


Interoffice Communication

Date: August 10, 2021
To: Faculty
From: Jonathan Wickert
Senior Vice President and Provost 
Subject: AY2021-22 SVPP Communication #1: Fall Syllabus Statements and FAQ

As a follow-up to the campus memo distributed earlier today, I am writing with additional guidance regarding the wearing of masks in classrooms and other instructional settings. This information aligns with current policies and decisions of the [Board of Regents](#).

While not required, Iowa State University encourages the use of face masks in indoor settings including all classrooms and learning spaces to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The university additionally encourages all members of the campus community to be vaccinated. Substantial scientific evidence indicates that these actions prevent severe illness and significantly mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and its known variants.

Standard syllabus statements encouraged for the Fall semester

Instructors are encouraged to use the following statements verbatim in their Fall 2021 syllabi (which are also available on the [website](#) of our Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching), and to reiterate this information verbally on the first day of class:

Face masks encouraged: *Because of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, all students are encouraged—but not required—to wear face masks, consistent with current recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Further information on the proper use of face masks is available at:*
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/effective-masks.html>.

Vaccinations encouraged: *All students are encouraged to receive a vaccination against COVID-19. Multiple locations are available on campus for free, convenient vaccination. Further information is available at:*
<https://web.iastate.edu/safety/updates/covid19/vaccinations>.
Vaccinations may also be obtained from health care providers and pharmacies.

Physical distancing encouraged for unvaccinated individuals: *Classrooms and other campus spaces are operating at normal capacities, and physical distancing by faculty, staff, students, and visitors to campus is not required. However, unvaccinated individuals are encouraged to continue to physically distance themselves from others when possible.*

What can I do as an instructor to encourage students to wear face masks in my classroom and other learning spaces?

In addition to wearing face masks themselves, instructors may:

- Encourage students individually and in group settings to wear a face mask while also noting it is a personal choice, and not a requirement
- Explain that the university's guidance is consistent with current CDC recommendations that face masks be worn in group settings indoors
- Explain these points both verbally on the first day of class, and in writing in the course syllabus
- Post approved face mask signage

What limitations exist?

Instructors may not require students to wear face masks. In addition, instructors may not:

- Penalize or criticize students for not wearing face masks
- Provide tangible incentives, such as extra credit or a higher grade, to students who wear face masks
- Direct students to sit in different areas of the classroom based on whether they are wearing face masks
- Engage in actions that could reasonably be interpreted as requiring disclosure of vaccination status

What about teaching laboratories, studios, and office hours?

The same guidelines apply, and the wearing of face masks is encouraged. Instructors may model desired behavior by wearing a face mask, posting approved signage, and encouraging students to wear a face mask, but it cannot be a requirement.

What about faculty or staff meetings with students, including academic and financial aid advising?

Again, the same guidelines apply, and the wearing of face masks is encouraged.

What about department offices, seminar and conference rooms, and other work areas?

Faculty, staff, students, and visitors to campus are encouraged to wear face masks in all indoor spaces when around others, but may choose to wear or not wear a face mask as they deem appropriate. Unvaccinated individuals are encouraged to wear a face mask while on campus, and to physically distance from others when possible.

Are there locations or units where an exception exists, and face masks are required for faculty, staff, students, and visitors to campus?

Yes. Face masks are required on CyRide and at Thielen Student Health Center, areas of the College of Veterinary Medicine where face masks are normally required, and Ames Laboratory facilities. Masks may also be required in research laboratories at the discretion of the principal investigator or lab supervisor.

This guidance may be updated at any time as further information becomes available.

Additional information for faculty on academic policies, Canvas templates, and teaching resources will be distributed in the coming days.

Thank you for your support and cooperation as work to maintain a healthy environment for Iowa State's students, faculty, and staff. I ask that department chairs share this communication with academic advisors, staff engaged in instruction, graduate student instructors, and teaching assistants.

C: Wendy Wintersteen, President
Pam Cain, Senior Vice President for Operations and Finance
Toyia Younger, Senior Vice President for Student Affairs
Provost's Council
Academic Department Chairs
Andrea Wheeler, President, Faculty Senate
Chris Johnsen, President, Professional and Scientific Council

This message was distributed to all Iowa State University of Science and Technology faculty.