

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION	UNIV University Administration
POLICY NUMBER	UNIV 3.04
POLICY TITLE	Communicable Disease Outbreak Mitigation Measures
SCOPE OF POLICY	USC System
DATE OF REVISION	July 8, 2020
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	President
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE	Office of the President

PURPOSE

This document outlines the University of South Carolina’s policy on implementing public health directives during a period of a communicable disease outbreak in accordance with guidance from public health officials and governmental entities.

DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Close contact: This is a set of criteria that will be set by public health authorities to define those individuals and behaviors that generate a risk of transmission.

Communicable disease: An illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxins that occurs through the direct or indirect transmission of the infectious agent or its products from an infected individual or via an animal, vector, or the inanimate environment to a susceptible animal or human host.

Face Covering: A face covering is a material that covers the nose and mouth. It can be secured to the head with ties or straps or simply wrapped around the lower face. It can be made of a variety of materials, such as paper, cotton, silk, or linen. A face covering may be factory-made, sewn by hand, or can be improvised from household items such as scarfs, T-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels; a face covering could be a face shield made of a clear material, for particular instructional needs or for individuals who cannot wear a traditional face covering.

Hand Hygiene: Hand hygiene is a way of cleaning one’s hands that substantially reduces potential pathogens (harmful microorganisms) on the hands. Hand hygiene procedures include the use of alcohol-based hand rubs (containing 60%–95% alcohol) and hand washing with soap and water.

Physical Distancing: Based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, physical distancing, also called “social distancing,” means keeping space between yourself and other people outside your home; the core tenants being: (a) stay at least six feet (about two arms’ length) from other people; (b) do not gather in groups; and (c) stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings.

Student: A person who:

- is currently enrolled at the university, or
- is accepted for admission or readmission to the university, or

- has been enrolled at the university in a prior semester or summer session and is eligible to continue enrollment in the semester or summer session that immediately follows, or
- is attending an educational program sponsored by the university while that person is on campus, or
- is engaged in prohibited conduct at a time when the individual met the above criteria.

Individuals who are not currently enrolled at the university remain subject to the disciplinary process for conduct that occurred while they were enrolled.

POLICY STATEMENT

In order to protect the health, safety and welfare of our faculty, staff and students, the USC institutions rely upon guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), and public health and medical professionals in making decisions about campus response to a communicable disease outbreak. Enacting public health mandates for students, faculty, and staff is also influenced by federal, state and municipal government directives (for example, the governor declaring a state of emergency or the mayor issuing specific mandates on citizen behavior modification). The duration of public health mandate enforcement by the university will vary based on the duration of the communicable disease itself, guidance from governmental and medical organizations, and the status of active cases in the area.

The four primary public health directives that may be implemented during a communicable disease outbreak, particularly one where person-to-person transmission is possible, include physical distancing, the use of face coverings in areas of campus where physical distancing is difficult, hand hygiene, and regular screening or testing for disease. In addition to encouraging and, in limited ways, mandating the enforcement of public health directives, the university can consider other means of protecting safety both in and outside the classroom; such activities can include, but are not limited to the following:

- Moving academic classes and support services to a virtual environment,
- Reductions of class size,
- Modifications of classroom assignments,
- Flexible work schedules for personnel,
- Cancellation and/or limitations for events held on campus,
- Alterations to how meals are prepared and/or delivered on campus,
- Changes to housing practices and roommate assignments,
- Installation of handwashing stations across campus, and
- University central purchasing obtaining face coverings or cleaning supplies for campus.

PROCEDURES

A. Physical Distancing when the university has mandated its necessity

1. In accordance with guidance from public health officials and governmental entities, the university can implement and enforce physical distancing requirements on campus where possible (such as limiting large events to a number recommended or mandated, requiring space between individuals, etc.). If there are physical distancing requirements issued by federal, state or municipal governmental entities that apply to off campus areas, the university can take a role in enforcing such mandates as to our students. Any individual believed to be responsible for intentionally violating an enforceable physical distancing mandate may be referred to student, employee, or faculty disciplinary processes in accordance with standard university procedures.

B. Face Coverings when the university has mandated its necessity

1. Priority Areas

Each campus or institution can identify specific areas where physical distancing is more difficult because of higher occupancy or physical characteristics. Face coverings are required in all classrooms, residential common areas, libraries, student union buildings, and campus health facilities. Other areas can be designated for required face coverings based on local conditions.

2. Faculty and Instructors

- a. Faculty should carry a face covering of their choice on campus so as to be prepared for environments in which a face covering is highly recommended or mandated in designated areas of campus where, due to the natural volume of human traffic, physical distancing is simply not possible. Faculty who have health conditions that make wearing a face covering risky should talk with their direct supervisor about the possibility of modifications and/or working remotely.
- b. Instructors of record (including faculty, staff instructors and graduate instructors or teaching assistants) will require face coverings in their classes. Since face coverings are required in their class, instructors are expected to either wear a face covering, be behind a barrier (e.g., sneeze guard), or be physically distanced from the students. Instructors may enforce the face covering requirement in their individual classes either by providing a face covering to the student in class (which will be made available by the university when possible), requesting the student to leave the class, or referring the student to the office of student conduct.

3. Staff

Staff should carry a face covering of their choice on campus so as to be prepared for environments in which a face covering is highly recommended or mandated in designated areas of campus where, due to the natural volume of human traffic, physical distancing is simply not possible. Staff who have health conditions that make wearing a face covering

risky should talk with their direct supervisor about the possibility of modifications and/or working remotely.

4. Students

Students should carry a face covering of their choice on campus so as to be prepared for environments in which a face covering is highly recommended or mandated in designated areas of campus where, due to the natural volume of human traffic, physical distancing is simply not possible. Students who have health conditions that may become exacerbated to the point that wearing a face covering interferes with their ability to be successful in the educational environment or that poses a risk to their health, should contact the respective student disability office (e.g., Student Disability Resource Center for USC Columbia) to determine if they may qualify for accommodations under the American with Disabilities Act. Specific documentation by a medical provider is required and the process of registration and/or having accommodations extended can take up to three weeks, so advance communication is encouraged.

5. Disciplinary Action

Any individual believed to be responsible for intentionally violating a face covering mandate may be referred to student, employee, or faculty disciplinary processes in accordance with standard university procedures.

6. Maintenance/Care of Face Coverings

Face coverings should not be shared with other individuals and should be kept in a clean safe place when not being worn. When taking the face covering off, or putting it on, use the ties and avoid putting your hands on the face cover. Perform hand washing before and after removal. See CDC recommendations of how to wear a face covering, how to make face coverings, and when they should be worn.

C. Additional Guidance

In alignment with the tenets of the Carolinian Creed, those individuals who are not yet fully vaccinated are strongly encouraged to continue wearing a face covering when indoors in any university facility unless you are actively engaged in eating or drinking, in order to help protect the health of the greater university community.

RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES

[UNIV 3.03 Quarantine and Isolation of Students, Faculty and Staff](#)

HISTORY OF REVISIONS

DATE OF REVISION	REASON FOR REVISION
June 18, 2020	New policy approval
July 8, 2020	Expand to system policy and add screening/testing as a mitigation strategy