

UTEP Plan for Instructional Activities

Spring 2021

This resource is intended to help instructors structure and offer courses in ways that will prioritize health and safety and provide a learning environment that will enable students to succeed.

UTEP’s approach for resuming campus operation is based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and takes into account the health conditions in El Paso (see [this webpage](#) for more information). If health conditions in our region change, the extent of campus activities may also change.

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NOTE: These guidelines are in addition to and DO NOT supersede any procedures implemented by The University of Texas at El Paso or The University of Texas System for the phased return of students, faculty, and staff to the UTEP campus.

President Wilson's Message on the Spring Semester

Although we are hopeful for a new normal in the summer, we expect to start the spring semester with the same mask, social distancing, and remote work requirements we have had on campus for the fall semester.

However, we believe there will likely come a point in the spring semester when we can start more meaningful campus activities. We cannot “toggle” classes from asynchronous distance learning to a classroom with a specific time. Even so, we will be able to expand our engagement with students, do more co-curricular activities, engage more students in research, and enjoy the pleasure of each other's company again.

UTEP will plan for increasing activities on campus the week after Spring Break – March 22 – with further expansion of activities after Easter weekend, starting April 5. Although classes should remain in the format designated in the spring schedule, each leader should work with their teams to begin developing plans for your area. We will have to stay agile as things could change rapidly.

As more people become vaccinated, we can and should do more together in ways that improve our teaching, our research, and our engagement with our students and campus community.

UTEP Policies

UTEP has established policies to help protect the health of our community and make our campus safe. All instructors must know and understand these policies when preparing and offering courses.

The UTEP [Temporary Health and Safety Policy](#) requires all faculty, staff, and students to follow these guidelines:

- **Stay at home** if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test.
- **Report** (screening.utep.edu) if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test.
- **Complete screening questions** (screening.utep.edu) every day before coming to campus and follow instructions provided.
- While on campus:
 - **wear face coverings** when in common areas or when others are present;
 - maintain a minimum **separation of six (6)** feet between yourself and others when possible, and arrange spaces to make this possible in almost all circumstances;

- **adhere to room/space limitations** on number of occupants; and
- **wash and/or sanitize hands** frequently.

The [Guidance for Resuming Campus Operations](#) calls for work/safety plans for all on-campus activities. If you have a course with face-to-face components, you can satisfy this work/safety plan for your course by:

- **Syllabus Option:** following the guidance within this document and e-mailing your syllabus to your department chair or director, or
- **Work/Safety Plan Option:** e-mailing your own work/safety plan to your department chair (along with the syllabus) for approval.

Department chairs/directors are responsible for reviewing syllabi and work/safety plans for all courses that have organized on-campus activities. Following review and approval, department chairs must submit a single document through our [electronic approval system](#) that lists all organized courses that have on-campus activities. This list must indicate whether each course either adheres to the Syllabus Option or the Work/Safety Plan Option. Department chairs must maintain electronic copies of all syllabi and work/safety plans so these can be reviewed if necessary. Syllabi and work/safety plans are not required for non-organized courses that use one-on-one instructional methods (e.g., independent studies, thesis, and dissertation).

Vaccinations

UTEP is in the process of becoming a COVID-19 vaccine provider for faculty, staff, and students under the Texas vaccination program. We have the facilities and trained healthcare professionals needed to conduct a safe vaccination program for ourselves.

While vaccines will be in very short supply in the early weeks after FDA approval, we expect supply will increase rapidly in January and February.

We encourage you to get vaccinated as soon as you are eligible for vaccinations. Please also encourage students in your class to get vaccinations. If faculty, staff, and students are eligible for vaccination through their doctor or another health care provider, please do not delay in using those resources.

Planning Your Course

Instructional approaches vary tremendously, and we are confident that instructors know what works well for their own classes. However, as you prepare and offer classes, carefully review all class policies and procedures to ensure that:

- ***Class policies and procedures do not conflict with, or create incentives that conflict with, university policies.*** Approaches that have worked well in the past may create complications in our current situation. For example, some instructors do not allow students to take exams after the scheduled class exam and allow students to drop one exam (to help with unforeseen events that cause students to miss an exam). Although this policy may work well in normal circumstances, it has the potential to pressure students to take an exam when feeling unwell and/or after exposure to COVID-19. It is common for students to not do well on the first exam. If this occurs, a student may not want to miss another exam and may come to campus when they should not (e.g., because they have COVID-19 symptoms). Therefore, students may risk their own or others' health.

All instructors should carefully review class policies to ensure that they do not create incentives that might lead students to put their own or others' health in danger. Given our current circumstances, it is better to have as much flexibility as possible and to include alternative and creative methods to determine students' knowledge of the subject matter.

- ***There is a plan for reasonable accommodations for students who may be limited by their circumstances.*** Although vaccinations are on the way, a number of students will still require accommodations as we deal with COVID-19 whether they are enrolled in classes that are entirely online, completely face-to-face, or hybrid. Students who are taking classes online may not have a good computer or may have intermittent internet access. Students who are taking on-campus classes may not be allowed on campus for a week or two because they are required to self-isolate. Students may become ill and need time to rest and recover.

All situations are unique, but it will likely save time in the long run to think about different class requirements and potential accommodations that can be employed if necessary. Provide guidance in your syllabus as to how students should notify you of their situations. If a student contacts you due to a positive COVID-19 test, exposure or symptoms, inform the student that they **must** report this to screening.utep.edu. Please work with the student, as appropriate, to help them successfully complete relevant course requirements. If you have questions about a student's status, you can contact the Dean of Students' Office.

- ***There is a plan to adjust the method of delivery if health conditions change, and UTEP changes the recovery level (e.g., move from low density operations to medium density campus operations).*** UTEP is using a staged approach to campus recovery that is based on guidance from the CDC. If health conditions in El Paso improve, this may allow for more in-person activities and fewer restrictions (e.g., larger gatherings). If health

conditions in El Paso deteriorate, there may be additional restrictions on in-person activities.

All instructors should think about how changes in [UTEP's recovery level](#) might impact course activities and make contingency plans. This is especially important for courses that include on-campus activities (including non-organized one-on-one courses), but may also impact courses that are completely online if course aspects require students to come to campus (e.g., to use library or computer resources).

- ***Make sure your courses, no matter the format, support student success.*** Feedback from students in the fall suggest that the following practices are essential for student success: (1) following the format and meeting times (if appropriate) designated in the Goldmine schedule, (2) making sure grades are available in a clear and timely manner, (3) offering synchronous office hours and other live “touch points” for students to engage with you and others, (4) responding to student emails within a timely manner, and so on.

Guidelines for All Classes

1. Faculty Responsibilities

- Complete self-screening (screening.utep.edu) prior to every campus visit.
- Inform students that they are required to complete self-screening (screening.utep.edu) prior to every campus visit. You should provide this information even if your course is entirely online because students may come to campus for other reasons (e.g., library, computer or internet access).
- Have a backup plan for instruction in the event that you become ill or must self-isolate.
- Verify that you have the ability to provide accommodations to students who might miss class, assignments, or exams because of COVID-19. When possible, discuss accommodations in syllabi.
- Include a COVID-19 statement(s) for classroom/lab/studio preventive policies in the syllabus and/or other official course documents (see below).
- Encourage students to complete the COVID-19 student training at [this site](#).
- Post each course syllabus on Digital Measures as soon as possible. This will facilitate compliance with state law (HB 2504) and allow students to assess their ability to meet course requirements.
- Post the course syllabus; course calendar; and course gradebook, at a minimum, in Blackboard. This will ensure all students have one place to access course items and enables UTEP to support students, faculty development, program integrity, and ADA

- compliance. This will help students who must self-isolate if they or a family member become ill. In addition, if there is another stay-home order, these courses will have a structure in place to allow the course to continue without significant interruption.
- Provide clear guidance in your syllabus regarding the number of “required meetings,” which might include synchronous online meetings, classroom meetings, exams, and so on.
 - If your class requires the use of UTEP’s face-to-face exam proctoring service, visit the [Registration and Records](#) website to reserve a date and time at the El Paso Natural Gas Building.
 - Work to ensure that your class meets the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. FERPA requires protection of educational records, including class recordings that contain personally identifiable information such as student images and voice recordings.
 - Please review carefully the [Online Learning and Student Privacy resource](#) prepared by the University of Texas System Online Education Task Force.
 - In order to protect student privacy, only University-approved platforms, including Blackboard, may be used to create and post recordings. Noncontracted platforms may not be used. If students or faculty members have questions about FERPA compliance, they may contact the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services and the Registrar.

2. Student responsibilities (these should be mentioned in syllabus)

- Complete self-screening (screening.utep.edu) prior to every campus visit.
- Complete COVID-19 student training at [this site](#).
- Contact instructor if temporary accommodations due to COVID-19 are needed (i.e., due to positive COVID-19 test, symptoms, or exposure).
- If unable to wear a face covering (e.g., medical reasons), the best course of action is to enroll in courses that are entirely online or to work with academic advisors, if necessary, to identify alternative courses. If this is not possible, request an accommodation from [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#) (CASS) prior to coming to campus for in-person activities. Students who receive an accommodation to not wear a face covering must share this with the professor and work to minimize contact with others in the class.

Guidelines for Fully Online Classes

Fully online classes should follow the guidelines in this section and those in the section [Guidelines for All Classes](#).

1. Faculty Responsibilities

- Use Blackboard as the primary platform for online instructional activities (in addition to course syllabus, course calendar, and course gradebook). This enables UTEP to support students, faculty development, program integrity, and ADA compliance. Adaptive courseware, or other software program links, should reside in your Blackboard shell along with some form of authentic engagement between the student and instructor.
- Consider challenges that students may have with technology, time conflicts, and quiet space to work that could interfere with synchronous sessions. It is recommended that:
 - Faculty provide nonsynchronous alternatives (such as recordings or transcripts of sessions).
 - Faculty not use synchronous sessions for high stakes attendance or assessments, where possible. Rather, consider opening tests for 48-72 hours and allowing students to complete within a time limit of their choosing.
 - Faculty use test proctoring software only for high stakes assessments.
 - Webcams be reserved for situations where it is absolutely necessary to the pedagogy of the course.
- Adhere to the following for all synchronous sessions:
 - ADA guidelines.
 - Limit sessions to the scheduled time indicated in the Goldmine schedule.
 - Notify students if the session will be recorded.
- Provide flexibility for those students who may become ill or need to take care of others who become ill. Even though the course is online, students may experience COVID-19 related impediments.

Guidelines for In-Person Instruction

Every class that uses in-person instruction should follow the guidelines in this section and those in the section [Guidelines for All Classes](#).

To help maintain a safe campus, UTEP policy requires work/safety plans for all campus activity, including classes that have in-person components, until we reach “Open Campus” on UTEP’s recovery matrix. Please see the section titled [UTEP Policies](#) above for discussion of work/safety plans.

1. Faculty Responsibilities

- Review general COVID-19 preventive measures and other course requirements during the first in-person meeting. You are welcome to use the [student training video](#) and discuss in your class. Even for continuing students, the training can serve as an excellent refresher of policies and protocols in place.
- Periodically remind students of the safety requirements when meeting in person.
- Ensure that university signage is present in the classroom (call 747-PETE if signage is missing).
- When possible, collect projects electronically through Blackboard and/or email (do not require that students submit projects on paper).
- Consider using a seating chart and taking attendance each day to facilitate contact tracing if a student or faculty tests positive for COVID-19.
- Consider dismissing your class by rows or sections to avoid bottlenecks at the exits.
- Discuss procedures for leaving and re-entering the classroom *during the class* so all attendees know what to expect regarding student movement in the classroom (e.g., not lingering close to another individual while moving through classroom).
- Ensure that you can provide accommodations if students are not allowed to come to campus. It is essential for everyone’s safety that students who are instructed to remain home not feel compelled to come to class for an assignment.
- If teaching in Physical Sciences 115 and 208, Quinn 208, and UGLC 106, 116, 126, and 128, contact Erika Villegas at evillegas3@utep.edu for instructions on utilizing the attendance data portal.
- Participate [UTEP’s COVID testing program](#) and get tested according to the schedule and guidance provided throughout the semester
- Strongly encourage students to participate in [UTEP’s COVID testing program](#) and test regularly.

2. Student Responsibilities (these should be mentioned in syllabus)

- Complete self-screening (screening.utep.edu) prior to every campus visit.
- Wear a face covering at all times.
- Maintain 6 feet of separation at all times, including when talking with other students.
- Participate in [UTEP’s COVID testing program](#)

- Follow signage indicating specific entry and exit doors and pathways.
- Do not cluster in groups and keep hallways open.
- Wash hands and/or apply hand sanitizer prior to entering classroom and after leaving a classroom. Do not touch face until after hands are washed/sanitized.
- Use an alcohol wipe, provided outside of classrooms, to sanitize the desk, chair, or table.
- Follow faculty protocols for leaving and re-entering the classroom.

Guidelines for Lab and Studio Instructional Activities

More vigilance is required for labs and studios because activities in these classes typically involve students moving around and using shared equipment. In addition to the guidelines outlined in the [Guidelines for All Classes](#) and [Guidelines for In-Person Instruction](#) sections, safety measures for labs and studio spaces include:

1. Faculty Responsibilities

- Establish and communicate clear schedules for student use of labs/studios (by email, Blackboard, and/or posting the schedules in the lab/studio).
- Ensure students use protective safety equipment when entering lab/studio space.
- Maintain contact information for users of shared lab/studio equipment (if applicable).
- Provide demonstrations on Blackboard or a digital projector if possible in order to limit close-quarter demonstrations.
- Establish lab/studio supervision to oversee student use outside of assigned class times as necessary. Consult with the space steward and/or department chair prior to announcing the additional times to students.

2. Lab/Studio Guidelines

- Leave doors open to promote airflow if feasible, unless advised not to do so by Environmental Health and Safety.
- Clear the room of non-essential tools and equipment.
- Ensure no more than one person at a time is working in a limited space such as a hood, glove box, sink area, safety cabinet, or small room.
- Clean/sanitize shared tools, equipment, and materials with CDC-approved solutions.
- Contact department chair or appropriate classroom/lab/space/studio manager if additional cleaning supplies are required.

Guidelines for One-on-One Instruction

The type of one-on-one instruction varies considerably across and even within disciplines – some instruction may be entirely online whereas others will be comparable to lab/studio classes. Faculty engaged in one-on-one instruction should review the section or sections of this document that most closely match the type of one-on-one instruction in which they will be engaged and follow those guidelines.

One-on-one instruction that involves on-campus activities must adhere to all university policies describe in the [UTEP Policies](#) section (i.e., completing screening questions before coming to campus, wearing face coverings, 6- feet separation, etc.).

Whenever possible, one-on-one instruction (e.g., student meetings for dissertation, thesis, independent research, independent study, and independent lessons) should be conducted using a virtual platform. We recommend using platforms supported by the university (Blackboard, MS Teams, etc.), but any platform may be used, provided that appropriate accommodations are in place for ADA compliance and that it does not place extra burden on students (e.g., require them to purchase license to use the platform).

All research activity requires work/safety plans to be submitted to the Vice President of Research, and these work/safety plans should address one-on-one instructional activities that involve research.

Non-Compliance with In-person Instruction Safety Guidelines

All syllabi for a course with any in-person instructional components should include a statement regarding non-compliance with preventive COVID-19 guidelines. Some students may claim that they are unable to wear a face covering. The best course of action for these students is to identify equivalent courses offered entirely online. If this is not possible, the student should be advised to request an accommodation from [CASS](#). Students who receive an accommodation to not wear a face covering must share this with the professor and work to minimize contact with others in the class.

If a student fails to follow COVID-19 guidelines, faculty should:

- Remind the student of UTEP and class policy.
- If the student does not comply, remind them of the consequences for non-compliance (i.e., dismissal from the course and submitting a report to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution, OSCCR](#)).
- If the student remains unwilling to comply, ask them to leave the classroom immediately.

- If the situation becomes unmanageable, faculty may call UTEP Campus Police for assistance. Campus Police will inform the student of the policy and encourage the student to wear a face covering or leave class immediately. In the event of class dismissal, Campus Police will document the situation and inform the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.
- Faculty may also determine that dismissing the class is the best resolution.

When faculty encounter a pattern of non-compliant safety behavior, a report can be submitted to OSCCR by using the [Incident Reporting Form](#).

Sample Language for Syllabi

The sections below are samples to help you prepare your syllabi. We strongly recommend that you include the ideas expressed in the paragraphs below in your syllabi. You are welcome to use these versions or alter them to match your approach.

Syllabus Statement Regarding COVID-19 Precautions:

(all **classes**) You must STAY AT HOME and REPORT if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test. Reports should be made at screening.utep.edu. If you know anyone who should report any of these three criteria, encourage them to report. If the individual cannot report, you can report on their behalf by sending an email to COVIDaction@utep.edu.

(all **classes**) For each day that you attend campus—for any reason—you must complete the questions on the UTEP screening website (screening.utep.edu) prior to arriving on campus. The website will verify if you are permitted to come to campus. Under no circumstances should anyone come to class when feeling ill or exhibiting any of the known COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, and alternative instruction will be provided. Students are advised to minimize the number of encounters with others to avoid infection.

(all **classes**) Wear face coverings when in common areas of campus or when others are present. You must wear a face covering over your nose and mouth at all times in this class. If you cannot wear a face mask for medical reasons, please let me know ahead of time to discuss accommodations. If you choose not to wear a face covering, you may not enter the classroom. If you remove your face covering, you will be asked to put it on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear a face covering and follow preventive COVID-19 guidelines will be dismissed from the class and will be subject to disciplinary action according to Section 1.2.3 *Health and Safety* and Section 1.2.2.5 *Disruptions* in the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures.

Please note that if COVID-19 conditions deteriorate in the City of El Paso, all course and lab activities may be transitioned to remote delivery.

Syllabus Statement Regarding COVID-19 Accommodations:

(classes with on-campus meetings) Students are not permitted on campus when they have a positive COVID-19 test, exposure or symptoms. If you are not permitted on campus, you should contact me as soon as possible so we can arrange necessary and appropriate accommodations.

Students who are considered high risk according to CDC guidelines and have an ongoing medical condition and/or those who live with individuals who are considered high risk who also have an ongoing medical condition may contact [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#) (CASS) to discuss temporary accommodations for on-campus courses and activities. Apply at cassportal.utep.edu and fill out a three-question application. You will be scheduled to meet with disability coordinator to discuss your unique situation.

It is important that you participate in [UTEP's COVID testing program](#) and monitor your e-mail for regular testing notices. Knowing your status is vital to taking care of yourself and protecting the health of others around you.