

After the [FAQs](#) on the University's COVID-19 policies, procedures, and protocols were distributed on August 13, 2021, we received a number of questions and comments. We want to provide everyone with this additional information.

1. Q: Is the University paying for all weekly COVID-19 tests for faculty and staff?

A: Yes. The August 12, 2021, "Health & Safety Update for Faculty and Staff" message indicated that "the University will pay for on-site testing through September 1. After that date, unvaccinated individuals will be responsible for paying for their own weekly testing." However, this decision was subsequently changed by senior staff. The University will be paying for all faculty and staff weekly COVID-19 on-site testing. This change was noted in the August 13, 2021, FAQs.

2. Q: Who is considered to be in the "unvaccinated" group?

A: As the University made decisions about the overall health and safety of our campus community, one decision was to conduct weekly testing of individuals who fall into the "unvaccinated group," which includes individuals in the following five categories:

- Individuals who have not responded to the University's request that they confidentially submit their vaccination status to Human Resources (HR).
- Individuals who have disclosed that they are not currently vaccinated.
- Individuals who chose to not disclose their vaccination status on the self-attestation form.
- Individuals who have received approval for an exemption from vaccination based on religious or medical reasons.
- Individuals who have started the vaccination process but have not surpassed the 14th day after receiving their final vaccination shot.

3. Q: Why is the University not requiring all faculty and staff to be vaccinated?

A: Following legal advice, at this time, we are not mandating vaccinations for faculty and staff as a condition of their employment. We do strongly encourage that proof of vaccination be provided to the University and that those individuals seeking exemptions work with HR. We are currently exploring the possibility of having an on-site vaccination clinic, free of charge, that is open to any member of our community. We are, like most of higher education, waiting to see what takes place once the COVID vaccine receives full FDA approval. At that time, our Health and Safety Committee will reconsider and potentially make a change in our current policy.

- 4. Q: What are the definitions of “close contact” and “potential exposure”?**
A: The CDC defines a “close contact” as someone who has been closer than six feet to the infected person for 15 or more minutes. The term “potential exposure” is used interchangeably with “close contact.” It is important to note that for the University’s contact-tracing process, the Southwestern faculty or staff member who reports that they have been “potentially exposed” to someone with COVID-19 needs to know that that person has officially tested positive for COVID-19. For example, if a Southwestern faculty or staff member attends a family gathering and they are then notified that someone who attended the gathering has now tested positive for COVID-19 *and* the faculty or staff member was closer than six feet to the infected person for 15 or more minutes, then they would be considered a “close contact” and would need to follow the appropriate health and safety protocols according to their own vaccination status. “Potential exposure” does *not* mean that someone believes that they might have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 because they were behind them in line at the grocery store and the person was coughing or sneezing.
- 5. Q: Can I know who in my area is not vaccinated?**
A: No. HR is required to keep the actual vaccination status of each employee confidential. For additional details, please refer to question #12.
- 6. Q: Is the University going to update its protocols for fully vaccinated individuals to get tested three to five days after close contact with someone with COVID-19?**
A: Yes. The [CDC recently updated its guidance](#) for fully vaccinated individuals who have been identified as a close contact with someone who has COVID-19. This means that fully vaccinated faculty or staff members who have been identified as a close contact with someone who has COVID-19 will now be required to get a COVID-19 test three to five days after the potential exposure date. These individuals should follow the previously described protocol—to notify HR and their supervisor (for staff) or the dean of the faculty (for faculty) if they are identified as a close contact—but will now also need to coordinate with HR to get registered and scheduled for the on-site weekly COVID-19 testing being conducted by Community Labs. The CDC’s guidance also recommends that these individuals wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until they receive a negative test result; the University already has an indoor masking requirement for everyone. As long as these individuals do not begin to have symptoms, they should continue to report to work. If they begin to experience symptoms or the test results are positive, the staff or faculty member should immediately begin the 10-day isolation period.
- 7. Q: Is the University considering testing a group of randomly selected faculty and staff who are fully vaccinated in addition to testing those who are in the unvaccinated group?**
A: The University is not doing this at this time. However, any fully vaccinated staff or faculty members may contact HR to be included in the weekly on-site COVID-19 testing if they desire to be tested.
- 8. Q: If someone decides to start their vaccination process, will the University provide paid time off for them to go get their shot during the regular workday?**
A: Yes, if it is needed. Staff members should coordinate with their immediate supervisor in accordance with regular procedures.

9. Q: If someone decides to start their vaccination process and becomes ill from their reaction to the vaccine, will the University provide paid time off while they are experiencing side effects?

A: Staff members will need to use their sick leave (or vacation) time for any time they are absent from work because of illness. If a faculty member is not able to teach, the dean of the faculty will work with the department chair to develop a plan for course coverage during the illness.

10. Q: Will there be any disciplinary action taken against faculty or staff who are required to have weekly testing but fail to show up for one or more tests?

A: An HR representative will contact anyone who did not show up for their weekly test to find out whether our records are accurate and, if they are, to ask why they missed their test, to arrange alternative testing, and to remind the faculty or staff member of the importance of attending testing going forward. The University is hopeful that everyone who is in the group that requires weekly testing will comply with that requirement so that no disciplinary action will be needed. If two or more infractions of the weekly testing requirement occur, at a minimum, a written warning will be given to that individual, and it will be placed in their permanent personnel file.

If someone has a **regular scheduling conflict** with the weekly testing day or time, they should coordinate with the HR office as soon as possible to figure out a regular alternative testing arrangement (such as the University providing them with a weekly self-administered testing kit).

If someone has a **scheduling conflict for just one or two testing days or times**, they should contact the HR office **prior to the testing day and time** to determine an alternative testing arrangement.

11. Q: If someone has started their vaccination process but then is potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19, will the University provide them with paid leave (Emergency-Related Approved Leave) if none (or just some) of their job can be performed remotely?

A: Yes. This needs to be coordinated with the HR department.

12. Q: Is the University keeping the details of faculty and staff vaccination status confidential?

A: Yes. Private medical information is held in confidence. The University has not disclosed details about anyone's vaccination status to anyone in the community. We did ask supervisors to remind all staff members in their departments to respond to the University's request. We also asked supervisors to remind those staff members in their departments who fell into the "unvaccinated" group to preregister for the weekly testing on the Community Labs website and to offer assistance if it was needed. However, the specific category that a faculty or staff member is in (see question #2) was not shared with the supervisors—only that they currently fall within the broader group of individuals who the University considers to be "unvaccinated" for weekly COVID-19 testing purposes.

13. Q: What should a faculty/staff member do if they become infected with COVID-19?

A: The HR website has a page dedicated to [COVID-19 Guidance and Resources for Faculty and Staff](#), which includes the following information:

You've tested positive for COVID-19? Here's what to do:

- 1) Contact your healthcare provider**, particularly if you or someone in your household has underlying health conditions.
- 2) Immediately self-isolate** in accordance with [the CDC's guidance for self-isolation](#), which currently states, "10 days since symptoms first appeared and 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving."
- 3) Inform your department chair and the dean of the faculty (for faculty members) or your supervisor (for staff members) to alert them of your anticipated absence from work** (it is not required to disclose the reason), and if applicable, discuss whether they approve you to teach or work remotely during your absence.
- 4) Remain at home, or go home.**
- 5) Contact HR** to confidentially discuss your situation.
- 6) Complete the [Daily Health Check](#)** each day of your isolation period, and if you are symptomatic in any way, complete [the CDC's Self-Checker](#).
- 7) Keep in contact with the HR department** during the isolation period. The University requires a written release from the faculty or staff member's healthcare provider (or county health agency or similar health authority) prior to returning to work on campus.

14. What should a faculty or staff member do if they are potentially exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19?

The HR website has a page dedicated to [COVID-19 Guidance and Resources for Faculty and Staff](#), which includes the following information:

Potentially exposed to someone with COVID-19? Here's what to do:

STOP! ARE YOU FULLY VACCINATED?

If you are fully vaccinated, you *do not* need to self-quarantine for 14 days, but please inform HR and your supervisor (for staff) or the dean of the faculty (for faculty)! Please note that HR will work with you to ensure that you are tested within three to five days following exposure.

If you begin to have symptoms, please refer to the section above, "You've tested positive for COVID-19? Here's what to do," for guidance.

- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** If you are identified as a "close contact" as part of the University's contact-tracing process when a campus community member has tested positive for COVID-19, you will be contacted by the assigned contact tracer, who will guide the self-quarantine process as described in #2 below.

If you've been in contact with someone outside of the campus community who tested positive, please follow these steps and contact the HR:

- 1) Determine whether you are a "close contact."** The CDC guidance regarding ["close contact"](#) is as follows: "Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness)

for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period . . . starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days before the positive specimen collection date), until they meet criteria for discontinuing home isolation.”

2) If you *are* a close contact, you should

- **Immediately begin a 14-day self-quarantine period.**
- **Inform your department chair and dean of the faculty (for faculty members) or supervisor (for staff members) to alert them of your anticipated absence from work** (it is not required to disclose the reason), and if applicable, discuss whether they approve you to teach or work remotely during your absence.
- **Remain at home, or go home.**
- **Contact HR** to confidentially discuss your situation.
- **Complete the [Daily Health Check](#)** each day of your quarantine period, and if you are symptomatic in any way, complete [the CDC's Self-Checker](#).
- **Keep in contact with the HR department** during the quarantine period, and if you remain asymptomatic, HR will clear you to return to work and will inform your department chair and the dean of the faculty (for faculty) or supervisor (for staff).

3) If you are *not* a close contact, you do not need to self-quarantine, but you should continue to complete your [Daily Health Check](#) to watch for symptoms.