

Suggested Syllabus Language for 2020/2021

Note: This document may evolve as additional topics are addressed.

Created by: Senate COVID-19 subcommittee

Date: 8-7-2020

Topics Addressed: mask wearing; attendance

Below are suggested guidelines for your syllabi to address mask wearing and attendance.

To be clear, the language here is not meant to be a mandate; this is not required language (as is the case with language regarding disabilities, academic integrity, etc.). However, instructors are strongly encouraged to include clear language about behavioral expectations that emphasizes these are the expectations for **everyone** on campus and within their communities. Instructors who are teaching remotely also are encouraged to include some version of this language in their syllabi. The attendance guidance may be relevant for remote learning, as well. These measures definitely add an unfamiliar layer to the classroom/campus experience, which will be challenging. Instructors are encouraged to remind students that it is imperative that they adhere to safety guidelines because, as members of the Penn State community, they share a collective responsibility to engage in simple-to-follow practices that protect the safety and health of everyone and that failure to adhere to these guidelines will disrupt the learning experiences.

This document details key items/messages you may choose to address related to mask wearing and attendance policies. An example syllabus statement that addresses all the key points is provided for use as a template, if desired.

Mask Wearing

It is recommended that instructors address the following points regarding mask wearing in their syllabi. Additional information on enforcement is posted here:

<https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/support-safety-conduct/student-conduct/conduct-information-faculty-staff>.

1. Clearly set the expectation, aligned with University policy, that all students, faculty and staff:

- Must wear face masks or other approved personal protective equipment in classrooms, labs, offices, and all buildings. Students and employees also should practice social distancing, avoid large gatherings and wear face masks while on campus, as well as within their local communities in line with local and state requirements.
- Maintain social distance of at least six feet from other individuals, whenever possible.

- Practice good personal hygiene by covering coughs and sneezes, staying home if sick, and washing hands thoroughly with soap and water or using hand sanitizer before and after class.
- Follow related guidance communicated by the University and via public postings/signage related to directional traffic flow, maximum occupancy of spaces, assigned seating, and closed-off desks/chairs/room sections.
- With the exception of bottled water, all food and drink consumption **is prohibited** in classrooms. Those drinking water should be especially conscious of maintaining social distancing and minimizing the time their mask is moved aside; straws are recommended for this purpose.

2. **Emphasize public health, safety, and cooperation.** These guidelines are meant to keep everyone safe and healthy. Adhering to the policies helps everyone get back to the campus life we want to have. Make it clear that the instructor and TAs will abide by the same policies.

3. **Address the issue of correct compliance.** Masks/face coverings need to cover both the nose and mouth and stay in place at all times.

(<https://news.psu.edu/video/618912/2020/05/06/when-and-why-should-i-wear-cloth-mask-ask-cidd>)

4. **Address the issue of exceptions.** On a case-by-case basis, students may consult with Student Disability Resources for accommodations if they cannot wear a mask. Students requiring such accommodations may be advised to take advantage of and participate in the course through synchronous remote learning, if available. Students requiring such accommodations should consult with academic advisers before the end of the drop/add period to locate alternative course offerings that will allow their participation remotely. Emphasize that, per university policy, nobody is permitted to attend class without a mask; accommodations will be for synchronous or asynchronous remote attendance only.

5. **Describe the consequences for refusing to wear a mask in the classroom.** Syllabus statements should make it clear that all cases of non-compliance will be addressed immediately to protect everyone's health. The University policies on classroom behavior allow for instructors to ask non-compliant students to leave the classroom, or, if all else fails, instructors may end class if a student refuses to wear a mask appropriately. All cases of non-compliance should be referred to the Office of Student Conduct by filing a report:

https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?PennState&layout_id=0.

6. **Information addressing what constitutes appropriate masks as defined by Penn State Environmental Safety and Health can be found**

here: <https://ehs.psu.edu/sites/ehs/files/covid19-clothmasks.pdf>.

Attendance

Because of the need for students to isolate and quarantine, as well as the general expectation to stay home if exhibiting any symptoms, it is recommended that instructors update their information on attendance to address the following issues. Existing Senate Policy on attendance provides the necessary flexibility to accommodate these unique circumstances.

- 1. Set the expectation of regular attendance and participation. Make it clear where students are supposed to be (remotely or in person) and when, especially if the course involves synchronous Zoom sessions, hybrid combinations of instruction models, etc. Make it clear how students will know which days they should attend in person and which days they should attend remotely. Clarify if there is flexibility in the schedule that would allow students to come on days when they are not scheduled. Reinforce that if/when students are scheduled for remote class time, their attendance and participation are still expected and important.**
- 2. In accordance with current University Academic Policy, instructors should avoid using physical attendance as part of course assessment (although active participation may be used). Counting physical attendance for class credit may inadvertently encourage students to attend class when they are ill or after they have been exposed to COVID-19.**
- 3. Emphasize that students should NOT come to class physically when they are feeling ill. Students need to be explicitly instructed that if they have potential COVID-19 symptoms or have been in contact with someone who has symptoms or tests positive, they should not come to class. They should call (not visit) as appropriate University Health Services at University Park (814-863-4463) or other campus health facilities, found here: <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health-wellness/medical-services/health-services-commonwealth-campuses>.**
- 4. If your class is set up for synchronous remote participation, spell that out. You may want to include instructions for how to access technological resources for remote attendance (synchronous or asynchronous) in your syllabus or direct students to where they can find those instructions. If your class does not allow for remote attendance/participation, either synchronous or asynchronous, please provide preliminary guidance about how absences will be addressed (e.g., whether students should contact you directly for alternate arrangements).**
- 5. Let students who may be participating remotely from other campuses know that the course will follow your campuses closure protocols (e.g., if your campus has a compressed schedule for weather delays). Remember that students at other campuses may not be able to participate synchronously if a compressed schedule moves class times.**
- 6. While University contact tracing *per se* will not include students who have been in a classroom where physical distancing and mask wearing have been maintained, it is still a good idea to keep track of who has been in the classroom on what days. Consider using assigned seating to monitor attendance and participation and to reinforce scheduling.**

This also would enable, if necessary, contact tracing. Seating assignments can be made in Canvas.

7. **Address University guidelines about quarantine and isolation.**

<https://virusinfo.psu.edu/faq/story/what-will-happen-if-when-students-test-positive>

Example of Language for Enforcement of Mask Wearing

[This particular example draws a parallel with the expectation that students will be fully dressed when they go out in public. What we want is to make clear that this is NOT something to be done just for class (and inadvertently give the impression that this is something that can be skipped for a minor penalty, e.g. losing participation points) but is the minimum behavior required to be able to participate in class.]

We know from existing scientific data that wearing a mask in public can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community (Lyu and Wehby, 2020; CDC, 2020; Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2020). Just as you're expected to wear a shirt and shoes to class every day, everyone -- including the instructor and TAs -- are required to wear a face mask in University buildings, including classrooms and labs. You **MUST** wear a mask appropriately (i.e., covering both your mouth and nose) in the building if you are attending class in person. Masks have been provided for students, faculty, and staff, and everyone is expected to wear one while on campus or out in the community.

All students, faculty and staff are expected to maintain social distancing (i.e., maintain at least six feet of space between individuals) when possible. Seating patterns and attendance patterns, including assigned seating and closed-off desks/chairs/room sections, have been established to help allow for this distance for your safety. It is also important to follow related guidance communicated by the University and via public postings/signage related to directional traffic flow and maximum occupancy of spaces.

You are not permitted to consume food or drink in classrooms, except for water. If you must drink water, please be especially conscious of maintaining social distancing and minimizing the time your mask is moved aside. Or, better yet, use a straw. Cooperation from **EVERYONE** will help control the spread of the virus and help us get back to the previous version of campus life as quickly as possible.

Students with conditions that make it difficult to wear a mask or who choose not to wear a mask [may participate in class remotely but]* may not attend class in person. This is to protect your health and safety as well as the health and safety of your classmates, instructor and the University community. Anyone attending class in person without a mask will be asked to put one on or leave. Refusal to comply with University policies is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct. Students who refuse to wear masks appropriately may face disciplinary action for

Code of Conduct violations. See details here: <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/support-safety-conduct/student-conduct/code-conduct>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, April 3) *Recommendation Regarding the Use of Cloth Face Coverings, Especially in Areas of Significant Community-Based Transmission*.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

Johns Hopkins Medicine. (2020, June 17) *Coronavirus Face Masks & Protection FAQs*.
<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-face-masks-what-you-need-to-know>

Lyu, W. and Wehby, G.L. (2020, June 16) *Community Use Of Face Masks And COVID-19: Evidence From A Natural Experiment Of State Mandates In The US*. Health Affairs.
https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00818?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori%3Arid%3Acrossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub++0pubmed&

**Obviously, you cannot direct students to participate remotely if that is not a viable option for your class. You may direct students who believe they need an accommodation to the Office of Student Disability Resources. You also may direct them to speak with their adviser to find an alternative that is offered remotely.*

Example of Modified Attendance Policy Verbiage

Regular attendance is critical for building on the skills and knowledge developed throughout the class. Students who participate have a more complete understanding of the material presented and are more likely to succeed in the class. This is true whether your attendance is in person or remote.

Because of classroom size limitations, you will be asked to attend in person only on certain days. Those of you with last names beginning with the letters XXXX will attend class on Mondays and will participate remotely on Wednesdays; those of you with last names that begin with the letters XXXX will participate remotely on Mondays and attend class in person on Wednesdays. Everyone will participate remotely on Fridays.

The attendance schedule is designed with health and safety of everyone in the class in mind, to ensure that we can maintain safe physical distancing during class time. **You should not attend class on days that you are not assigned!** Please stick to your scheduled dates. This helps to maintain appropriate social distancing and safety of in-person participants. Come on the day you are scheduled, wearing your mask appropriately (i.e., covering your mouth and nose).

****Note: this section only applies to hybrid classes and will need to be tailored to classroom size and days of the week****

If you are not feeling well or if you have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, DO NOT COME TO CLASS. I cannot stress this strongly enough. We are counting on you to help contain the spread of the virus (and other illnesses) on campus by self-

isolating if you have a fever, feel unwell, or have been in contact with someone who has tested positive or is showing symptoms. [You may participate remotely or watch the recorded class]*. If you are not in class on your assigned day, you may be contacted by the instructor or the TA to check up on you. Again, this is important in the event that we need to follow up on a potential infection.

You will be assigned a seat in the classroom. It's important that you sit in your assigned seat for each class period you attend. This allows me to know quickly who is in class on their assigned day and who is not. Physical attendance will NOT be used as part of the calculation of your course grade (although participation may). In the event that someone in the class contracts COVID-19, it's critical to know who was in class with that person and how close they were seated to that person. For this reason, seats are assigned and attendance will be taken each class day. According to University guidelines, and because of the distancing procedures in place for in-person classes, if someone in the class tests positive, we will continue with our regularly scheduled classes.

**Again, this may not be applicable to your class. If remote participation is not an option, address how students are expected to make up missed work (e.g., contact you directly for alternate work, work with the TA).*