

# AU FORWARD

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## FALL 2021 HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN



**JUNE 21, 2021**

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

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# Introduction

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American University will return to full operations in August 2021. This return is possible due to the development, introduction, and availability of several vaccines that provide protection from the COVID-19 virus, the wide acceptance of these vaccines, the resulting high vaccination rates in the United States, and the declining number of reported COVID infection rates. Based on a body of evidence from the [Centers for Disease Control](#) and other scientific resources, communities that are fully vaccinated are at low risk of symptomatic or severe infection and are less likely to have asymptomatic infection or transmit the virus that causes COVID-19 to others.

Some students, faculty, or staff might not be able to get the COVID-19 vaccine due to medical or other conditions. AU will determine mitigation strategies, accommodations, and policies for any student, faculty, or staff member who cannot be vaccinated.

The *AU Forward: Fall 2021 Health and Safety Plan* is based on evolving guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the DC Department of Health (DCDOH), and the American College Health Association (ACHA). This plan replaces and supersedes the *AU Forward: Fall 2020 Health and Safety Plan* and the *Amended AU Forward Fall 2020 Health and Safety Plan*.



# University Operating Status

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On August 1, 2021, the university will return to Full Operations Mode. The university will return to full capacity in-person learning with the following strategies to support the return to campus for all students, faculty, staff, and contractors:

- The fall 2021 academic calendar for the university and Washington College of Law (WCL) will be maintained.
- In-person instruction on main campus will return for all classes with fewer than 50 students. Classes with more than 50 students will be online. WCL will determine the appropriate threshold for the law school's in-person classes. While most undergraduate courses will be held in person, departments may put some sections (particularly for courses with many sections or required courses) online for groups of students who require an online modality (e.g., international students).
- Residence halls will reopen with double occupancy rooms. Isolation rooms for students in university housing who contract COVID-19 will be provided by the university. Off-campus students will be expected to comply with isolation and quarantine guidelines at their off-campus residences.
- Faculty and staff on-campus presence and remote work will be managed based on guidance from the Office of Human Resources.
- All academic, administrative, and athletic buildings will reopen.
- Event space reservations will proceed according to established protocols. Regular unit business meetings will be expected to remain virtual with a few exceptions.
- AU Athletics will resume training, practice, and competition in accordance with NCAA, Patriot League, CDC, and DCDOH guidance.
- Official university travel essential for research or the operations of the university will resume with updated approval processes.
- AU Shuttle Services will return to full operation.
- Parking fees will be reinstated, and the Parking Policy will be reinstated.
- The U\*Pass Program will be reinstated for all eligible students.
- All food service will reopen.



# Risk Mitigation

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The safety and security of the AU community remains our paramount concern, and the safeguards in this plan are designed to mitigate the risk to members of our community of contracting COVID-19 and transmitting it to others.

General public health considerations—such as handwashing, cleaning/disinfection, and respiratory etiquette (e.g., covering your nose/mouth when sneezing or coughing)—are encouraged regardless of vaccination status.

Many of the risk mitigation measures previously put into effect will be eased or removed because of the university's requiring faculty, staff, students, and full-time contractors be vaccinated for COVID in time for the start of the fall semester, the downward trajectory of the infection rates, and the efficacy of the various vaccines. However, these reasonable and prudent precautions will remain until the AU community achieves an 85 percent vaccination rate (at which time these measures will be reevaluated):

- **COVID-19 Vaccination:** All students, faculty, staff, and contractors with a presence on campus or on university-sanctioned study abroad or university sponsored activities off premises will be required to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Please refer to applicable [policy, procedures, and directives](#) for further information. AU is committed to promoting a vaccination environment that is safe and equitable for all students, faculty, and staff.
- **Testing:** Regular COVID-19 testing (PCR) will be required for all students, faculty, staff, and contractors with a campus presence who are exempt from the vaccines requirements or who are not yet fully vaccinated. Given COVID-19 variants, all fully vaccinated students, faculty, staff, and contractors will be subject to periodic surveillance testing. Any person who experiences COVID-19 symptoms should get a COVID-19 test.
- **Education:** To ensure the highest level of health and safety, the university will initiate promotional campaigns to educate members of our communities about the university's directives, expectations, and practices for COVID-19 mitigation. These campaigns will include posters in visible spaces on campus, social media posts, print communications, and as needed, webinars.
- **Communications:** The university will maintain robust communications protocols to keep our community informed about current and emerging public health directives issued by the city and updates to university operations. These protocols include emails, text alerts, and a website dedicated to COVID-19 announcements, information, and links to ReOpen DC, DCDOH, and CDC.
- **Health and Safety Pledge/Acknowledgment:** All students will be required to sign a Health and Safety Pledge, and faculty and staff will be required to sign an acknowledgement that they will abide by all health and safety regulations imposed by the university and the city and practice appropriate health precautions.

- **Daily Screening:** To ensure they are not symptomatic, all students, faculty, and staff who are exempt from vaccines or have not yet been fully vaccinated must complete daily screening for COVID-19 by completing the university's online daily screening form. Hosted campus visitors will be expected to conduct daily screenings prior to coming to campus.
- **Contact Tracing:** The university has issued a directive that all students, faculty, and staff must cooperate with the DCDOH contact tracing efforts should they be contacted to provide information. AU also has established a contact tracing team that follows up on positive test notifications of AU affiliates. These efforts are coordinated with and support DCDOH. AU community members are required to cooperate with AU contact tracing efforts.
- **Face Coverings:** Face covering requirements are contingent on vaccine status, size and nature of events/activities, and locations. All individuals will be required to wear face coverings on the shuttle buses and at the student health center and COVID-19 testing site, and at any other office or operation that posts this requirement.

While in campus buildings, unvaccinated AU community members must wear face coverings over their mouths and noses at all times except when individuals are alone inside private offices or residence hall rooms or when eating or drinking. Although fully vaccinated persons do not generally need to wear masks, the CDC recommends continued masking and physical distancing for people with weakened immune systems.

Individuals are not required to wear masks while outside on campus unless they are in a group of 25 or more. The defined size of a large gathering is likely to increase by the beginning of the fall semester as case count continues to decrease.

- **Personal Health Precautions:** In addition to wearing face coverings as noted, members of the AU community are expected to exercise personal health precautions through practicing frequent hand washing and respiratory etiquette, monitoring their own health daily, and seeking medical care if symptoms warrant. These precautions not only reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection but also the spread of infectious disease in general. Students, faculty, and staff with signs or symptoms of infectious illness should stay home or seek medical care.
- **Positive Test Reporting/Quarantine:** The university has issued a directive requiring those who test positive for COVID-19 to notify the university and follow DCDOH guidance regarding quarantine. Students in university housing will isolate in designated rooms, and the university will attend to their essential care needs.
- **Exposure to COVID-19:** Vaccinated members of the AU community who are exposed to COVID-19 and are asymptomatic may or may not have to quarantine depending on DCDOH guidance. Unvaccinated members will be required to be tested and quarantined.

- **Density Management:** Capacity at all indoor and outdoor locations will be managed in accordance with prevailing guidance from the DCDOH and AU event guidance and protocols.
- **Physical Distancing:** Members of the AU community may be subject to physical distancing guidance based on DCDOH.
- **Cleaning:** Cleaning will generally return to normal levels and frequency. Staff and faculty are responsible for cleaning their desks. Units with refrigerators and other kitchen appliances are responsible for the upkeep and cleaning of this equipment. Units are responsible for acquiring and maintaining adequate levels of cleaning supplies for desks, private kitchens, etc.
- **Facility Air Quality/Water Quality:** Increased standards of air quality in all buildings will continue, using upgraded HVAC filters (based on availability) and/or changing filters on a more frequent basis. Also, outside air flow will remain higher and to a level that will not compromise the space conditioning of any building. Water systems have been properly managed and maintained during remote operations to ensure water quality and safety.
- **Space Management:** Plexiglass partitions will remain at reception desks, customer service desks, cash registers, and residence hall entry desks. Special purpose locations such as breakrooms, community bathrooms, and lounges will require users to self-regulate use to ensure appropriate health and safety.
- **Classrooms:** Exempted unvaccinated students or faculty are expected to wear face coverings while in classrooms for instruction, group projects, etc.
- **Offices/Workspaces:** Given the vaccine requirements, faculty, staff, and students can meet in offices. Individual office occupants have the discretion to request that visitors/colleagues wear masks when in meetings in their offices. Exempted unvaccinated staff or faculty sharing workspaces may work with the Office of Human Resources and their managers on alternate office space arrangements (including staggered work arrangements, installment of plexiglass, or relocation of space).
- **Event and Space Requests:** Units will continue to host regular staff meetings virtually to ensure that university spaces are utilized at an optimal level, prioritizing space needs for classes, student engagement, and major campus hosted events. Units may obtain exceptions to virtual meetings for retreats. Please refer to event scheduling guidance for more details.
- **Dining/Catering:** Dining and catering services will follow DCDOH guidance on food and beverage safety and management. AU Dining will be fully operational with appropriate density for the TDR. For more information on food operations on campus please refer to [AU Dining website](#).

- **ADA Accommodations for High-Risk Community Members:** The university has taken several measures to address the health concerns of AU community members who meet the high-risk threshold. Students can seek accommodations through the [Academic Support and Access Center](#). Faculty and staff members can request ADA accommodations through the [Office of Human Resources](#). ADA accommodation only applies to the person affiliated with AU. Family members or persons within the same household who have medical conditions are not covered. Faculty and staff members may apply for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act.
- **Positive Case Notification:** The university will follow established protocols to notify the various segments of our community (and emergency contacts where appropriate) of confirmed COVID-19 cases. Case information that does not compromise confidentiality will be posted on the university's [COVID-19 Resources website](#).
- **Variants:** Increases in COVID-19 cases among fully vaccinated AU community members and/or within the District, Maryland, and Virginia may result in DCDOH re-instituting, intensifying, or implementing certain prevention strategies. The university will notify the community of any changes in guidance.

## Resurgence Plan

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American University can enact procedures to quickly return to remote operations should there be a resurgence of COVID-19 that compels DC government to return to [Phase One of the city's reopening plan](#). Should circumstances require students to remain on campus, American University will provide for their safety and essential care.



# Coordination with the District of Columbia

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American University will continue to cooperate and coordinate with District of Columbia governmental agencies tasked with planning for, responding to, and managing the effects of COVID-19. Specifically, AU will follow the guidance developed by the DCDOH and will align with public health protocols issued for each phase of reopening. While the university will not be more lenient than DCDOH guidelines, there may be instances where the university will be more restrictive in the application of certain protocols to achieve a unified community approach to certain precautions.

The following members of the AU leadership team have been appointed to liaise with the city on matters of COVID health and safety:

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# Beyond Fall 2021

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This plan will be updated in the months ahead based on the trajectory and velocity of COVID-19 transmission in the District, Maryland, and Virginia; direction from government officials; and expert advice on how to mitigate risks to keep our students, faculty, staff, and contractors safe. It relies on the full understanding, support, and cooperation of every member of the AU community. We must each make a personal commitment to our shared physical responsibility and recognize that our individual support of the plan and adherence to its standards will serve to enhance the safety of the entire community and create an environment of community care.

AU supports the health and well-being of the AU community through integrated programs, education, and resources that encourages positive daily habits that support your health and wellbeing. Our goal is to provide you with the tools needed to make the best possible choices to live a balanced and healthy life as we return to campus.