

Frequently Asked Questions

from Town Halls for Faculty and Staff

1. **If a student in class tests positive for COVID-19, will the entire class need to go into quarantine?**

No. If the class members are following the university's requirements and wearing masks and social distancing, there is no reason for the entire class to be notified. Close contact (within six feet), for 15 minutes or more, or close contact without a mask places you at risk. Being both socially distanced AND wearing a face covering should provide ample protection. Contact Tracers will work with the student to determine if anyone in the class was exposed.

2. **Will faculty and students be informed if a student in the class is presumed positive or tests positive with COVID-19?**

It is of utmost importance that we recognize the privacy of members of our community. The university advises students to make their professor aware if they need to isolate or quarantine, but the professor will treat the information confidentially. No announcement will be made in class. If the contact tracers feel someone in the class may have been exposed, they will privately contact them.

3. **Is the HVAC circulation a critical aspect of mitigating the risk of infection?**

We have ensured that all buildings are meeting the appropriate recommendations. The CDC and ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers) has made recommendations to improve building health to help prevent the spread of COVID. Many of these have already been instituted. UofSC Aiken has implemented these CDC and ASHRAE recommendations:

- increase outdoor air ventilation
- increase air exchange rates
- Increase the frequency of cleaning HVAC equipment such as coils, pans, etc.
- increase filter size and changes

All buildings have been evaluated to have at least four air changes per hour. Meaning the total volume of air is exchanged four times in one hour. This exchange rate meets or exceeds the guidance provided by ASHRAE.

While air exchange, ventilation, and circulation are important, we must also avoid too much ambient air circulation, such as using fans. Fans and increased indoor ventilation can cause airborne particles to travel more than six feet.

4. Will there be any mass testing events during the semester?

CDC or DHEC does not recommend mass testing for many good reasons, including that it utilizes too many resources for the information provided. However, working with our partners at Aiken Regional Medical Centers, PCR diagnostic testing for campus community members will take place for all housing students, all athletes, and any employee who wants to be tested at announced dates/times. Any member of our campus community who is symptomatic may be tested 10 a.m and 1 p.m. at the Student Health Center, Monday through Friday. Testing is conducted in the morning hours to ensure that samples are received by 1:30 to get them to the proper location for analysis. Individuals need to make an appointment to be tested at the Student Health Center to protect other patients visiting the Center. Symptomatic students, staff, and faculty may be tested in the Student Health Center this fall. Employees and students may seek tests from their medical providers or community clinics, as well. UofSC Aiken does not require that symptomatic tests be performed only on campus. We hope that in late September, more antigen testing will be available, and we can have two types of testing available.

5. What do we do if a colleague or a student refuses to wear a mask or face covering?

Face coverings are required on the UofSC Aiken Campus in all classroom spaces, in the Library, and other identified areas. Wherever physical distancing is difficult, face coverings should be worn. This requirement includes all employees, students, and visitors to the university.

Students who fail to bring a mask or face covering to class will be asked to leave to get a mask from the building manager before returning or absent themselves for the remainder of that class period. Students who disrupt class by refusing to wear face coverings are subject to disciplinary review processes and action. Employees who violate the policies should be reported to HR. Employees who fail to conform to the policy are insubordinate and may be subject to disciplinary action.

All regular vendors and deliveries have been notified, and signs are posted near each entrance to inform visitors of the mask requirement.

If someone enters an office with “counter-service” and refuses to wear a mask, the staff may refuse service until the visitor conforms to the policy. We want to maintain our reputation for top-notch service and polite interactions, but we must remain safe.

Note: individuals walking outdoors alone and able to remain physically distant from others are not in violation of the mask policy. However, everyone should carry a mask in case physical distancing is challenging to maintain, and of course, masks are required to enter buildings.

6. Will we have sporting events this fall?

Given that athletes can't be physically distant or wear a mask during exertion, the NCAA has instituted extensive regulations to protect student-athletes during pre-season, season, and post-season plans. Divisions II and III have canceled fall championships. The Peach Belt Conference has not yet made a ruling on fall regular season play. As an NCAA, DII institution, UofSC Aiken will conform to the recommendations/requirements of both the NCAA and the Peach Belt Conference.

7. When will antigen testing be available?

Viral antigen tests directly detect the proteins of the virus rather than its RNA. These tests tend to be highly specific, but not as precise as RNA-based tests, meaning their false positive rates are higher, but still within acceptable guidelines. Typically, if an individual's tests are positive, an RNA test is also conducted. The FDA has approved a limited number of laboratory-grade antigen tests at the time this document was written. Still, the expectation is that other companies will soon have approved tests available. While these viral antigen tests have less accuracy, they can be processed faster and are less expensive than the PCR test. Hopefully, more of these tests will become available early in the early fall. If possible, the university will investigate providing the option of the viral antigen testing as it becomes available.

It is unclear if insurance will cover the viral antigen test and the RNA tests if an individual takes both.

8. Has the university considered conducting tests on waste/brown water?

Yes, the university has looked extensively at the benefits of testing brown water. Working with our biology department (who have the knowledge and ability to analyze samples), the university considered testing the wastewater from the dorms. It showed promise for providing an early warning if an individual in housing might be positive for COVID-19. However, for several reasons, that project was abandoned. For the cost, the testing of brown water would not be worth it. We could not separate the wastewater from rooms set aside for quarantine, so whenever a student was in quarantine, it would read as a positive result. Individuals who have had COVID-19 in the past and are no longer contagious would also produce waste that still would read as COVID positive. Finally, the workload on the faculty who could run the samples would be excessive.

9. Are we setting any crowd limits on the SAC?

Yes. Students in the SAC must be physically distanced. Student Life staff will be removing or labeling seating to make sure that students remain a safe distance. Other modifications are being made, including the following events: club sports, Rush, Move-In Day, Orientations, and Get on Board Day.

10. **How long does someone need to be in isolation or quarantined once they are tested positive?**

Quarantine is for someone exposed to COVID-19 and lasts for 14 days, beginning with the day of the last exposure to someone positive. Typically, the contact tracers or medical provider will advise the individual on how much quarantine time is needed, helping them determine the specific dates. It is important to note that if a person in quarantine chooses to get tested, even if the test comes back negative, it continues the full 14 days.

Quarantine is 14 days with the monitoring of symptoms. There are instances when quarantine is longer. One example of possibly more extended quarantine is if a person is living in the same home with someone positive, in isolation, and it is impossible to maintain an appropriate distance. In that situation, the person would have to continue to quarantine for another 14 days from the last day of the positive person's isolation.

Isolation is for someone who has or is suspected of having, COVID-19, based on test results or symptoms. Isolation begins with the first day of symptoms, or the date of testing if the person is asymptomatic and continues for ten days as long as the person's symptoms are resolving, and they are fever-free without medications for 24 hours. If a person gets tested because of suspicion of being positive and tests negative, isolation may end.

11. **Some institutions in S.C. are going online for the first few weeks. Why aren't we?** At this point, the plan is for all public universities in the state to open face-to-face instruction in the fall. Several are beginning with online classes, and then, following Labor Day, they anticipate switching to face to face instruction. In some cases, the institutions are in communities that were reporting high rates of infection, and the hospitals in those communities were at capacity. Fortunately, Aiken is not one of those communities.

UofSC Aiken is offering remote learning, face-to-face, and hybrid instruction this fall. The vast majority of students requested face-to-face instruction, and most faculty prefer that approach as well. Nonetheless, the university requested that individuals with pre-existing medical issues or caregivers for individuals who are at high risk to work with their supervisors for accommodations, as needed.

12. **How often will our classrooms be cleaned?**

Our partner, Allegiance, will be sanitizing all classrooms and "high touch" public areas each morning and again in the afternoon. Additionally, rooms will have sanitation supplies for use by classes as they come in. Hand sanitizers are also in each building. While we did our best to estimate how much of a product will be used per day if you see supplies running low, please contact the Building

Manager, and they will put in a request for more supplies to be delivered.

13. If my department wants to order our supplies, may we do so?

Individually purchasing supplies would not be a good use of state funds or departmental/office budgets. Because we buy in bulk, and because we are buying supplies approved by the CDC, we are confident of their quality and better pricing. While we are supplying a lot of supplies to mitigate COVID-19, we suggest that individuals purchase pocket-sized hand sanitizer and masks so that you won't be unprepared.

14. How do I know if I've got COVID-19?

According to the World Health Organization, DHEC, and CDC, there are relatively standard symptoms. Each member of our community will need to monitor their health every day for signs of typical symptoms. These include:

- a fever higher than 100.4
- a cough
- shortness of breath
- fatigue
- lack of taste or smell

Other symptoms may include sore throat, headache, runny nose, abdominal pain. If any of these symptoms exist, stay home (or leave the workplace), call your supervisor, and contact your healthcare provider. Employees can access a health awareness form from the UofSC Aiken website. Being aware of your health is an essential step in the institution's plan to mitigate the virus's spread.

15. What can I do personally to avoid getting COVID-19?

The only way to stay 100% risk-free is to remain in your home, never leave your home, and see no one until you have taken an approved vaccine. That is not a healthy way to live...so the next best thing is to mitigate the risks.

Every employee must take personal responsibility to mitigate the spread of the virus by following CDC guidelines, which include: frequent and thorough handwashing with soap, using hand-sanitizer, particularly after using the stair handrails, being in shared spaces, opening mail, touching door handles, handling boxes. Also, avoid touching your face, always maintain physical distancing of 6 feet from others, and wear a cloth face mask, shield, or covering. If you are using a paper face covering, change it for a fresh one each day. If you are using a cloth face covering, laundry it frequently. Never share a mask with someone else and clean face shields after each use.

Most importantly, be very aware of your health and surroundings. Remember, good health is about more than just avoiding disease. For most people, being healthy

also requires social interactions with friends and family, spending time outdoors, exercise, eating right, getting restful sleep, and other activities that make us well-rounded, happy, and well-adjusted individuals.

For more information, see UofSC Aiken's mitigation plan, *Ready, Set, Return*, available on the UofSC Aiken website.

<https://www.usca.edu/pacer-ready/mitigation-plan/file>