

Spring 2022

Campus COVID-19 Semester Update and FAQ



Updated March 3, 2022

UPDATE to TC3 Spring 2022 COVID-19 Policies

As of February 28, 2022, the Tompkins County Health Department has lifted the mask advisory that had been in place for the County. The College has consistently looked to the County for pandemic safety protocols and followed their guidance accordingly.

Therefore, as of Tuesday, March 1, there will no longer be an indoor mask requirement in place for all College facilities. The vaccine & booster mandate for students is still in place.

Individuals are encouraged to continue to wear masks as a personal choice. While masks will no longer be required on campus, we recommend that you make the decision that is best for your own health and wellbeing. Please support anyone's choice to continue masking or to maintain social distancing, and be kind and respectful of everyone's individual choices.

***PLEASE NOTE: As the dynamics of the pandemic change, so might these guidelines. The College, in consultation with the Tompkins County Health Department, SUNY, and NYSDOH retain the authority to pause or restrict campus operations in the event of new conditions.*

Mask Timeline

May 19, 2021

CDC issues guidance noting a partial lifting of mask mandate for those who are vaccinated. The College follows this policy and allows vaccinated individuals to be unmasked on campus.

July 30, 2021

The Tompkins County Health Department issues a mask advisory for indoor settings. The College follows suit shortly thereafter and requires masks on campus.

December 13, 2021

The State of New York imposes a mask mandate in public indoor settings; Tompkins County Health Department follows suit.

February 9, 2022

The State partially lifts the indoor mask mandates but keeps it in place for a variety of public spaces, including for childcare centers and schools.

February 27, 2022

Governor Kathy Hochul announces plans to end the state mask requirement in schools starting on March 2, 2022
<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-plan-end-state-mask-requirement-schools-starting-march-2>

February 28, 2022

The Tompkins County Health Department suspends the local mask advisory as the spread of COVID-19 and active COVID-19 hospital admissions have slowed.

<https://www2.tompkinscountyny.gov/health/covid-19-update-tompkins-county-mask-advisory-suspended-228-nys-school-mask-mandate-ends-32>

I don't feel comfortable without a mask, can I still wear one?

Absolutely. While the presence of COVID-19 has greatly diminished in our community, it has not been eliminated. At any level of COVID-19 spread, people can choose to wear a mask based on personal preference informed by personal level of risk. Masks continue to be a highly effective tool in stopping the spread of COVID-19. Masks are recommended to be worn if you are around people who are ill, who may not be vaccinated against COVID-19, or with those who are at higher risk of severe illness. TCHD also recommends masks be worn by immunocompromised individuals and seniors who are at higher risk of severe illness from the virus.

Are there any places in our community that I still am required to wear a mask?

In New York State, masks are still required in the following settings:

- All health care settings regulated by the Department of Health and other related state agencies will continue to require masks. This includes hospitals, doctors' offices, and other medical facilities.
- Nursing homes
- Adult care facilities
- Correctional facilities
- Detention centers
- Homeless shelters and domestic violence shelters
- Public transit and transportation hubs, as well as trains, planes and airports in accordance with federal regulations.

I'm not vaccinated, do I have to wear a mask?

It is strongly recommended that those who are unvaccinated continue to wear a mask. Unvaccinated students with exemptions and unvaccinated faculty and staff are also still required to test weekly.

What metrics did the County use to determine the safety measures?

According to the metrics recently released by the CDC regarding "community levels," Tompkins County has fallen into the "Low" category based on the following data: fewer than 200 new cases per 100,000 people over the past seven days, less than ten new COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 people at Cayuga Medical Center, and lower than 10 percent of staffed inpatient beds at the hospital occupied by COVID-19 patients.

Can I require my class to wear a mask even though the campus has lifted the requirement?

Instructors will not be allowed to mandate mask wearing individually in classes. As in all cases, we are following the county health department guidance. Per that guidance, individuals are encouraged to wear masks if they feel that is appropriate but it is the individual's discretion.

I don't feel comfortable in a one-on-one meeting in a small space without a mask. What can I do?

It is perfectly acceptable to move the meeting to a larger space (such as an empty classroom or the cafeteria) to allow for more distancing or to change the meeting to a remote meeting instead of an in-person one.

Can I switch the modality of my class given the reduction in COVID cases?

The College believes it is vital for students to be able to maintain the modality for which they registered except in exceedingly rare cases. As indicated in the Teaching Manual, faculty instructors can go to the backup modality that they have listed in their course outline for the equivalent of two weeks. Any further change in class meeting requires Provost approval. For the full language and context of this policy please read the full policy in the Teaching Manual in the Provost's communication folder in SharePoint.

I don't understand why people are still wearing masks. What is the purpose to continue wearing one?

If you see someone choosing to wear a mask, please remember:

- People may have a health condition that puts them more at risk
- People may live with high risk loved ones
- People may have unvaccinated children at home
- People might be unvaccinated themselves

Masks continue to be a highly effective tool in stopping the spread of COVID-19. Masks give additional protection to the wearer and many people will choose to continue wearing masks as an extra level of personal protection.

Please be kind and respectful of everyone's individual choices.

Whom can I contact if I have any questions or wish to report a concern?

The College has established an email that can be used for any of the following reasons:

- If a student self-reports to you that they are positive or in quarantine
- If a student reports to you that they think another student is positive or in quarantine
- If you wish to report a concern that someone is not following College COVID-19 protocols
- To ask a question regarding any of the College COVID-19 protocols

The email is reportcovid19@tomkinscortland.edu and is listed in Outlook as "COVID19 Reports."

For the most up to date information on the College's COVID-19 Policies, please bookmark this website:

<https://www.tomkinscortland.edu/college-info/covid-19-policies-and-updates>