your course successfully.

3. If conflict emerges about being near unmasked individuals, acknowledge nonjudgmentally that although masks are not required in the classroom, UWM recommends they be worn in classrooms and other public UWM facilities. Tell the student expressing concern they can move to another seat or area if they would like. Do not require class members (with or without masks) to change seats or sit in particular areas of the class. Avoid singling out or being perceived as reprimanding students who may attend class without masks. Do not ask them to leave class to get a mask. Remind students that wearing a N95/KN95 protects the person who wears the mask. If you need support or have questions or concerns, please contact the Dean of Students Office (dos@uwm.edu).

4. Reiterate that students who are ill or symptomatic should *not* come to class. Consider ways that students who can't be present in class could make up missed work and/or complete online learning activities instead.