Classroom Guidance During COVID-19

General Principles

Keeping our MC community safe during the COVID-19 pandemic requires attention to basic COVID-19 safety guidelines outlined on our Return to Campus: Health and Safety Guidance webpage.

As you develop your course specific plan to bring students to campus safely for face-to-face instructional activities, please keep the following in mind:

- **Wear face coverings (masks) at all times in MC buildings and workspaces.** Face coverings should **fully cover the nose, mouth, and chin.** Individuals may choose to wear a face shield as an extra precaution, but they must continue to wear a face covering (mask) also.

- **Although social distancing mandates are not in place, we encourage maintaining distance** between individuals in a classroom when possible.

- **Assess your health status regularly.** Take the MC [Daily COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment](#) each day before coming to campus. If you are showing COVID-19 related symptoms, stay at home and get tested immediately. If you start feeling sick while on campus, go home immediately, consult a healthcare provider, and get tested. You may go to one of the [testing facilities in Montgomery County](#). COVID-19 testing is free and no ID or doctor’s prescription is required to get tested.

- **Get vaccinated.** While Montgomery College is considering the possibility of requiring vaccinations, you can still do your part. Vaccines are the best way to reduce the spread and prevent harmful effects of COVID infections.

This document is divided into three sections to provide recommendations for:

- **Section 1: Preparing Classroom Space, Equipment, and Supplies** pp 2-3
- **Section 2: Preparing Faculty, Staff, and Students** pp 4-5
- **Section 3: Navigating On-Campus Procedures** pp 6-9
Section 1: Preparing the Classroom Space, Equipment, and Supplies

A. Communicate with Facilities

- **Departments can coordinate with their Facilities campus help desk** as they plan logistics for returning students to classroom or lab spaces. The facilities help desk can answer questions about specific building protocols (e.g., cleaning schedules, signage, HVAC / air filtration, etc.) Consult with your department chair to streamline facilities questions, requests, and follow-ups.

- **For Service and PPE Requests**: Please use Facilities iService Desk.

**Facilities Campus help desk contact:**

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B. Consider your Classroom Space

- **Set-up individual, self-contained workspaces** within the classroom or lab, when possible. Assign each student a workspace that they will use for all class meetings. This minimizes cross-contamination and facilitates contact tracing, if necessary.

- **Minimize student movement around the classroom** to facilitate social distancing. Assure that individual workspaces have necessary tools and equipment (including waste containers) to complete their work. When possible, dispense materials and supplies to individual workspaces before students arrive, so that they do not need to retrieve items from other parts of the room.

- **In situations where social distancing is not possible**, wearing masks and frequent sanitizing are still effective protections. Students and instructors should avoid, when possible, congregating in large groups. Feel free to take opportunities, when they are available, to use larger, more open spaces to meet with students. Department chairs can help faculty explore options for alternate meeting spaces.

C. Plan for Equipment and Supplies

- **Face Coverings** (masks) must be worn at all times in MC buildings and workspaces. If a student does not have a face covering, backup supplies are available in each building. Consult your department for the location of these supplies.

- **Additional safety supplies** should be purchased by departments when there is a course specific need. For example, some activities may need gloves or surgical masks for course specific purposes. Courses with instructional activities that require close contact (less than 6 feet) should consider using face shields, in addition to face coverings.
• **Disinfecting wipes** are useful for sanitizing surfaces quickly and easily. Facilities will provide a box of disinfecting wipes, usually mounted on the wall adjacent to the door. Facilities will refill the canister as needed and can be contacted directly or through department staff using the [Facilities iService Desk](#) form.

• **Plexiglass** has also been installed where appropriate. Individual faculty should not install plexiglass themselves as it could pose a safety risk, particularly in smaller, enclosed spaces, by limiting ventilation and air circulation. Faculty members may choose to wear a **face shield** in addition to a face covering (mask). Face shields may be requested through and ordered by departments.

• **Consider purchasing microphone headsets for instructors and students** using department funds. Face coverings and masks inhibit clear verbal communication. Instructors and students must speak loudly for others to hear, which can be difficult to sustain over long class periods. Voice amplifying headsets can reduce voice strain and prevent the need to move closer to someone to hear what they are saying.

• **Avoid sharing tools or equipment** in classrooms or labs, when possible. Assign each student a dedicated set of tools and supplies that are used through the entire semester.

• **Develop cleaning and disinfection protocols for any shared equipment.** Shared equipment or supplies should be cleaned and disinfected between use by each student. For large equipment, cleaning and disinfection protocols should focus especially on frequently touched surfaces.

• **Consider implementing a workspace cleaning checklist for students.** This approach is useful if multiple groups of students are using the same classroom and/or the same workspaces, equipment and supplies within the same week. At the end of the class meeting, students use provided disinfectants to sanitize all surfaces on the checklist. The checklist should pay particular attention to frequently touched surfaces in the workspace.
Section 2: Prepare Students

A. Communicate with Students Early About On-Campus Expectations

Students may feel anxious or have questions about attending on-campus instructional activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Outline basic expectations well in advance to alleviate any concerns. For example, communicate with them about how many times they will come to campus, the duration of class meetings, and safety protocols in place. Be flexible with attendance policies for on-campus instructional activities because rigid guidelines could compel sick or vulnerable individuals to come on-campus. A common syllabus statement on COVID health and safety has been sent to department chairs to assist you in communicating classroom expectations and guidelines.

B. Identify Students with Special Accommodations

If there are students with special accommodations requirements registered for your class, discuss the accommodations with them as early as possible. ADA accommodations continue to apply and are mandatory during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, there may be unique masking requirements for some students (e.g., clear masks). Consult with the Disability Support Services office for guidance providing accommodations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

C. Facilitate Contact Tracing

- Collect updated contact information for students. *Essential for all on campus classes.* Current cell phone and/or home phone numbers will allow contact tracers to act quickly in the event of a potential exposure. Hold the current phone numbers with your course records, so that the information is available if needed.

- Encourage students to answer the call and stop the spread of COVID-19. If students receive a call from 240-466-4488 or MD COVID they should answer; the call is from a contact tracer.

- Develop plans for tracking student attendance. Accurate records of students who attend each on-campus class meeting are critical for effective contact tracing in the event of a potential exposure. If possible, also consider a seating chart with standard seat assignments throughout the semester. This practice will facilitate determining close contacts in the classroom space.

D. Train Students on COVID-19 Safety Protocols before Coming to Campus

- General student training on COVID-19 should be embedded in your course Blackboard site.
  o At a minimum, such training should include: a short description of COVID-19, information on how COVID-19 spreads, its symptoms, and ways to stay safe, including social distancing, handwashing, wearing a mask, and health assessment.
  o These training materials are already available and will be shared with departments and faculty. The student training can be uploaded from a shared OneDrive folder into a faculty member’s Blackboard course site. Faculty can supplement the training with additional videos or resources for students.
• **Provide a course specific COVID-19 orientation for students via Zoom.** In addition to the general training, instructors may conduct a Zoom orientation session before coming to campus for instructional activities. This orientation should review MC COVID-19 safety guidance outlined on the Return to Campus: Health and Safety Guidance webpage. Additionally, it should discuss any safety protocols unique to your instructional activities or classroom space.

• **Communicate with students about office hours.** Faculty are required to hold office hours, but these can be done remotely or in alternative spaces on campus. Department chairs can help faculty explore options for alternate meeting spaces.
Section #3: Navigating On-Campus Procedures

A. Before Coming to Campus

• **COVID-19 safety training should be complete.**
  - For Faculty and Staff: Follow employee guidance outlined on the Return to Campus page: Employee Guidance: Returning to Campus.
  - For Students: Faculty should verify that students have completed the course embedded COVID-19 training (see p. 4) prior to coming to campus.

• **Conduct a personal Health Assessment before each visit to campus.**
  All students and employees visiting campus should screen themselves for possible symptoms of COVID-19 before coming to campus. Anyone with symptoms (even mild ones) should not come to campus and should STAY HOME.

  - Use MC’s online screening tool Daily COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment. The tool can also be accessed by scanning the included QR code or by clicking on Take Health Self-Assessment from the blue banner on the MC Homepage.

    - If you answer YES to any of the symptoms you should STAY HOME and contact your healthcare provider or get tested. If you answered NO to all, you may proceed to campus.

    - These personal health assessment data are NOT saved, stored or retained by the College.

    - A time-stamped email is sent to the student’s or employee’s email address with a green check (clear to go to campus) or red x (do not go to campus).

• **Bring a clean face covering or mask** each day you come to campus.
B. Building Entry

- **When entering MC buildings**, the following should be true for students and employees:
  1) wear a clean face-covering or mask
  2) attain symptom-free results from the [Daily COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment](#)

- **If a student forgets to bring a mask to campus**, backup supplies will be available in each classroom building. Consult your department for the location of these supplies. Departments may also request a supply of masks by placing a PPE request using [Facilities iService Desk](#) form.

C. Managing Instructional Spaces Safely

- **Prop open classroom doors throughout instructional time** so that students are not touching doorknobs upon entering and exiting the classroom.

- **Institute “sanitize-in and sanitize-out” protocols for instructional spaces.** Upon classroom entry, students should perform hand hygiene and then use disinfectant wipes to sanitize surfaces and objects in their assigned workspace before use. After class is over, students should again sanitize their workspace (using a [workspace cleaning checklist](#), if available). Then, they should perform hand hygiene before leaving the classroom.

- **Assign separate workspaces, tools, and equipment for each student that remain consistent** throughout the semester to avoid cross-contamination, when possible.

- **Remind students to follow classroom protocols** for personal protective equipment (e.g., masks, etc.) and for cleaning and disinfecting any shared equipment between uses.

- **Allow students to take restroom breaks throughout class time** instead of designating one break for everyone to use the restroom at the same time. Spreading out restroom breaks will help maximize social distancing.

D. Responding to What If Scenarios

- **What if a student refuses to follow safety protocols (e.g., will not wear a mask)?**
  - The [Student Code of Conduct](#) requires students to follow MC health and safety protocols. If a student refuses to do so, consider a range of options to encourage health and safety. For example:
    - Set the tone and expectations for proper mask wearing on the first day of class.
    - Consider class reminders or “mask checks” at various intervals during class meetings.
    - Have a private conversation with a student who repeatedly does not meet masking requirements.
    - Request help from your department chair for advice on dealing with a specific student. Additional support may be requested from the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs.
    - To maintain the health and safety of the classroom, it may be appropriate to ask the student to leave the classroom. Additional assistance from Public Safety (240-567-3333) may be requested if a student refuses to leave the classroom.
• **What if an individual develops symptoms of illness during on-campus instruction?**

  - According to MC guidelines found in *Return to Campus: Health and Safety Guidance*, an individual (employee or student) who has COVID-19-like symptoms should not be on campus. That individual should suspend on campus activities, return home, consult with a healthcare provider and/or get tested.

  - Any faculty member who observes a student in the classroom with clearly observable signs of illness that are uncharacteristic for that student or may be negatively impacting that student’s or other students’ performance should discretely speak with the student and advise the student to go home if they are ill. Remember to maintain confidentiality when speaking with others about a student’s health.

  - Students who need to return home should contact their instructor about any missed work, and instructors should be flexible regarding excused absences including providing students the ability to make-up missed work due to illness.

  - Please keep in mind that a cough, sneeze, or other minor symptoms are not automatically indicators of COVID-19. A student could have allergies or another chronic condition.

• **What if an individual involved in face-to-face instructional activities reports that they have COVID-19?**

  - The person who tested positive should contact publicsafety@montgomerycollege.edu to report their infection status. The person should be prepared to give their name, contact information, and details about activities while at the College (e.g., building and classroom, course CRN and faculty, etc.).

  - Concerns regarding a possible case of COVID-19 at MC should be communicated to: publicsafety@montgomerycollege.edu or The Office of Public Safety and Emergency Management via phone at 240-567-5333.

  - Provide the following basic information: name, contact number, and name and contact details for the individual directing the person’s activities at the College. For example, if a student reports that they are positive, provide the student's name, their updated telephone number, and the contact information for the course instructor.

  - The **MC COVID-19 Response Team**: (The Office of Public Safety and Emergency Management and The Office of Public Health and Environmental Safety) will follow-up to investigate and determine any actions that need to be taken to protect the health and safety of the community. This includes reporting relevant information to:
    - Public Health officials
    - MC Facilities and MC Communications
    - Dean of Student Affairs and VPP of the discipline with a suspected exposure
Should a student notify a faculty member, or should an instructor become aware during class time that a student in class has tested positive for COVID-19, the instructor should discretely have a conversation with the student. If confirmed, the instructor should announce that there has been a possible infection, dismiss class, immediately notify Public Safety, and use the course Blackboard site to announce any next steps or contingency plans.

The impacted course will immediately suspend face-to-face instructional activities and convert to structured remote format. The course will remain in structured remote format for 14 days if a positive case is confirmed. The MC COVID-19 Response Team will provide additional guidance based on the specific situation.

There may be cases where a student mentions they were with someone who tested positive. Please stay calm. This does not automatically mean that student has been exposed. A general reminder to all students to take the Daily Health Assessment, monitor themselves for symptoms, and contact their health care provider if they have any concerns.

An individual’s health information should remain private and should not be shared with any others in the class.

Any Questions?

Please consult with representatives below on the former CAT or current RTCAT.

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