

Fall 2021 Process for Faculty Work Adjustments

April 15, 2021

This document will be updated. Revisions will be highlighted in yellow and the date updated.

Background

The University has announced a phased return over the summer semester to a full on-campus work environment for fall 2021. This document outlines the expectations for faculty working on-campus during the fall 2021 semester. The Graduate School will be crafting a similar process for graduate student instructors as the fall approaches that will account for both the pandemic status at the time and the University's final approach. The Office of the Senior Vice President for Research is updating its guidance for conducting on-campus, research-related activities.

For instruction, the pandemic temporarily altered expectations for faculty and instructors beginning in spring 2020. As a result, the University implemented COVID instructional modes that provided a range of instructional options for courses. During the fall 2020 and spring 2021 semesters, faculty who had concerns about teaching in person could work with their academic units to offer their courses using any of the four COVID instructional modes. Beginning in fall 2021 and consistent with pre-pandemic curriculum needs, schedules and practices, the University expects faculty to provide in-person rather than remote instruction.

For research, in September 2020, the Office of the Senior Vice President for Research released *Guidelines to Sustaining Safe, Research-Related Activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, which included development of standard operating procedures for each unit: institutes, colleges, and campuses. Those guidelines are currently being updated, where unit leaders will re-visit their existing plans and update them to support increasing on-campus research-related activities.

As we move toward a resumption of full on-campus activities and a return to non-COVID modes of instruction and research, we continue to recognize a need to balance the educational and functional needs of the University with personal and health-related employee concerns. The health and safety of all members of the University community continue to be of utmost concern, and the plans for in-person classes and on-campus research have the flexibility built in to quickly respond to changing pandemic conditions, if necessary. The University will continue to follow any changing recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, and other organizations regarding COVID mitigation efforts such as masking, physical distancing, and enhanced cleaning efforts.

Even with COVID mitigation efforts and the expected widespread availability of vaccines, some individuals may have health-related needs for workplace adjustments.



Process

For fall 2021 semester, the process outlined below is for anticipated requests from faculty who need to request health-related adjustments to their on-site work environment. The process reflects the University's commitment to keeping a faculty member's health concerns confidential, ensuring consistent implementation across the Commonwealth, and providing flexibility given the uncertain course of the pandemic.

If a faculty member or a household member of the faculty member has a health condition that they believe precludes them from teaching in person **or conducting research that needs to be conducted on-campus during** fall semester 2021, then they should complete the Faculty Work Adjustment Request Form and send it to their unit HR Strategic Partner. The faculty member's request should outline the health-related reason(s) why they are unable to teach, **conduct on-campus research**, or perform other duties in person during the fall semester, the nature of the proposed reduction/elimination of in-person activities, and the way(s) in which they propose to perform their full job duties. The HRSP will consult with HRSP leads Jennifer Wilkes and Amanda Jones to ensure consistency of decision-making across units. After review by this team, either the request will be sent to unit academic leaders for further consideration and discussion with the faculty member and a final determination, or the request will be denied and the faculty member and unit executive will be informed by the HRSP who received the request. Faculty members' personal health information will not be shared with the academic unit.

Please note the following:

- Faculty members who are approved by the unit for a work adjustment may not teach or work remotely from another country.
- **Post-docs may request a work adjustment using the process outlined in this document.**
- Additional situations or circumstances may be considered as the fall semester approaches. For example, if K-12 schools were to operate remotely in the fall, faculty may find themselves temporarily unable to teach in person **or conduct on-campus research** and may submit a request for a work adjustment.
- If a faculty member does not agree with the decision regarding the requested work adjustments, then they should contact their unit ombudsperson to facilitate additional discussion.
- Faculty members with documented disabilities still may request reasonable accommodations under the ADA by contacting the University's ADA Coordinator.