

Fall 2021 Academic Affairs Guidance (updated as of 8/9/2021)

- 1. Health and Safety.** As UNCW prepares for the fall 2021 semester with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the university is observing numerous health and safety measures aimed at minimizing interaction impacts of the virus so we can meet the instructional needs of our students. Some of those measures are:
 - Members of the university community should wear face coverings for all indoor activities. Faculty and staff can remove their face coverings if they are alone in an individual office. This guidance is through September 17 (or until additional guidance is provided).
 - Each member of the community should complete their daily health assessment and should not attend in-person activities if they are not feeling well.
 - Transactional workspaces or locations should use Plexiglass dividers as appropriate.
 - In-person activities should be minimized in cases where the activity can be completed virtually.
 - Increased signage throughout the campus should be employed to ensure community awareness.
 - Members of the community should be encouraged to wash their hands.
- 2. Guiding Principle for Faculty and Staff Flexibility.** During the fall semester, we anticipate faculty and staff may experience personal circumstances related to COVID-19 impacts for themselves, their families, or individuals for which they are the primary caregiver. Leaders and supervisors are encouraged to identify flexible work arrangements under these circumstances to enable employees to balance their work responsibilities with their personal situations. These arrangements should be informed by the nature of the work and the potential for faculty or staff success in the alternative arrangement. If a faculty or staff member feels they need to use leave or initiate college/school/department course coverage processes, leaders and supervisors are asked to support their faculty and staff through these decisions.
- 3. Course Modalities.** One of our two key priorities is the high-quality delivery of the curriculum in a manner consistent with its design and our students' needs. In building the fall 2021 schedule, faculty, departments, schools, and colleges identified course teaching modalities to deliver this curriculum. As much as possible, UNCW would like to honor these plans. We also understand that some faculty may have individual circumstances that may result in modality modification requests associated with COVID-19. To that end, guidance to address COVID-19 related modality modification requests has been provided to the deans for dissemination to the department chairs and directors. This guidance attempts to provide clarity and transparency on how course modality change decisions will be made. In all cases, faculty members who wish to discuss their course teaching modality for fall 2021 should contact their department chair/school director as soon as possible. (Note: This guidance only addresses COVID-19 related modality modification requests; department, schools and colleges will continue to manage non-COVID-19 modality modification matters through their standard processes).
- 3. Staff Flexibility.** To minimize the potential interaction impact while we work to maintain the high-quality, student-centered experience that is a hallmark of our campus, leaders and supervisors are encouraged to consider how to provide flexibility for staff in terms of their schedules and work arrangements. We understand that some positions will require on-campus, in-person work to ensure that students receive the UNCW experience. However, some positions can (even if not optimally) temporarily work remotely or work with alternative schedules. In general, we encourage leaders and supervisors to coordinate schedules and activities with their staff to reduce the number of unnecessary personal interactions on campus for the next 4-6 weeks (or until further guidance is shared on this

topic). Strategies to support this effort might include staggered or rotating schedules, virtual or hybrid meetings, and delaying activities that would require in-person interactions. For support in thinking through strategies to provide flexibility to staff, please contact your Dean's or Associate Provost's Office for consultation with the Office of the Provost. Note: Flexibility granted during the next 4 to 6 weeks does not constitute a revision to the supervisor determination of position eligibility for teleworking and/or flexible work schedules.

4. **Open Offices.** While granting flexibility to staff, leaders and supervisors should consider the operational needs of their departments/units with respect to the university operating largely in-person. Each department/unit within Academic Affairs provides support to faculty, staff, and students in different ways. Therefore, as leaders and supervisors contemplate flexibility arrangements, there should be consideration for how in-person support needs for faculty, staff and students will be met. If specific leaders and/or supervisors have questions regarding their operation, please contact your Dean's or Associate Provost's Office for consultation with the Office of the Provost.
5. **Remote v. In-Person Activities.** For the next 4 to 6 weeks, UNCW encourages you to consider the modality of meetings and gatherings that are not directly related to student learning experiences to minimize exposure to the virus. Please use your professional judgment in determining whether an activity requires in-person interaction, and when possible, use Zoom or Teams platforms for meetings or consider delaying in-person meetings for 4-6 weeks.
6. **Research Activities.** Research activities are guided by our existing university guidance for university activities, which requires face coverings while indoors. Although no social distancing is currently required, faculty may rearrange their labs or schedule student activities to minimize contact, as appropriate. Additional questions about research activities can be directed to Dr. Stuart Borrett (borretts@uncw.edu), Associate Provost for Research and Innovation.
7. **Travel.** UNCW has returned to standard travel approval processes for domestic travel. While additional approvals are no longer required for domestic travel, faculty and staff should be cognizant of the COVID-19 situation at their destination and along their route. Additionally, faculty and staff should take appropriate health and safety precautions. All international travel (as well as travel to Hawaii and Alaska) requires additional approval from the Dean/Associate Provost, the Provost, and the Chancellor. Requests for international travel should be routed from the faculty/staff member to their unit head, to the Dean/Associate Provost, and then to AARMResource@uncw.edu for Provost and Chancellor approval. More information about travel can be found at [Travel: UNCW](#). Faculty and staff should contact their Business Officer for questions regarding the travel approval process.
8. **Spending.** The UNC System Office has not lifted the suspension of non-essential spending, thus UNCW continues to function under spending restrictions. Spending should be limited to only essential items and services. Spending approval processes through Chrome River and Ushop remain in place. Please contact your Business Officer for questions related to essential spending.
9. **HR Actions.** Given the lack of an adopted State Budget for FY 2021-22 at this time, Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) issued guidance on continuing budget authority and continued limitations on many types of salary adjustments until further notice. This freeze on certain salary actions is required by G.S. 143C-5-4(5). In addition, the UNC System Office's pause on non-essential HR actions also remains in effect. Under this pause, UNCW is not able to reclassify positions, make market/equity salary adjustments or other discretionary salary actions. Please contact your Business Officer for questions related to HR actions.