

Tuesday, November 17, 2020

News for Faculty and Instructors: Penn State and COVID-19

This twice-weekly email is designed to provide faculty and instructors with Penn State's pandemic-related news and updates during the Fall 2020 semester. Watch for these emails on Tuesdays and Fridays, with additional "special editions" delivered periodically. Previous faculty news digests are [archived here](#). For current Fall 2020 faculty guidance, resources, FAQ documents, and more visit the ["Back to State Info for Faculty"](#) webpage.

FAQ Roundup: Below is a summary of FAQs related to the November 20 student departure from campuses and transition to remote learning.

Access to Facilities and Classrooms:

- [Will instructors be able to use their classrooms after November 20 when the University moves to remote instruction?](#)
- [Will in-person student research continue after November 20?](#)
- [Will graduate courses continue to be taught in person after November 20?](#)

Testing, Quarantine, and Isolation:

- [What is the status of walk-up virus testing at University Park?](#)
- [Will Penn State continue to offer quarantine and isolation for students who test positive and need to stay past November 20?](#)
- [What if I test positive before I'm scheduled to depart campus?](#)
- [What testing will be available for students who remain on campuses past November 20, especially during the week of Thanksgiving?](#)

Departure and Travel:

- [I am an international student planning to return to my home country. What steps do I need to take?](#)
- [How will departure from campus residence halls proceed after the conclusion of the in-person portion of the fall semester on November 20?](#)
- [What should students take with them when leaving the residence halls on November 20?](#)
- [Should I travel internationally during the upcoming remote period or the semester break?](#)

QUESTION FROM FACULTY

Q: *Where can I find answers to my questions about alternative grading?*

A: Alternative grading will be implemented for the fall 2020 semester to serve as a safety net for undergraduate students who encounter significant challenges that impede their academic goals due to circumstances beyond their control. The [keep teaching website contains more information and FAQs](#) about alternative grading, including how

students enter their elections for alternative grading, how financial aid might be affected, and whether faculty should encourage students to elect or not to elect alternative grading for a particular course.

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- Penn State's [COVID-19 dashboard](#) has been updated today with the [results of on-demand and random testing](#) from the period of November 13 to 15, as well as new University testing results from the prior week.
- In preparation for the departure from campuses after in-person instruction ends on November 20, [Penn State has announced an aggressive fall departure plan](#) offering all students COVID-19 testing, at no cost to students.
- In a presentation to the Board of Trustees at its Friday (Nov. 13) virtual meeting, President Eric Barron revisited [University actions related to the pandemic](#) that have been taken in key institutional areas, as well as new strategies for moving forward in response to the pandemic.
- To accommodate vehicle loading near student residence areas for fall semester departure, a [number of parking, traffic, and transit adjustments](#) will be in place beginning Friday, November 20 through Sunday, November 22.
- Kim Robson, lecturer in music at Penn State Abington, [organized a fall "unconcert"](#) for the Abington concert band, chamber singers, and campus choirs, staged outdoors and featuring personal amplification devices and special masks for each performer.

WEBINARS

- Upcoming webinars for instructors at all Penn State campuses include:
 - Wednesday, November 18, 4:00-6:00 p.m., [Ask the Experts: Virtual Office Hours](#)
 - Thursday, November 19, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., [Ask the Experts: Virtual Office Hours](#)
 - Thursday, November 19, 12:00-1:00 p.m., [Adapting Assessments to Promote Academic Integrity](#)

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- Penn State is [reimplementing its opt-in alternative grading system](#) for the fall 2020 semester. For the fall 2020 semester, undergraduate students will be able to choose to keep the grade earned in each of their courses, or to have one or more grades replaced with one of three alternative grades that have no impact on GPA calculation.

- A [resource has been developed for instructors who are teaching asynchronously](#), such as World Campus or COVID-Web courses, to incorporate Wellness Days into these modes for Spring 2021. The resource provides practical ideas for addressing wellness with students.
- [Students who are studying outside of the U.S. may encounter problems obtaining instructional materials](#) such as textbooks, lab kits, and technology necessary to be successful in their courses. A cross-university team has developed a set of solutions for instructors to help ensure students have access to these materials in a timely manner.
- The [recorded November 10 webinar with President Eric Barron](#) is now available to view online at <https://liveevents.psu.edu/nov-10-2020-webinar>. Joining Barron for the webinar were Damon Sims, vice president for Student Affairs, and Kelly Wolgast, director of the COVID-19 Operations Control Center.
- After nine months of social distancing, masking and quarantining, [many are experiencing pandemic fatigue](#). Whether it manifests as anxiety, exhaustion or defiance, it's important to recognize and address it for the sake of our physical and emotional health.
- Penn State Human Resources, in partnership with Health Advocate, has announced a [three-pronged approach for the 2020 flu vaccine clinics](#) throughout the commonwealth. Employees can choose one of three options to get a flu shot.
- [Faculty can still submit questions](#) related to Penn State's return to classrooms this fall. Questions may be submitted [here](#).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To obtain comprehensive, updated information at any time, please review:

- The University's comprehensive resources on its ["Back to State" page](#) and [updated FAQs](#) regarding on-campus work and learning this fall
- Penn State's ["Keep Teaching"](#) and ["Keep Learning"](#) websites, including many [Fall 2020 instruction-related FAQs](#) and [new webinars](#)
- Penn State's [COVID-19 dashboard](#)
- The online archive of [video messages](#) from Penn State leaders and experts
- The [Office of Human Resources COVID-19 information site](#) and ["Return to Work on Campus"](#) resource site
- The ["University Measures" webpage](#), which summarizes steps Penn State is taking in response to COVID-19
- The University's [health information page focused on personal safety practices](#) for individuals at all campuses

- A robust, updated [list of contacts and resources](#) for the University community
- The Social Science Research Institute [website featuring pandemic-related insights from University experts](#) and other resources