



The University of Texas at Austin College of Natural Sciences

Dear CNS Faculty,

I am following up on the [provost's message](#) sent yesterday about additional options for classroom flexibility in light of the health situation. Today, Provost Wood [let all students know](#) that, due to the health situation, some faculty are making temporary adjustments to their classes to reduce density through Sept. 17, providing the examples of meeting in person only once a week and otherwise remotely or moving online entirely through Sept. 17.

Our focus remains on serving our students' educational needs and maintaining safety. As faculty members, you have flexibility in meeting these dual goals. For temporary modality changes in CNS, there are two options:

- 1. If you have already determined a way to offer some in-person learning through Sept. 17, communicate with your class any changes related to your reduced-density plans now.** There is flexibility for in-person and hybrid classes as to what constitutes an in-person experience, provided you have some sort of at least once-weekly offering that adds value and applies to all of the class. Examples faculty have mentioned include using the [cohort model](#), opening up optional in-person problem-solving sessions led by faculty, providing a once-weekly chance to connect outdoors, etc.
- 2. If circumstances do not allow for the above, use the [CNS approval-request form to teach 100% remotely through Sept. 17](#) to explain why.** The form asks how you will provide high-quality learning experiences to your students during the first three weeks of classes in lieu of in-person interaction. College leaders will respond by the end of the week to any submissions made [by 5 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 19](#) and as soon as possible for later submissions. Communicate with your students once you receive approval. The dean's office will need to report to the university only *aggregate* data about temporary modality changes.

It is very important that you communicate to students any temporary modality/density changes via course Canvas pages as soon as possible.

A few additional reminders and notes:

- Students with symptoms or who test positive have to stay home. Alternatives need to be available in lieu of credit for attendance.
- Early next week, CNS will provide some resources, such as slides, key points and notes about incentives, to support faculty who seek to integrate science-based messages pertaining to mask-wearing, vaccinations and other health and safety measures into a course. The governor's executive order makes clear that faculty and staff may not treat individual students unequally on the basis of vaccination status or mask wearing.
- Requests for permanent modality changes due to health concerns go through separate channels outside of CNS. (Use [this option if you are concerned about your own health](#) and [this form for household member-related health concerns](#).)

Thank you for staying engaged as we get closer to offering more of the in-person experiences that many students need to learn best. The university continues to monitor conditions in the community and on campus, and we will keep you posted as plans and policies respond to the situation in Austin and the state.

Sincerely,



David Vanden Bout | Interim Dean

This communication is from College of Natural Sciences – Official.

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