



Office of the Vice Provost
for Faculty Affairs
The Pennsylvania State University
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Spring 2022 Process for Faculty Work Adjustments

October 14, 2021

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

Background

This document outlines the expectations for faculty working on-campus during the spring 2022 semester. The Graduate School will be crafting a similar process for graduate student instructors. The Office of the Senior Vice President for Research is updating its guidance for conducting on-campus, research-related activities.

The pandemic temporarily altered instructional 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 and instructors 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. For the 2021-2022 academic year and consistent with pre-pandemic curriculum needs, schedules and practices, the COVID instructional modes were discontinued and the expectation is that faculty will provide instruction consistent with the instructional mode specified in LionPATH. Recognizing that even with COVID mitigation efforts and the widespread availability of vaccines, some individuals may have health-related needs for workplace adjustments, a “work adjustment” process was implemented for fall 2021 that allowed faculty to request to teach remotely for health-related reasons. The Penn State community has embraced Penn State’s COVID-19 health and safety standards by wearing masks in instructional spaces and either providing evidence of vaccination or participating in weekly testing. Regardless, some of our community continue to have health-related needs for workplace adjustments and thus, this process will also be available for the spring 2022 semester.

The health and safety of all members of the University community continue to be of utmost concern, and 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.

Criteria

We continue to recognize a need to balance the educational and functional needs of the University with personal and health-related employee concerns. For the spring 2022 semester, requests to teach remotely (i.e., work adjustment requests) will be approved if the applicant meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. Faculty member or immediate household member is immunocompromised;

2. Faculty member or immediate household member cannot be vaccinated because of a medical condition (excludes children too young to be vaccinated), and the faculty member has been granted a medical exemption from any applicable vaccine requirement;
3. Faculty member has a child age 24 months or younger;
4. Faculty member has a child age 2-11 who has a condition that puts them at high risk for severe illness or complications from COVID.

Requests must be COVID-related. Generally, requests where the faculty member or household member is vaccinated AND where being vaccinated significantly reduces the faculty member's, or a household member's, risk of getting COVID or becoming seriously ill from COVID will not be approved.

Process

For the spring 2022 semester, the process outlined below 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.

There are two pathways for faculty to obtain a work adjustment for spring 2022:

Pathway 1:

Faculty and instructors with an existing, approved work adjustment for fall 2021 may complete [this form](#) to indicate whether they would like an extension of their work adjustment through the spring 2022 semester. Forms must be submitted by no later than October 29, 2021; faculty members who do not submit a form will be considered to have declined a work adjustment for spring 2022. If you no longer meet at least one of the criteria listed above, it is expected that you will not request an extension of your work adjustment. Upon receipt of the form with affirmation that the faculty member wants to extend their work adjustment, the work adjustment will be approved and the faculty member, their HR Strategic Partner (HRSP), the unit executive (dean/chancellor), and the academic unit head (department head/school director/division head/director of academic affairs) will be notified.

Pathway 2:

Faculty and instructors who do not have an existing, approved work adjustment for fall 2021 and who meet at least one of the criteria described above may request a work adjustment for spring 2022 by completing the [Faculty Work Adjustment Request Form](#). This form must be submitted to their unit HR Strategic Partner by no later than October 29, 2021. The faculty member's request must outline the health-related reason(s) why they are unable to teach, conduct on-campus research, or perform other duties in person during the spring semester and the way(s) in which they propose to perform their full job duties. The HRSP will consult with the work adjustment review team (see members below). 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. The review team will consult with a team of medical professionals from Penn State Health as needed to aid in decision-making.



Please note the following:

- If a faculty member is approved for a work adjustment, then all teaching must take place remotely (remote synchronous or remote asynchronous instructional mode). A faculty member may not, for example, teach via a hybrid course mode (both in-person and remote) or teach one course in person and another remotely.
- This process is separate from any vaccine requirements announced by the University at University Park and other campuses. Even if you are granted a work adjustment, you still must comply with any applicable vaccine requirements.
- If a faculty member is approved for a work adjustment, then the expectation is that they will not come to campus for meetings, events, or to conduct research, and that they will not travel on behalf of the University during the semester. Work adjustments are considered to be effective until the last day of spring semester 2022, i.e., Friday, May 6, 2022. If a faculty member with a work adjustment plans to participate in any of these activities, then they must first make a request to their unit executive (dean/chancellor).
- Faculty members who are approved 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.
- If a faculty member does not agree with the decision regarding the requested work adjustments, then they may resubmit the request with additional information, or may contact their unit ombudsperson to facilitate additional discussion.
- This process cannot accommodate requests that are unrelated to the global pandemic. Faculty members with documented disabilities may request reasonable accommodations under the ADA by contacting the University's ADA Coordinator.

Deadline for submission of a new work adjustment request is October 29, 2021. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be accepted unless the faculty member experiences a significant change in their medical condition or the condition of an immediate family member. If you experience such a change, please contact your HRSP immediately to discuss next steps.

Work Adjustment Review Team:

Katherine Allen, Office of General Council

Abby Diehl, Assistant Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs

Amanda Jones, Senior Director, Human Resources

Jennifer Wilkes, Assistant Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses

Kathleen Bieschke, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (ex-officio)

Alan Finnecy, ADA Coordinator, Affirmative Action Office (ex-officio)