

Guidelines on Face Covering Safety for WKU Faculty (8/18/2021)

Faculty members are in the challenging position of monitoring safety concerns in classrooms in the midst of the COVID-19 Delta variant outbreak. Just as in healthy times, faculty should use reason, good sense, and appropriate flexibility to create safe learning environments and should attempt to calmly de-escalate difficult situations that may arise. [Healthy on the Hill](#) provides extensive guidance on appropriate face coverings and the [Office of Student Conduct](#) (OSC) provides additional information to help manage challenging situations.

How will students know about specific face covering requirements in the classroom?

WKU has created a [standard statement](#) that should be included in all syllabi:

All students are strongly encouraged to [get the COVID-19 vaccine](#). Out of respect for the health and safety of the WKU community and in adherence with CDC guidelines and practices of all public universities and colleges in [Kentucky](#), the University requires that a cloth face covering (reusable or disposable) that covers both the nose and mouth must be worn at all times when in public areas within all buildings. Students must properly wear face coverings while in class regardless of the room size or the nature of the classroom activities. Students who fail to wear a face covering as required will be in violation of the WKU Student Code of Conduct and will be asked to comply or will face disciplinary action, including possible dismissal from the University. Accommodations can be requested in special cases through the Student Accessibility and Resource Center ([SARC](#)): [270-745-5004](#) (voice), [270-745-3030](#) (TTY), or [270-288-0597](#) (video).

All students must immediately report a positive Covid-19 test result or close contact with a person who has tested positive to the Covid-19 Assistance Line at 270-745-2019. The assistance line is available to answer questions regarding any Covid-19 related issue. This guidance is subject to change based on requirements set forth by public health agencies or the office of the governor. Please refer to the Healthy on the Hill website for the most current information. www.wku.edu/healthyonthehill

Can faculty include additional safety protocols?

Yes. Departments in certain disciplines (i.e., arts, sciences) have already worked with [Healthy at Work Officers](#) to create syllabus statement addenda for their units. Individual faculty can add other reasonable requirements to ensure a safe environment. Consult with [Healthy at Work Officers](#) if you would like to add additional measures. The WKU [syllabus statement](#) presents *minimum* safety standards.

What happens if students arrive to class without a face covering?

Faculty members should simply remind students that they forgot to put on their masks. In most cases, students will have one on their person and comply. If not, faculty should ask students to leave the classroom and get a mask from a vending machine, possibly the department office, or their dorm room or car. The faculty member may count this as an unexcused absence.

What should a faculty member do if a student refuses to wear or retrieve a face covering?

Hopefully, these instances will be rare, but if they occur, stay calm. Ask non-compliant students to meet with you in the corridor and remind them that WKU has set clear safety protocols to protect our community. Again, ask them to comply. If they still refuse, ask them to leave the building and inform them that you will follow-up with an email after class. If they still don't comply, dismiss class, email your department head, and document the incident with the [Office of Student Conduct](#) (OSC) via the [Maxient electronic reporting form](#).

What should I say in the email to the student?

Briefly summarize how the student has violated safety protocols and what you did to address the violation. Try to make this an educational opportunity to help ensure future compliance. Let non-compliant students know that they will be dropped from the course if they cannot follow safety protocols. Copy the email to your department head and document with OSC's [electronic reporting form](#).

Can I drop the student from my class for failure to comply?

[The Faculty Handbook](#) (XI.I. Student Behavioral Offenses) provides faculty with latitude if a student behaves in any "activity, which impairs, impedes or obstructs teaching." Every effort should be made to educate non-compliant students and for them to comply with safety protocols. If, however, after one egregious offense (students *refuse* to wear a mask) and they return without a mask, they can be administratively removed from your class. Have a conversation with your department head; then, document the incident and your decision to drop the student in an email to the DH. The DH will execute the drop and notify the student and dean via email and notify OSC via the [electronic reporting form](#).

What if students repeatedly forget the face covering? May I drop them from the course, then?

Again, please make every effort to educate students. This is the protocol:

1. Forget mask 1st time – option to go get mask and return to class
2. Forget mask 2nd time – option to go get mask and return to class with notification email of second violation sent to student and copied DH and dean; complete OSC's [electronic reporting form](#).
3. Forget mask 3rd time – administrative removal from course may be implemented following protocol described above

What will the Office of Student Conduct's role be in this process?

OSC will track non-compliance across the university, educate students about the importance of following protocols, require agreement to follow protocols, enforce disciplinary action, and notify faculty and other reporters of actions and outcomes.

Will students be given accommodations if they have a medical reason for not wearing a mask?

[The Student Accessibility Resource Center](#) (SARC) will assist with any needed accommodations. While students approved for accommodations will be given them, in most cases, students will be shifted to online courses, if available. All students will be required to wear face coverings in class.

What if I see students, faculty, staff or visitors violating safety protocols out of the classroom?

First, politely remind people to put on a mask or say "you must have forgotten your mask." If they forgot, they will likely put one on or they may need to be directed to a vending machine or department office for a face covering. If the person refuses to comply or leave, you may report safety concerns about our community on this [web page](#).

What if a faculty member refuses to wear a face covering in class or public spaces?

This will be rare and unlikely, but if it were to occur, the department head would have a conversation with non-compliant colleagues. The DH would email a summary of the incident to the colleague and dean and indicate that failure to comply at the next or future class meetings will result in removal from the classroom, prorated reduction in pay until the end of the semester, and initiation of proceedings for dismissal for cause as described in the [Faculty Handbook](#).