



MEDICAL SCHOOL POLICY

Face-to-Face Learning Activities Impacted by COVID-19

Senior Leader: Medical School Dean

Responsible University Officer: Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education

Policy Owner: Office of Student Affairs, Twin Cities and Duluth

Policy Contact: Michael Kim, MD, (612) 625-5180, mikekim@umn.edu

Robin Michaels, PhD, (218) 726-8872, rmichael@d.umn.edu

POLICY STATEMENT

University of Minnesota Medical School (UMMS) students must take precautions to protect patients, healthcare providers, faculty, staff, and other learners and to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

Students must be provided excused absences from face-to-face learning environments, including direct clinical care, if diagnosed with COVID-19. Students who fit this category should seek medical evaluation promptly.

Students may also be granted excused absences from face-to-face learning activities if they are at high risk of complications, have household contacts who are at high risk, or have significant personal concern regarding the general risks of COVID-19.

Every effort will be made to provide accommodations and to minimize the impact of any absence on academic progress and graduation date for students who need to take absences due to COVID-19. Based on current procedures and restrictions due to COVID-19, students unable to complete required activities may be required to take an Incomplete (I) or withdrawal (W) as determined by the Course Director and may require taking a Leave of Absence (LOA).

Given that the application of this policy may result in the need to share protected health information (PHI), students are directed to work with their academic advisor or Dean of Student Affairs (Twin Cities Campus) or Robin Michaels (Duluth Campus) rather than directly with the course or clerkship directors. The academic advisors will then contact the course managers, clerkship coordinators, and/or course director as needed without revealing PHI whenever possible.

REASON FOR POLICY

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a highly contagious virus. COVID-19 symptoms can range from mild (or no symptoms) to severe illness.

The UMMS needs to minimize the spread of COVID-19 by UMMS students in the learning environment and to protect students, especially those who are at higher risk of complications from infection, from contracting the illness.

Students still need to successfully complete all requirements within a given course or clerkship and meet all requirements for academic progression and graduation, with or without reasonable accommodations. When a student is unable to meet the goals and objectives due to excused absences, it will be at the discretion of the Course Director to determine how requirements can be met, either during or after the completion of the course. Extended time after the completion of the course may result in an Incomplete (I). Students may be required to Withdraw (W) from the course in the event the Course Director determines such activities cannot be reasonably completed during or after the course. In these cases, the student will be required to reschedule the course, in its entirety.

PROCEDURES

I. General activities for all students

It is the professional responsibility for all students to take precautions to protect themselves and the community from COVID-19 by following guidelines of the Campus Public Health Officer of the University of Minnesota, the site of their course, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Minnesota Department of Health including practicing social distancing at all time and universal masking if unvaccinated or partially vaccinated, daily self-assessment for symptoms and not coming to work when ill, hand hygiene practices, travel restrictions, and site requirements for personal protective equipment.

Students in face-to-face learning environments, including direct clinical care, should:

Unvaccinated and Partially Vaccinated

- Follow the guidelines from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/>, and the Center for Disease Control <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Must use an acceptable face covering when on University property and in the on campus learning environment. See [University Face Covering Protocol](#)
- May not directly treat patients who are known to currently have COVID-19 and/or who are unknown in their COVID-19 status
- Use mass transit with appropriate precautions including wearing a mask and using social distancing (<https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/stay-safe-mn.jsp>)
- Check their temperatures twice daily, before and after participation
- Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 daily, including fever > 100⁰ F, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell or other less common symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea

Fully Vaccinated

- Follow the guidelines from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/>, and the Center for Disease Control <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Must use an acceptable face covering when on University property and in the on campus learning environment. See [University Face Covering Protocol](#)
- May offer direct care and see patients who have COVID-19
 - Students must follow clinical site guidelines if differ
 - Students have the option to opt out of seeing COVID-19 patients. Vaccinated students must let their site know if they choose to opt out.
- Use mass transit with appropriate precautions including wearing a mask and using social distancing (<https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/stay-safe-mn.jsp>)
- Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 daily, including fever > 100⁰ F, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell or other less common symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea

II. Students who test positive for COVID-19

1. Students must follow the guidelines from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) at <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html> including self-quarantine and seeking appropriate medical care.
2. To begin making modifications and/or course schedule changes students must:

Duluth Campus

- In pre-clerkship courses, years 1 and 2, notify the Associate Dean of Student Life and Academic Affairs, Dr. Robin Michaels (rmichael@d.umn.edu)

Twin Cities Campus

- For all pre-clerkship and clerkship courses, students will notify their assigned Academic Advisor

3. Duration of isolation and precautions
 - a. For most persons with COVID-19 illness, isolation and precautions can generally be discontinued 5 days after symptom onset and resolution of fever for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, and with improvement of other symptoms.
 - i. A test-based strategy is no longer recommended
 - ii. For a limited number of persons with severe illness or those who are severely immunocompromised a prolonged quarantine may be required and testing needed to confirm clearance of the virus. These individuals should have consultation with an infectious diseases expert prior to returning
 - iii. Where rules and guidelines established by a clinical site differ from those set by the MDH, students must follow those rules and regulations set by the clinical site
 - iv. Students participating in a clinical rotation must check with their supervisor on appropriateness of seeing any individual patient upon return to clinic post COVID
 - b. For persons who never develop symptoms, isolation and other precautions can be discontinued 5 days after the date of their first positive result.
 - c. For persons who develop new symptoms consistent with COVID-19 during the 3 months after the date of initial symptom onset, if an alternative etiology cannot be identified by a provider, then the person may warrant retesting; consultation with infectious disease or infection control experts is recommended. Isolation may be considered during this evaluation based on consultation with an infection control expert, especially in the event symptoms develop within 14 days after close contact with an infected person

III. Students who develop symptoms of COVID-19

1. Students must promptly remove themselves from the learning environment and consider seeking testing (see below under Forms/Instructions for testing instructions).
2. Students should notify their assigned Academic Advisor (Twin Cities Campus) or Robin Michaels (Duluth Campus) so they may assist in guiding you through policy/procedures.
3. Students may return to the learning environment when
 - a. [Symptom Approach] At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), AND, at least 5 days have passed since symptoms first appeared
OR,
 - b. [Testing Approach, if available] Fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medications, AND, respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved, AND, at least two nasopharyngeal swab specimens collected ≥ 24 hours apart have negative results

- i. Note: As for individuals with mild symptoms that improve within days, the testing approach does not typically provide significant reduction in quarantine time, the test-based strategy is no longer recommended.

IV. Post vaccine symptoms

Because systemic post-vaccination signs and symptoms might be challenging to distinguish from signs and symptoms of COVID-19 or other infectious diseases, students with postvaccination signs and symptoms should not enter the learning environment. If you are experiencing any symptoms following your second COVID vaccine dose that will prohibit you from participating in your scheduled clinical or course activities, please make sure to follow the Excused Absence Policy and reach out to the appropriate individuals. If you will require any extended time, reach out to your Academic Advisor (TC Campus) or Robin Michaels (DU Campus)

V. Exposure

All students, regardless of vaccination status, must be tested after a higher-risk exposure.

Post-exposure testing should occur immediately upon identification of the case (but not earlier than two days after exposure) and at day 5 to 7 after exposure.

Unvaccinated and Partially Vaccinated

Unvaccinated and Partially Vaccinated students with an unprotected exposure or close contacts (see Definitions) to a person who is infected with or suspected to be infected with COVID-19 or has participated in an activity or event that puts them in prolonged unprotected close proximity with many people of unknown COVID-19 status are required to self-quarantine for 14 days from the date of exposure

1. Students must promptly remove themselves from the learning environment or not re-enter.
2. Students should get tested for COVID-19 and self-quarantine (For public health reasons, regardless of results of tests you still must self-quarantine for 14 days)
3. Students must notify their assigned Academic Advisor of any absence
4. Students may return to the clinical or learning environment if they remain symptom free and 14 days have elapsed from the exposure.

Fully Vaccinated students

Fully vaccinated medical students with high-risk exposures who remain asymptomatic do not need to quarantine from the learning environment or the community for the 14 days following their exposure and may enter the learning environment while they await test results. Students are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their final COVID-19 vaccine dose (two doses in a two-dose series or one dose in a one-dose series).

Exceptions

1. Exposures where MDH has identified that the exposure might be associated with a SARSCoV-2 variant of concern
2. Where rules and guidelines established by a clinical site differ from those set by the MDH, students must follow those rules and regulations set by the clinical site

If signs or symptoms develop at any time in the 14 days following exposure, students should not enter the learning environment, seek testing, isolate at home, and communicate with their Academic Advisor and clinical rotation (if on one).

VI. Returning to Campus (Travel)

All students should practice careful preventive measures during travel

Unvaccinated and Partially Vaccinated students

1. Get tested 1-3 days before your flight/train/bus and get tested 3-5 days after travel AND stay home and self quarantine for 7 days after travel.
 - a. Even if you test negative, home quarantine for the full 7 days.
2. If you don't get tested, stay home and self quarantine for 10 days after travel.

Fully Vaccinated students

Students who are fully vaccinated (≥ 2 weeks after the second dose of a two-dose vaccine or ≥ 2 weeks after a one-dose vaccine) do not need to quarantine from the learning environment or the community following international or domestic travel **but** should be tested for COVID-19 within 3-5 days after returning from travel.

Exceptions

1. Where rules and guidelines established by a clinical site differ from those set by the MDH, students must follow those rules and regulations set by the clinical site

VII. Students who wish to opt-out of the face-to-face learning environment due to a high risk of complications of the COVID-19 infection, have a household member who is at high risk or for personal or other health reasons

1. Students will notify their Academic Advisor (Twin Cities Campus) or Associate Dean of Student Life and Academic Affairs (Duluth Campus) to begin the process of making modifications and/or course schedule changes
2. Students with controlled underlying medical conditions may also be referred to the UMN Disability Resource Center to explore reasonable accommodations

FORMS/INSTRUCTIONS

Student Testing Instructions:

1. Self quarantine
2. Call
 - a. Twin Cities: To schedule a [COVID test at Boynton](#), call 612-625-3222, or schedule online using the [MyBoynton Patient Portal](#).
 - i. If you have questions about symptoms call the [Boynton Nurse Line](#) 612-625-7900 (24/7) for a phone screening.
 - b. Duluth, call [Health Services](#) at 218-726-8155 prior to arriving at the clinic. For after hours medical care call St. Luke's Hospital at 218-249-4200, Essentia Health at 1-833-494-0836
 - c. Outside of Duluth or Twin Cities, call current health insurance provider or local health system
3. Complete testing
4. Continue to self quarantine and do not reenter the learning environment while awaiting results

There are no forms associated with this policy.

APPENDICES

There are no appendices associated with this policy.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Specific health system regulations. Each health system has specific approaches to exposures, symptoms, and testing. Please let the Primary Contact of this policy know of any additional requirements above those listed here.

Prometric testing implications. Since Prometric testing sites are following appropriate social distancing regulations, if students are able to drive to and from the site and follow social distancing along the way, taking USMLE Step 1 or Step 2 CK would NOT be considered a high risk activity needing to have quarantine or testing.

Current testing options. Boynton Health Clinic is currently offering any student, classifying them as essential personnel, testing for either exposure or symptoms. Other testing options may be available outside of Boynton. At the time of this writing the turnaround time for results at Boynton is 2 - 3 business days. Times vary widely for other locations.

Lead time before reentering the face-to-face learning environment. It is recommended for those who need to bus or fly from out of state return at least 14 days prior to starting a face-to-face learning environment to allow for proper testing, to complete any compliance requirements, or, if necessary, self-quarantine if COVID positive. The minimum required time would be seven days in order to comply with the post-exposure testing strategy.

Implications for academic progress. The academic advisors are available to discuss the implications of this policy on academic progress, options for seeking modifications, and to provide assistance on any potential schedule changes.

Preclerkship (MS 1 and 2) face-to-face activities. For students requiring limited, less than two weeks, removal from the face-to-face learning environment alternative coursework will be made available by the course directors. Although these alternatives cannot fully substitute for in-person experience it would be expected that the limited occurrence would not significantly alter the course outcomes. For longer or repetitive absences the risk of negative outcomes increases and the academic advisors should be consulted to review options.

Clerkship (MS 3 and 4) face-to-face activities. The academic advisors will facilitate communication with clerkship directors and other appropriate parties to determine the best course of action, including developing an incomplete contract and or course changes.

General Precautions. In general, attempt to follow the safest precautions when possible when coming into contact with other individuals outside of the learning environment. Wear a mask, keep six feet distance from others, and minimize the time indoors with others (grocery stores, bars, etc.)

Use of N95 masks. Individuals who have close contacts (family, partners, etc.) who are at high risk are encouraged to use N95 masks around these individuals.

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

| Subject | Contact | Phone | Fax/Email |
|---|--------------------|--------------|--|
| Primary Contact: Assistant Dean for Student Affairs | Dr. Michael Kim | 612-625-5180 | mikekim@umn.edu |
| Associate Dean of Student Life and Academic Affairs | Dr. Robin Michaels | 218-726-8872 | rmichael@d.umn.edu |
| Twin Cities Foundational Curriculum Manager | Elle Fasteland | | efastela@umn.edu |

DEFINITIONS

Unprotected (High-Risk) Exposure

Exposure within 6 feet for longer than 15 minutes without appropriate PPE (mask and eye cover) to a patient or co-worker with confirmed COVID-19, close contact to a household member or intimate partner with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, or attending a large gathering, such as a demonstration, vigil, or neighborhood clean-up event in the past 5 days, where all appropriate social distancing and PPE had not been followed.

Close Contact

You were within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more, provided care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19, had direct physical contact with the person (hugged or kissed them), shared eating or drinking utensils, they sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on you.

Unvaccinated

Individuals who fall into ANY of the below categories:

- Have not received any COVID vaccination doses
- Have only received 1 of 2 doses
- Are < 2 weeks following receipt of final vaccine dose

Partially Vaccinated

Individuals you have only received 1 of 2 doses and/or it is < 2 weeks following receipt of final vaccine dose

Vaccinated

Individuals who are two weeks after their final COVID-19 vaccine dose (two doses in a two-dose series or one dose in a one-dose series).

RESPONSIBILITIES

Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, Michael Kim

Ongoing monitoring of Minnesota Department of Health and CDC guidelines pertaining to COVID-19 screening and testing. Monitor student compliance.

Associate Dean of Student Life and Academic Affairs, Robin Michaels

First contact for students on the Duluth Campus to report needs to quarantine. Facilitate any excused absences or schedule changes with course directors.

Academic Advisors

First contact for students on the Twin Cities Campus to report needs to quarantine. Facilitate any excused absences or schedule changes with Course Directors and or Course Managers/Coordinators.

RELATED INFORMATION

1. Medical School Policy: [Excused Absences](#)
2. University of Minnesota COVID-19 Health Alerts:
<https://safe-campus.umn.edu/public-health-alerts>
3. Information for health care providers from the Minnesota Department of Health:
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/index.html>
4. Minnesota Department of Health COVID-19 Recommendation for Health Care Workers
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/hcwrecs.pdf>
5. Minnesota Department of Health Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf>

HISTORY

Approved: Associate Dean, UME July 2020

Amended: September, 2020

Amended: June 2021

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Amended: January 2022

Reviewed and Approved: Senior Associate Dean, UME, February 2023