UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON COVID-19 FACE COVERING POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Washington's COVID-19 Face Covering Policy is in accordance with the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) workplace health and safety requirements, the Washington State Department of Health Face Covering Order, the Washington state Proclamation for Higher Education, and local public health agency orders and guidance. This policy is in effect until otherwise modified or rescinded.

As part of the University's multi-layered strategy to limit the transmission of COVID-19, face coverings are required to be worn at the University of Washington, regardless of vaccination status:

- Indoors when other people are present, and in all public and common areas, such as lobbies, hallways, stairways, restrooms, elevators, and in shared vehicles;

Outdoors, face coverings are recommended regardless of vaccination status, when in crowded settings and in settings where there is a decreased ability to consistently maintain a physical distance between others.

The University continues to implement a multi-layered COVID-19 Prevention Plan. Being vaccinated against COVID-19 (including receiving a vaccine booster) is the most critical element of this plan. Face coverings continue to be an important element, along with staying home if you are sick or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, practicing good hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, and communication and education.

For the purposes of this policy, a face covering must: Fit snugly against the sides of the face; completely cover the nose and mouth; be secured with ties, ear loops, elastic bands, or another equally effective method; include at least two layers of material; allow for breathing without restriction; be capable of being laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape (if made with cloth); be free of holes, tears or valves that have the potential to release respiratory droplets. A face covering may also be a mask that provides a higher level of protection than a cloth face covering, such as a medical procedure/surgical mask, a KN95 mask, or an N95 mask.

Personnel and students with a University-approved vaccine exemption from the University's vaccination requirement must wear a medical/procedure mask or higher level of protection where face coverings are required at the University. Cloth masks are not permitted to be worn by personnel and students with a University-approved exemption from the University's vaccination requirement.
2. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all University personnel, students, contractors, vendors, tenants, customers and visitors, on site at a University location, including campus residence halls, unless specifically exempted below in Section 3.

For the purposes of this policy, “University personnel” includes:

- Faculty, librarians and other academic personnel; students who work on site at a University work location; staff, including contract-covered, classified non-union, temporary hourly, and professional staff; Hall Health physicians; and Intercollegiate Athletics (ICA) contract employees.

- Individuals who have a contingent worker or appointment relationship with UW, stipend recipients, and others who work on site at a University location but are not employees of the University.

3. EXEMPTIONS

The following exemptions apply to this policy:

a. UW Medicine medical facility employees and visitors to UW Medicine medical facilities are required to wear a face covering and/or personal protective equipment (PPE) in accordance with UW Medicine policy.

b. Personal office/workspaces, private residential units:

   - Working or spending time alone in a personal office or workspace with the door closed or open by a few inches to allow others to know if the room is occupied, such as in the case of an emergency evacuation.

   - Operating a vehicle with no passengers

   - Inside an assigned on-campus residential unit

c. When actively eating or drinking in appropriate places

d. While actively engaged in a performing arts performance

e. University personnel verified to be vaccinated in accordance with the University’s COVID-19 Vaccination Requirement may temporarily remove their face coverings when formally presenting to or instructing a group or class in a large space from behind a podium or in a stage-like setting. Physical distance of at least six feet from others is required at all times while the face covering is removed.

f. While actively playing or training for, coaching, or officiating indoor sports in a collegiate, K-12, or recreational setting. This exemption does not apply to indoor fitness facilities.
g. While swimming or engaged in water sports or recreation.

h. While showering, bathing, or engaging in other personal hygiene or grooming activities that require the removal of a face covering.

i. When any party to a communication is deaf or hard of hearing and not wearing a face covering is essential to communication.

j. When necessary to confirm the person’s identity.

k. When unable to put on a face covering due to an emergency.

l. Job-specific personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements: Face coverings do not replace required job-specific PPE, such as medical/procedure masks, face shields or respirators. See the Workplace COVID-19 Risk Level and Selection of Personal Protective Equipment guidance for job-specific PPE requirements.

m. Children younger than five years old: Children who are younger than two years old should never wear a face covering due to the risk of suffocation. Children who are two, three, or four years old, with the assistance and close supervision of an adult, are strongly recommended to wear a face covering at all times in public settings and when around non-household members.

n. Modifications to the application of this policy as approved by EH&S and the Executive Office for specialized operations or programs not covered by the listed exemptions where alternative health and safety measures and protocols are implemented to reduce the risk of transmission while also meeting the state and local compliance requirements.

4. UNIVERSITY UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES

Units are required to provide all personnel working on site at a University work location with face coverings and/or job-required PPE and replace them when necessary. Unless personnel have job- or location-specific required PPE, units must distribute two cloth face coverings to personnel who are required to wear them. Personnel are responsible for laundering their University-issued reusable cloth face coverings and remembering to bring them to work. Personnel may use a personal alternative face covering as appropriate, as long as it complies with requirements in this policy.

University units must train personnel on the proper use, care, storage and disposal of face coverings and PPE. Units should refer to the EH&S Guidance on Facemask Use for Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 for training personnel on the selection, care and use of face coverings and facemasks. Units can also refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance with regard to type and fit, wearing and washing face coverings.
Units must communicate and enforce these requirements to all personnel working on site at a University work location and ensure all personnel are trained on the University’s COVID-19 Prevention Plan. Signs indicating the face covering requirement for all who enter should be clearly posted at all building entrances and the requirement communicated on websites when possible.

The University of Washington is committed to maintaining a respectful, productive, inclusive, and equitable workplace, and discrimination and other conduct that is inconsistent with our values will not be tolerated.

5. POLICY ENFORCEMENT

a. In the Workplace:

Personnel are required to comply with this policy as a condition of employment, as well as for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues, and the UW community. Units are required to ensure all of their personnel have a thorough understanding of the requirements outlined in this policy. If, after education and training, personnel refuse to comply, contact your college/school/campus’s dean/chancellor office or your unit’s human resources/academic human resources (HR/AHR) representative to initiate the appropriate corrective action or standard of conduct process. If your dean/chancellor’s office or unit’s human resources representatives require assistance, they should contact their central HR consultant or Academic Human Resources business partner. If personnel state they are unable to wear a mask due to a health condition, refer the individual to the formal accommodation request process. University personnel with concerns that other personnel are not complying should speak with their supervisor or report it to EH&S.

b. Students:

Students are required to follow the University’s COVID-19 Face Covering Policy at all times when on-site at the University, including any posted requirements in specific buildings or spaces.

If a student refuses to comply with the policy, the student can be asked to leave University premises. If they live in an on-campus residence hall, they can return to their residence hall unit. Student Conduct offices are available for consultations on potential violations of student conduct if needed. University personnel with concerns that a student or group of students are not complying with this policy should speak with their supervisor, consult with the campus student conduct office, or report it to EH&S. Students concerned about other students should contact their campus student conduct office.

c. Members of the public, customers and visitors on campus:

Members of the public, customers and visitors to the University are required to wear face coverings when entering a University facility and receiving service in accordance with this
policy. If a member of the public, customer or visitor is not wearing a face covering, the following steps are to be taken:

- Begin with a polite verbal request for compliance to educate and persuade the individual to wear a face covering. University personnel should ask the individual to wear a mask or face covering, and have a supply of disposable facemasks to offer individuals who do not have one.

- If, following a polite verbal request, the individual continues to decline to wear a face covering or facemask, personnel should notify the site manager to assist the customer with determining if accommodations, such as curbside pickup, can be made.

- If the individual refuses to wear a face covering and does not indicate a medical condition or disability that prevents them from wearing a face covering, they should be politely informed that they are not permitted to enter and be asked to leave. Personnel should not attempt to physically block an individual or physically remove them from the space and should avoid confrontation but should not provide service. Law enforcement (e.g., University of Washington Police Department or local law enforcement agency) may be called for help as a last resort.

6. ACCOMMODATION RESOURCES

Individuals required to wear a face covering who have the following medical conditions or health risks may request an accommodation: a mental health condition, a developmental or cognitive condition, or a disability that prevents them from wearing a face covering. This includes, but is not limited to, persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing, who are unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.

For University personnel requesting a medical or health risk accommodation, determination of the accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis with the unit human resources representatives in coordination with the Disability Services Office (DSO) and EH&S. Personnel may be required to provide documentation to substantiate their need for an accommodation.

Students seeking an accommodation should contact Disability Resources for Students (DRS) for determination of a medical or health risk. Accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis through consultation with DRS.

7. RESOURCES

- EH&S Workplace COVID-19 Risk Level and Selection of Personal Protective Equipment
- EH&S Face Covering Requirements Webpage