

Fall 2020 FAQ's for Students

Topics

- 1) [Instructional Format](#)
- 2) [Safety Concerns](#)
- 3) [Academic Policies](#)
- 4) [Academic Calendar](#)
- 5) [Academic Services](#)
- 6) [Social Distancing and Health Measures](#)
- 7) [Travel to and around D.C.](#)

INSTRUCTIONAL FORMAT

Will the Institute prioritize offering in-person classes?

Yes, the Institute is planning to offer all its fall courses in person. However, recognizing that both students and faculty may need to self-quarantine or self-isolate at various times, we are able to offer hybrid or virtual instruction as well, according to circumstances as they develop.

Is there a cutoff for the size of an in-person class?

The Institute will follow the DC regulations and CDC recommendations for group sizes. For DC, that means we can have groups of 10 in Phase 1, groups of 50 in Phase 2, groups of 250 in Phase 3, and unlimited groups in Phase 4 (once a vaccine has been discovered). We anticipate that DC will be in Phase 2 when the semester opens in August.

Institute classes fall well within this limit, and classes have been assigned to classroom space that will allow for social distancing. Every class will abide by the maximum number of students allowed in that classroom according to social distancing standards.

Will the length of classes be adjusted to shorten exposure time to other students or, conversely, lengthened to reduce the number of different people who use the same space in the course of a day?

At this point, there is no plan to change the daily schedule. Classes will meet at their normally scheduled times. Classroom scheduling is being reviewed to reduce the number of people who use the same space over the course of the day. Cleaning schedules have been adjusted to allow for classrooms to be cleaned between classes.

How and when will students be notified of changes to the format of particular classes they are enrolled in?

If a class is moved to be completely online, registered students will be notified immediately via email. All classes will also be able to function as a hybrid course, meaning that students will be able to join an ongoing in-person class remotely if needed.

If D.C. advances through the reopening phases during the semester, will the mode of instruction on campus be adjusted?

Given the small class sizes at the Institute, advancing to a new reopening stage with larger gathering limits will not affect the instructional mode of our courses, although it may allow changes to planned events and lectures during the semester.

Conversely, if a second wave of COVID-19 were to arise, would instruction be moved entirely online?

We will be monitoring the impact of COVID-19 as the fall semester progresses. Our hope is that we can continue the semester in person as planned, with adjustments to individual courses if needed. However, we will follow DC regulations and CDC indications in the case of a second wave, and if need be, we would continue instruction online so that everyone has the opportunity to complete the semester.

If an instructor tests positive for COVID-19, would the class move online, or would the instructor Zoom in to the regular classroom on campus?

In the case that an instructor tests positive, if health permits, the professor will continue teaching the course through Zoom; if health does not permit, the Institute will seek another instructor who may replace him to allow the course to proceed.

If a student needs to self-quarantine or self-isolate, will it be possible to shift to online learning?

Yes, if a student needs to self-quarantine or self-isolate, it will be possible to shift to online learning. In fact, we would strongly encourage the student to stay caught up with the class if his or her health permits remote participation while self-quarantined or self-isolated. Updates to technology in the classrooms will allow for self-isolating students to join ongoing in-person classes remotely as needed. Students who need to take advantage of this possibility should contact the Associate Dean (nbagileo@johnpaulii.edu) to get the details.

How will students who need to self-isolate or self-quarantine be supported academically?

While a student is self-isolating or self-quarantining, he or she will have online access to the academic resources that are available to students in person; faculty office hours, Writing Center appointments, and library resources will all be available virtually for self-quarantined students whose health allows them to participate.

SAFETY CONCERNS

Testing

Is the Institute requiring that students be tested for COVID-19 before arriving on campus?

The Institute does not require its students to be tested before returning to campus. However, students should be aware of the [self-quarantine order by the D.C. government](#), addressed to individuals travelling from certain states. In addition, all students should begin daily symptom checks 14 days before returning to campus. This protocol, which will include taking temperature and considering a [list of symptoms](#), will serve the Institute community through its regular and sustained use.

During the semester, how should a symptomatic student access COVID-19 testing?

Students who are symptomatic for COVID-19 should consult a health care professional. A complete list of free COVID-19 testing sites can be found on the [D.C. Government's Coronavirus page](#).

The focus of this effort will be in testing symptomatic students and those who have come into direct contact with positive cases of COVID-19. Direct contacts are those individuals who have come into direct contact (at least 10 minutes of contact within 6 feet) of a positive or presumed positive case.

Tracing

How will the Institute assist with contact tracing in the event someone tests positive for COVID-19? Who else will need to self-quarantine?

After a reported positive test of a faculty or staff member or a student, Institute staff will conduct an initial trace of possible direct contacts with the person in question. We are required to report positive cases to the D.C. Department of Health (DCDOH), which will take the lead in more systematic contact tracing.

If someone tests positive, any close contact would need to self-quarantine. A close contact is defined as someone who has been within six feet of the Covid-19 positive person for more than 10 minutes. Someone sitting in a classroom more than six feet away, or the faculty person in the class, would not necessarily need to self-quarantine. A family member, roommate, study partner, or anyone else who would fit the "close contact" definition would need to self-quarantine. They would be contacted by a contact tracer from the DOH.

Social distancing in class

How is the safe capacity of classrooms being determined?

The University has reviewed all classroom space, including the Institute's spaces in McGivney Hall, to determine maximum density that would allow students to be six feet apart from each other. Changes have been made to furniture and classroom layouts to facilitate social distancing in the classrooms.

Will seating arrangements in class be fixed?

Students are asked to sit in the same spot during each class meeting to help facilitate contact tracing, should it be necessary.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

Will attendance policies be modified to encourage students to stay home if they feel ill or have been exposed?

Students who feel ill should stay home and should notify their professors that they will be absent from class. Students who have been exposed to or diagnosed with COVID-19 should follow the protocols for self-quarantine. In either case, students are encouraged to join their classes remotely if their health permits. The Institute's usual absence policy (see the Student Handbook) will be modified for students in these cases.

How will comps and other program-level exams be affected by the new safety measures?

Comprehensive exams and other program-level exams can be administered virtually to comply with health and safety guidelines, or they could be administered in person if conducted in a classroom with sufficient space for social distancing. For program-wide exams (e.g., M.T.S. Comprehensive Exams, Ph.D. Foundational Works Exams), the format will be announced well in advance. For individually scheduled exams (e.g., thesis defenses, Ph.D. Qualifying Exams), students should consult the Program Advisor during scheduling.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR

How will the academic calendar be adjusted in response to COVID-19?

Classes are starting one week earlier than previously planned, on August 24, and in-person instruction will end at Thanksgiving break. The week between Thanksgiving and final exams will serve as a reading period to prepare for exams, complete final papers, and allow for any needed make-up classes or other activities. Final exams will take place on Dec. 7 and Dec. 9 to 12, and all exams will be virtual. The [Academic Calendar](#) will have an Administrative Monday, on Oct. 13. The Academic Calendar has been adjusted with revised dates for add/drop, midterms, withdrawing from classes, etc. to accommodate the earlier start date.

Will the date of Orientation also be adjusted?

Orientation for all students actively enrolled in coursework will take place on Friday, August 21.

What should I do if I won't be available to start classes on August 24 as I already have my tickets to come later? Or if I'm returning from abroad and need to self-quarantine for 2 weeks and won't be able to be in person on August 24?

Changing the Academic Calendar to an earlier start with remote learning after Thanksgiving was the right decision for the health and well-being of our community. Yet, we know that may cause some hardships for students who were planning a later date to return to campus. If you find yourself in this situation, please plan on doing the following:

- Contact the Program Advisor (M.T.S.: nhealy@johnpaulii.edu; S.T.L., S.T.D., or Ph.D.: dcrawford@johnpaulii.edu) for your degree program immediately to inform the Institute of your situation.

- Contact the Associate Dean (nbagileo@johnpaulii.edu) to request information on joining your classes remotely until you arrive in town.
- Email all of your instructors to let them know you will need to participate remotely for the first week.

ACADEMIC SERVICES

Libraries

Will the library be open on a regular schedule?

The university is planning for [Mullen Library](#) to be open during the fall semester. It has not yet been determined whether Mullen Library will operate on its regular Fall schedule or if there will need to be changes to accommodate physical distancing for library patrons and library staff.

Will occupancy of the library be capped at a certain number?

Seating will be greatly reduced in [Mullen Library](#). At this time the library staff does not anticipate needing to enforce a fixed occupancy limit. In order to support those unable to come into Mullen through the fall semester, the library plans to continue curbside pickup of materials, digitization of print materials on demand, and online instruction & research consultations.

Computer Facilities

Will computer labs be open on a regular schedule?

The public computing in Leahy Hall will be open on its normal schedule, which is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Staff will be on-site and available to assist users with issues between 9 AM and 5PM Monday through Friday.

Academic Support

How will office hours work?

Office hours will be available in person, following the appropriate social distancing and face covering requirements, or online. Please consult your course syllabus for instructions on how to meet with your instructor.

Will the Writing Center be open on a regular schedule?

The CUA Writing Center, which is available to Institute students, will be operating on a regular schedule; however, the shift to virtual services may afford greater flexibility in scheduling to meet student needs. Typical hours of operation can be found on the Center for Academic and Career Success website (success.catholic.edu).

How will academic support services be modified to accommodate social distancing?

All academic support services provided by the Writing Center will be conducted virtually using Google Meet and/or Zoom. Any student who is unable to attend a virtual session for any reason can request an in-person appointment in advance of a scheduled appointment by emailing the Writing Center (cua-writingcenter@cua.edu) or by calling 202-319-5655. Requests for in-person support should be made at least 24 hours in advance.

SOCIAL DISTANCING AND HEALTH MEASURES

Are students required to wear face coverings?

Consistent with the Institute's [Social Distancing Policy](#) and local guidelines and requirements, all members of the Institute community (faculty, staff, and students) are **required to wear face coverings** in all campus buildings when other people are present and while on campus grounds when social distancing cannot be achieved. Violation of this requirement may result in disciplinary action. Exceptions include when eating or drinking or if you have a medical condition that prevents wearing a face covering.

The Institute will provide two washable face coverings to all members of the community, after which individuals will be expected to provide their own face coverings.

Is the Institute implementing social distancing?

Yes. Consistent with the Institute's [Social Distancing Policy](#) and local and federal guidelines and requirements, all members of the University community should practice social distancing. Limiting close face-to-face contact with others is the best way to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing means keeping a safe space between yourself and others. To practice social distancing, stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other others. Social distancing should be practiced in combination with other everyday preventive actions to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including wearing cloth face coverings, avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands, and frequently washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer.

Are students expected to complete a daily health check?

Yes. One of the most important things that we will all need to do each day is monitoring our health, including conducting symptom checks and taking our temperature each day before classes. Students should begin daily symptom checks 14 days before returning to campus. All students should provide their own thermometers to help conduct self-checks. Additionally, students should ensure that they have awareness of the symptoms of COVID-19. A good point of reference is the [CDC Coronavirus site](#).

What other precautions should students take to help stay healthy?

Proper handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself from getting sick. Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community. **Always avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.** Follow these steps to ensure that you have effectively washed your hands:

- Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.

- Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
- Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. You can tell if the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol by looking at the product label.

TRAVEL TO AND AROUND DC

What are the recommendations for using the Metro or travelling in the D.C. area?

It is important to maintain up-to-date awareness of changing conditions and requirements. See the [WMATA Website](#) for information regarding travel on the Metro system. For instance, in mid-May, Metro announced that face coverings are required for all riders. Please check the [DC Reopens website](#) regularly for information from the D.C. government regarding the parameters of each reopening phase and any new regulations or recommendations for the District.

In terms of travel via other means (i.e. trains, planes, etc.) it will be important for students to check with the airline, etc., and maintain up-to-date awareness of changing conditions and requirements. For instance, as of late May, the State of Virginia requires face coverings at Reagan National and Dulles International airports while Baltimore/Washington International Airport in Maryland has both recommendations and requirements for face coverings. Similarly, Amtrak requires face coverings for all customers.

Will parking be available on campus?

Institute student's will be able to purchase a campus parking permit, or they may also park at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine after obtaining a parking permit through the Institute office.