Office of Academic Affairs
Dept. 3302 • 1000 E. University Avenue
Laramie, WY 82071
(307) 766-4286 • (307) 766-6476 • fax (307) 766-2606
www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs

COVID-19 Mask Policy Update
Implications for Faculty and Academic Administrators
February 16, 2022

On February 16, 2022, the Board of Trustees lifted the mask mandate for all classroom settings, effective Monday, February 21, 2022. Masks are still required in campus offices when requested by the office occupant or visitor; for employees in UW's Early Care and Education Center; and in medically related units including UW's Student Health Service; UW Athletics' medical clinic area; family medicine residency clinics in Casper and Cheyenne; the Albany Community Health Clinic in Laramie; the Speech and Hearing Clinic; the Psychology Clinic; the Counseling Center; and the COVID-19 testing area. Masks also will continue to be required on UW Transit Service buses, in accordance with federal rules.

What does the change in policy mean?

1. **Instructional Delivery Mode**: The university administration encourages faculty and administrators to make every effort to ensure that classes scheduled for in-person instruction retain that mode of delivery for the duration of the spring semester. Nevertheless, there are circumstances where exceptions to changing modalities may be justified. Guidance for submitting exception requests can be found here.

2. **Absence Policy:** UW's policy for handling student absences can be found here. In handling cases of illness, faculty have discretion to work in good faith with students to find other ways to complete required activities.

3. **Temporary changes in delivery mode**: There may be circumstances that warrant a temporary adjustment in delivery mode, as in any semester. Faculty continue to have the ability to arrange for alternative learning/assignments on a limited basis, including guest lecturers, online assignments, outside-of-class assignments, etc. No request for change in modality is needed for short-term modifications two weeks or less in length. However, faculty should discuss these short-term changes with their unit head and

communicate expectations (including days for alternate delivery) to students as early as possible.

4. **Office hours/Advising:** Masks are still required in campus offices when requested by the office occupant or office visitor. Therefore, faculty may request students to wear masks during office hours, advising appointments, and other informal instruction that occurs in the faculty member's office. Similarly, a student may request the faculty member wear a mask during these activities. Providing alternative methods for conducting office hours, advising and other in-office meetings are encouraged if needed.

5. **Changes to Course Syllabi:** Faculty should update their course syllabus (and other materials in WyoCourses to reflect the new mask policy. Suggested statement:

   "During the ongoing global pandemic, the wearing of masks in the classroom, although not required, is highly encouraged. Furthermore, the University requires all students, faculty, and staff to abide by the preventive guidelines established in the COVID Policy, including:
   • Not coming to campus if you are sick.
   • Minimizing contact with shared surfaces.
   • Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer.
   • Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
   • Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or using the inside of their elbow.

6. **Classroom arrangements:** As a reminder and as in any semester, faculty may physically arrange their learning environment in any way they see fit, as long as the objects (e.g., seats/desks) are movable and are returned to the original location before departing the classroom. Students can request to socially distance if possible. If faculty wish to explore alternative learning spaces, they should contact their department head who will work with Academic Scheduling in the Office of the Registrar.