I am writing to share COVID-19 related expectations for the Aug. 26 start of classes. Please note, should circumstances change regarding the pandemic or there are updates in state/federal guidelines, we may revise this guidance. It remains our hope that, with increasing rates of vaccination and a decreasing caseload, we will be able to relax or eliminate some restrictions for vaccinated individuals during the semester. In addition, institutions may need to adjust practices to address local conditions during the semester working closely with system office. Finally, system office leadership is working to achieve an agreement with the CSCU bargaining units related to vaccine requirements for all employees. We will issue further guidance specific to employees when negotiations are completed. Thank you for your patience and support.

Guidelines for the Fall reopening (as of 8/18)

Virus Mitigation

Vaccines

According to the CDC, COVID vaccines are safe and effective at preventing COVID-19 infection and virtually eliminating severe illness and death. Infections happen in only a small proportion of people who are fully vaccinated and when these infections do occur, they tend to be mild. However, if fully vaccinated individuals become infected with the Delta variant, there is some evidence they can spread the virus, though for a shorter duration than can unvaccinated people.

For the fall semester, the BOR has required COVID-19 immunization for all undergraduate and graduate students with the allowance of exemptions for medical and non-medical reasons. Campuses will continue to coordinate with the state Department of Public Health to advertise and host vaccine clinics to promote access to these important vaccines.

Student vaccination FAQs [ct.edu]

Please note: Only individuals designated by the President or COVID Coordinator are permitted to ask students their vaccine status and to change the parameters of their school activities based on vaccine status. The names of unvaccinated students will not be shared with faculty and staff and students should not be asked to disclose their vaccination status in the classroom or outside of the classroom.
Weekly COVID Testing

Weekly testing will take place on campus for students who are not vaccinated or show proof of vaccination. **At this time, vaccinated students will not be tested as part of the weekly screening program except as required for athletic programs, clinical or internship placement requirements, etc.**

Quarantine/Isolation

All students and employees should watch for symptoms of COVID-19, and if they have symptoms, should be tested, stay away from others, and report their symptoms to university health services. Symptoms can arise 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Per CDC guidance, should an employee or student test positive for COVID they are required to isolate for 10 days and not return to work or class until free of fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication, other symptoms are improving and they have been cleared by university health services or the HR department in the case of employees.

Health services will notify the COVID Coordinator who will work with the local public health department and support contact tracing so that any individuals considered close contacts can be notified. For those considered a close contact who are not vaccinated, they should get a COVID test within 3-5 days of exposure and are not to return to work or class for 14 days from date of exposure and they have been cleared by university health services or the HR department in the case of employees.

People who are fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine after contact with someone who had COVID-19. However, fully vaccinated people should be tested 3-5 days after their exposure. Should the vaccinated close contact get a positive test result or experience symptoms, they must self-isolate for 10 days or until fever is gone for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and other symptoms are improving.

Contact Tracing

The universities will continue to conduct contact tracing for their student populations to manage the spread of the virus on campus. The COVID Coordinator will serve as the primary leader for this activity.

Physical Distancing

- **Outside:** If you want to spend time with people who don’t live with you, outdoors is the safer choice! You are less likely to be exposed to COVID-19 during outdoor activities, even without the use of masks. Physical distancing will not be required outside of buildings except as deemed necessary by the institution such as large events with mixed of vaccinated and unvaccinated people where both physical distancing and masks may be required.

- **Inside, for vaccinated AND unvaccinated individuals:** DPH has indicated classrooms are low-risk spaces due to the student vaccination requirement and the universal wearing of masks. Fall classroom spaces are arranged in most cases at a minimum of 3 feet of physical distancing. In addition, office areas, particularly those that serve students, are arranged with a minimum of 3 feet of physical distancing wherever possible.
Masking

- **Outside:** Masking will not be required outside of buildings. However, we strongly encourage those who are not vaccinated to continue to wear masks outside. As noted above, campus leaders may deem masks necessary at certain outdoor larger events with mixture of vaccinated and unvaccinated populations in attendance.

- **Inside:** At this time, because of current virus conditions, wearing face coverings over the nose and mouth is required inside all campus buildings for both vaccinated and unvaccinated students and employees. This includes offices, conference/meeting rooms, event spaces, classrooms, libraries and laboratories, etc.

- All visitors—including contractors, delivery personnel, high school students engaged in dual enrollment or continuing education courses, employees in business-sponsored training programs, parents with children in early childhood centers, and similar groups of intermittent attendees at the campuses must also be masked indoors. Universities that host on campus events should consider all attendees as visitors requiring masks and physical distancing. Tracking attendance is strongly encouraged should contact tracing be required due to notification of a positive case.

- **Inside (exceptions):** Exceptions may be made in the following circumstances:
  - Individuals working alone in an enclosed space (an office, research lab, or area with a door or cubicle with walls that extend at least 30 inches above the desktop).
  - Student residence hall rooms, but not common areas such as lounges, game rooms, computer labs, gyms, etc.).
  - Some students and employees, who have received accommodations, may wear face shields instead of masks.

We will continue to evaluate indoor masking guidelines, with the hope that these can be further relaxed or eliminated based on CDC and DPH guidance.

**Requesting an Accommodation/Exemption**

Faculty or staff who wish to seek a medical exemption or disability-related accommodation should contact the Human Resources department at the universities or HR shared services for Charter Oak. Students who wish to seek medical/disability accommodations should contact the Health Services/Disability Services offices and students who wish to seek non-medical exemptions should contact the Student Affairs office on their respective campuses for assistance.

**Telework**

Only employees in the SEBAC classified and SUOAF bargaining units at the universities and AFSCME at Charter Oak are eligible for telework agreements. A telework request process has been established through the HR departments of the universities and through HR shared services for Charter Oak. Those employees without a telework arrangement approved by HR are expected on campus full time.
Campus Activities

Student Services

The full array of campus and student services will be offered on ground this fall. Staff in offices will be required to wear masks and practice physical distancing whenever possible. Alternate meeting spaces have been identified on campuses to support this distancing for meetings should staff and/or students be more comfortable in a larger space. Appointments may be required for some services, but all offices will be open to walk in students.

Teaching and Office Hours

Faculty and students will meet in person for the majority of class sessions this fall, with limited instances of pre-established online and hybrid courses. Classrooms will be close to full capacity, with 3 feet social distancing in most cases and with all in attendance wearing masks to start the semester. Again we will continue to monitor the public health conditions and guidance and make adjustments if possible.

Should it be necessary to move a class to online format, the Provost or their designee will make that determination. Faculty are not permitted to unilaterally change the modality of their classroom sessions. However, faculty should be prepared to provide virtual learning opportunities for students who are in quarantine or isolation and should be prepared to pivot to remote teaching if, and only if, called for by the institution.

Office hours will be provided on ground as well as online at the discretion of Provost or their designee. Faculty are not permitted to unilaterally change the modality of their office hours. Alternative sites have been identified on campus to allow for greater physical distancing than individual offices should faculty and/or students be more comfortable in a larger space.

Food Service

Campuses will offer food service this fall. Opportunities for outside dining and grab and go meals are still encouraged especially for those who are unvaccinated. Masks may be removed while actively eating and drinking in designated areas. Maintaining physical distancing from others while eating and drinking, particularly those you don’t live with, is highly encouraged for fully vaccinated individuals and required for unvaccinated individuals.

Travel

Per the CDC guidance, unvaccinated individuals who travel outside of Connecticut should get a test 1-3 days before and 3-5 days after travel and quarantine for 7 days upon return; even if they get a negative test individuals should quarantine for the full 7 days. If they receive a positive test or experience symptoms, isolation is required for 10 days or until fever is gone for 24 hours and other symptoms are improving. Before returning to campus, students and employees must be cleared by university health services or their primary care physician. Those who are vaccinated do not need to test or quarantine after traveling.

At this time, the CDC recommends individuals do not travel internationally until they are fully vaccinated. Read the full CDC international travel guidance for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals (cdc.gov)
The COVID-19 situation, including the spread of new or concerning variants, differs from country to country. All travelers need to pay close attention to the conditions at their destination before traveling.

Unvaccinated employees and students should be prohibited from school-sponsored travel unless granted an exception for special circumstances until such time as local, national and international transmission of the virus is low and/or CDC guidance changes. All school-sponsored and personal international travel must be discussed with the COVID Coordinator to establish a plan for the student’s or employee’s safe return to campus. All sponsored trips should follow CDC guidance for public transportation. Requirement for Face Masks on Public Transportation Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs | CDC

Note: the travel rules do not apply to individuals who commute from neighboring states to go to school or work.