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Return to Campus Safely

On July 12, 2021, Washington State Governor Jay Inslee issued proclamation 20-12.4, in which he declared that a State of Emergency continues to exist in all counties of Washington State and to help preserve and maintain life, health, property or the public peace the COVID19 related proclamations for institutions of higher education remain in effect – even after the June 30th State Reopening.

The proclamation offered two optional operational pathways for providing in-person classroom instruction, lectures and similar educational gatherings. Regardless of the chosen operation pathway, Seattle Colleges must record the vaccination status of students, staff, and faculty who participate in or attend courses, operations, or other activities in person. In general,

- To be a “**non-vaccinated campus**” the institution must:
 - Record the vaccination status of students, staff, and faculty who participate in or attend courses, operations, or other activities in person.
 - Require physical-distancing of 3 feet for on-campus operations.
 - Follow DOH’s COVID19 guidance for institutions of higher education.
 - The colleges must continue to practice requirements established by the Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) and other applicable regulations and statutes.
- To be a “**fully vaccinated campus**” the institution must:
 - Implement a policy requiring students, staff, and faculty who participate in or attend courses, operations, or other activities in person to be fully-vaccinated against COVID19, subject to any medical exemptions required by law and any religious exemptions declared in the institution’s policy.
 - As required by the state – according to the August 20, 2021 [proclamation 21-14.1](#) (for employees) and August 27, 2021 [proclamation 20-12.5](#) (for students) – a philosophical exemptions to the vaccine mandate are not permitted.
 - Physical-distancing measures are no longer required – but encouraged, where feasible.
 - The institution is exempt from the requirement to follow DOH’s COVID19 guidance for IHE – but encouraged, where feasible.
 - The institution must continue to practice requirements established by the Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) and other applicable regulations and statutes.

Considerations for being a Fully-vaccinated Campus

Although COVID19 vaccines are now widely available in the United States, not every eligible American will be vaccinated, making achievement of community (herd) immunity elusive. The worldwide communities still struggle to even get access to a COVID19 vaccine and the pandemic rages on more than ever in some regions. Throughout the duration of 2021 and early 2022, the emergence of more transmissible variant strains of SARS-CoV-2 have necessitated masking, hygiene, distancing, cleaning, and disinfection to some extent. According to the American College Health Association (ACHA): testing,

contact tracing, quarantine, and isolation established over the 2021 should also be retained to some extent, with modifications made in accordance with case prevalence and as vaccination uptake increases in the campus community.

Since the December 2020, three COVID19 vaccines have received emergency use authorization (EUA) by the US. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In addition, several vaccines have been authorized for emergency use by the World Health Organization (WHO). As of August 23, 2021, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID19 Vaccine (now be marketed as Comirnaty [koe-mir'-na-tee]) has received full FDA approval, which means it is no longer only authorized under emergency use conditions for all individuals over the age of 16 years. Comirnaty continues to be available under emergency use authorization for individuals 12 through 15 years of age.

Booster vaccine doses are now recommended for anyone who received the Johnson & Johnson /Jaansen vaccine **more than 2 months ago** and/or anyone who received their second dose of either the Modern/Comirnaty (aka Pfizer-BioNTech) **more than 5 months ago**. Any necessary additional vaccine doses are based on an individual's personal health status and should be discuss with their personal healthcare provider. Second boosters have been authorized for anyone over the age of 50 years, those age 12 years and under who are moderately or severely immunocompromised, and anyone over the age of 18 years who received Johnson & Johnson /Jaansen for their primary and/or booster vaccines.

These FDA approved, COVID19 vaccines have proven safe and highly effective in preventing COVID19; according to CDC, early data suggests the vaccines are also effective to reduce transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The capability of COVID19 vaccines to disrupt transmission and reduce disease incidence is the single most valuable lesson learned over the past couple years. Shifting resources to vaccinate the campus community will have wide ranging positive implications for higher education, the economy, the health of the public, and the health of individuals.

Existing CDC guidance states that people who are double-vaccinated and have a known exposure to COVID19 do not need to quarantine (unless symptomatic or tests positive) but may continue to interact with public while utilizing masks as infection controls. With comprehensive vaccination, indoor classes, group sizes, residence hall occupancy, eating establishment operations, and sporting events may default to pre-pandemic guidance. Such an environment will be a new normal, but with continued need to seek local health department guidance and readiness to elevate COVID19 precautions depending on campus or community transmission.

For the above discussed reasons, leadership of Seattle Colleges has weighed the options and determined the best path forward is to become the so called "fully-vaccinated campus" (as defined in Inslee's proclamation 20-12.5). It is the fastest way to return to in-person teaching and learning as it eliminates the requirement for physical-distancing, while offering protection of everyone's health & safety. In Fall 2021, the colleges began work to convert as many classes from hybrid to in-person as safely possible and bring back the Seattle College workforce to campus.

Additionally, all Washington State employees have been required in Inslee’s proclamation 20-14.1 to be fully-vaccinated by October 18, 2021. Therefore, on-campus students and employees, including all contractors, training-partners, and volunteers must be vaccinated as discussed in the [Campus Vaccination Standards](#) section of the Infection Control Program.

Campus Vaccination Standards

Seattle Colleges has chosen to be a so called “fully-vaccinated campus” (as defined in Inslee’s proclamation 20-12.4). This means that all students, staff, and faculty are to be fully-vaccinated for COVID19. An individual is considered fully-vaccinated two (2) weeks after receiving the final dose of the vaccine. Exemptions to this requirement may be granted for medical or sincerely held religious reasons.

The COVID-19 vaccine is free in Washington State and the greater United States; no insurance required. Most pharmacies, clinics, and public health centers now offer drop-in COVID-19 vaccination with no appointment needed. [Get the facts about COVID19 vaccines](#). Find information about free vaccinations at [Vaccinate WA](#) and the [King County Vaccination Pop-Ups Schedule](#).

Each of our colleges have hosted additional free pop-up COVID-19 vaccination clinics, when available. Details and plans have been and are provided through social media and online platforms, as scheduled.

Student Vaccination Standards

All students are required to be fully-vaccinated and report their vaccination status or file an exemption. Students who do not report their vaccination status or file an exemption will not be permitted to register classes in Spring Quarter 2022 (and so on) until they report their status or file an exemption.

Student Reporting of Vaccination Status and/or filing for Exemption.

Students can report your status now using ctclink as follows. Those who are continuing on with registration in latter quarters – post Fall/Winter 2021 – who have already reported their status through ctclink, do not need to report your vaccination status again. To report your vaccine status:

1. Login to ctclink at <https://gateway.ctclink.us>.
2. Select your student homepage from the menu in ctclink.
3. Select the Immunization Attestation tile, enter your information, and hit the submit button.

A video with [step-by-step instructions](#) is available to walk you through the process ([click here](#)).

Exemptions to the Student Vaccine Standard

The governor’s proclamation permits Seattle Colleges to provide exemptions for medical/disability-related reasons and sincerely held religious beliefs. Those are options students may select in the same ctclink portal where one would report their vaccine status (described above).

The following criteria classify student eligibility for exemption to the campus vaccine standard:

- Students who do not/will not reside in Washington (WA) state while enrolled in all online classes, i.e. international and other students residing out of state.
Note, this does NOT exempt WA residents taking online courses at Seattle Colleges.
- Off-site (at non-college owned and operated facilities) apprenticeship students.
Note, this does NOT exempt apprenticeship students attending instruction at Seattle Colleges campuses and facilities.

A PDF document with instructions about how to report your vaccine status is also [available here](https://www.seattlecolleges.edu/sites/seattlecolleges.southseattle.edu/files/inline-files/Students%20-%20Vaccine%20Exemption.pdf) (<https://www.seattlecolleges.edu/sites/seattlecolleges.southseattle.edu/files/inline-files/Students%20-%20Vaccine%20Exemption.pdf>). Refer to this PDF for information about requesting an exemption.

Employee Vaccination Standards (including student workers)

All faculty, staff, and student workers are required to be fully-vaccinated as a condition of employment and that an employee's proof of vaccination be verified by Seattle Colleges. This means that all employees of the colleges have been required to provide proof of complete course of vaccination (as defined below) or file for exemption – with accommodation for on-campus work that ensures appropriate worker protects based on workplace specific transmission risk and corresponding mitigation measures, as developed in L&I worker/employer standards.

A completed course of vaccination means that 2 weeks have passed since:

- the second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Comirnaty (aka Pfizer-BioNTech) or Moderna vaccines, or
- the single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine

Employee Reporting of Vaccination Status and/or filing for Exemption.

Prior to Monday, Oct. 18, 2021 all employees were required to become fully-vaccinated or receive exemption approval. This time has passed. All currently employees have been either verified as fully-vaccinated or granted exemption with accommodation (as described in the next section).

Note: Employees returning to work after a leave or break (e.g. part-time faculty not teaching during fall quarter) should contact their campus HR team to have their vaccination status verified. Even if you already completed the self-attestation form in ctLink, HR still needs to visually verify your proof of vaccination or approve an exemption/accommodation.

Any new employee hire will have vaccination verified during the onboarding process. The Human Resources team handles employee vaccination verification for Seattle Colleges. This information will be kept private, like all employee medical information received by Seattle Colleges.

Acceptable forms of Proof of Vaccination include:

- CDC COVID-19 vaccination record card (or a legible photo of the card), or
- Documentation of vaccination from a health care provider or electronic health record, or
- State immunization information system record

See also the [Visual Guide to Official Washington State Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination](https://coronavirus.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/848-810-COVID-19ProofGuide.pdf) (available here <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/848-810-COVID-19ProofGuide.pdf>) for more information on acceptable forms of documentation.

If a person has lost their vaccine card, they can provide documentation of their vaccination status through:

- A healthcare provider or electronic health record (e.g. [UW's MyChart](#)) or
- State immunization information system record. That's [Washington State's MyIR](#) – for access and instructions, go to <https://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/immunization/access-your-family-immunization-information>)

Exemptions & Accommodations to the Employee Vaccine Standard

The governor's proclamation permits Seattle Colleges to provide medical/disability-related reasonable accommodations and sincerely held religious belief accommodations to the requirements of the proclamation.

In order to facilitate this accommodation process, Seattle Colleges has created the following forms for employees to request accommodations. Completed forms should be submitted to hr.vaccine@seattlecolleges.edu.

- Request for accommodation: medical/disability-related ([click here](#))
- Request for accommodation: sincerely held religious beliefs ([click here](#))

If your medical provider has included private health information on your disability-related reasonable accommodation form, please do not send the form via email and instead send a note to hr.vaccine@seattlecolleges.edu, and we will provide you with a secure folder to transmit your form(s).

After your completed forms are submitted, a member of the HR team will be in contact with you if additional information is required or if your accommodation request has been approved or denied. As with any accommodation process, private information submitted to HR will not be shared unless otherwise necessary or authorized.

HR will follow up via email regarding opportunities for employees to verify their vaccination status as required by the governor's proclamation.

Vaccination Standards for Contractors Vendors Educational Partners, and Their Workers

Contractors, vendors, educational partners, and their workers are required to confirm [proof of COVID19 vaccination status](#) or request an accommodation (and be approved) by Oct. 18, 2021.

Below is the mandate announcement requesting verification from contractors, vendors, and educational partners and the form they need to submit. Completed forms should be submitted to craig.bush@seattlecolleges.edu.

- [Mandate Announcement](#)
- [Vaccination Declaration/Attestation Form](#)

Note: All contractors, educational partners, and their workers must continue to observe Seattle Colleges' infection control standards and follow the current [requirements for on-campus activity](#).

Vaccination Standards for Visitors and Guests

The governor's proclamation does not require campus visitors and short-term guests to be vaccinated.

Note: All visitors and guests must continue to observe Seattle Colleges' infection control standards and follow the current [requirements for on-campus activity](#).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Campus Vaccination Standards

FAQs about campus vaccinations standards are posted and available here:

<https://www.seattlecolleges.edu/coming-campus/covid-19-vaccination-requirement>.

Considerations for Masking Optional

Beginning Spring Quarter 2022, masks will be “optional but encouraged” at Seattle Colleges District. This aligns with the [state’s higher education guidelines](#) and [King County’s Current COVID-19 guidance](#). If public health conditions change, if community levels increase, or if there are future surges or new variants, face covering requirements will be reassessed.

Masking will continue to be required in some situations:

- Clinical and other health-care settings and educational programs (dental hygiene, respiratory care, nursing, EMT, NA-C, etc.)
- Any individual who is ill or tested positive for COVID19 must wear a KN95 for 10 days after symptoms developed (or – if asymptomatic – 10 days after the test event) and follow designated isolation standards.
- Any individual who has been exposed to someone infected with COVID19 must wear a KN95 for 10 days after the exposure event and follow designated quarantine standards.

Rationale for Lifting the Mask Requirements

There were several factors leading to this decision:

- Vaccination and booster rates are high in Seattle and King County.
- Washington state’s data has shown a decline in COVID-related transmission, hospitalization, and death rates. The current COVID-19 Community Level in King County is Low.
- It is also partly due to changes in our health measures in alignment with the CDC framework on COVID-19 community levels across the country.
- State public health officials continue to monitor for other variants.
- The CDC and King County recently updated their masking guidelines based on COVID-19 and related hospitalization rates.
- Seattle Colleges will continue to employ and encourage multiple strategies to ensure the safety of our students and employees.

Personal Reasons to Wear a Face Covering

While not required in most indoor settings, face coverings remain an important intervention against respiratory illnesses of all kinds and offer an additional layer of protection. Individuals may choose to wear a face covering if they are in close contact with someone who is at high risk for severe illness (such as a household member) or have close contact young children who are not yet eligible for vaccination.

Some people may choose to wear a mask out of consideration for people who may be at high risk in public settings, or if they want to further reduce their own risk for any reason. Please remember that individuals may need to or choose to wear — or not wear — masks for a wide range of reasons. Thank you for respecting those needs and choices.

If you are meeting one-on-one in a closed space or in close-contact with someone who politely asks you to wear a mask while interacting with them, please be respectful of the fact that we all have varying levels comfort at this time; put on a mask for that interaction.

A Phased Return-to-Campus Plan

Seattle Colleges has taken a phased approach to returning to campus, safely during the worldwide COVID19 pandemic. Since early 2020, each college has held limited numbers of face-to-face instructional activities for hands-on programs, who could not function academically in a remote capacity (e.g. professional-technical programs for essential working trades, such as construction, nursing, etc.). The colleges have gradually phased in more and more on-campus activity with each new academic quarter and now plans to fully reopen campus to provide face-to-face services (as community transmission rates remain low and while State and Public Health guidance permits). Many lecture-based instructional programs have been phasing-back to campus and have been hosting either on-campus face-to-face lecture-based activities or hybrid type instructional systems more and more since Fall 2021. Each campus is additionally moved to ensure schedules for on-campus student services meet the needs of students who necessitate face-to-face structure to achieve a success academic career.

With each return-to-campus phase, the programs who have been preparing to return from remote operations have undergone a Return-to-Campus H&S planning process, through which program leadership (supervisors, managers, and unit administrators) were familiarized with the present expectations for on-campus activity and given opportunity to declare division-specific situations that needed accommodations for the broadly applied, district-wide infection control standards. For example, when 6 feet of physical-distancing was mandated, programs were required to plan ahead and declare the specific situations and activities that their work might require breaking physical-distance. From that, alternative methods or enhanced protections were then implemented to keep the department transmission risk low.

In this H&S planning process, returning programs were given additional guidance and supports to ensure the program returns safely. First, the program was supported by COVID19 Site Supervisors and the H&S team to review alternative means for undertaking the specific work activity without breaking distance. The groups worked together, as a team, to incorporate as many infection control measures (established by CDC and local DOH) as possible and finally, the H&S team conducted a [transmission risk assessment](#) (based on risk management protocols established by OSHA and L&I) the H&S declared the [minimum required personal protective equipment](#) (if necessary) for the program participants. The goal was (and continues to be) to keep the risk of COVID19 transmission at lower level (the lowest feasible level). This Return to Campus Planning Process (aka RTC application) produced a program-specific H&S plan and approval letter from the district H&S team, which declared the minimum required personal protective equipment for all employees/students who were returning to campus under that program-specific H&S plan.

After a while - and once unit administrators had become familiar with the process and already established infection control measures within their initial on-campus workgroup of employees, more employees were brought back to campus and designated to operate under the same program-specific H&S plans developed for their peer employees within the same division (or under the same unit administrator).

At the start of Spring Quarter 2022, the district expects that all unit administrators have brought back at least some portion of their administration, and the intent of the RTC process (as an onboarding education piece for programs to plan how to return safely) has been achieved. The requisite to complete the RTC review process – and receive the above-described approval letter from H&S has been sunset. H&S will, however, continue to offer the RTC review and planning process for those administrators who desire to continue to utilize that as a support resource. And other implemented infection controls (e.g. Plexiglas etc.) should remain in place – for the time being. While physical-distancing and masking standards have been relaxed, so will these other implemented control standards wain, with due cause and inversely correlative to local community case counts, transmission rates, and hospitalizations. H&S continues to expect that all campus leadership (unit administrators, supervisors, managers, deans, directors, VPs, etc.) uphold the universally applied infection control measures established in the district infection control program.

Current Requirements for On-Campus Activities

The provided Requirements for On-campus Activities (so called cliff-notes to the district infection control program) are updated regularly and available here: <https://www.seattlecolleges.edu/media/731>