Return to Campus Guidance

June 2020
Welcome Back

We’ve missed you.

Over the last few months, the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has caused a major shift in how the world works. Since January, Worcester Polytechnic Institute has been working to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on our university community. The WPI community acted swiftly and decisively—and collaboratively—to shift to remote operations, delivering both graduate and undergraduate courses via technology-enabled learning, connecting and continuing work virtually, and maintaining critical on-campus facilities and operations with designated emergency personnel. It was not easy, but this community pulled together and made it happen.

In the months since, the WPI Coronavirus Emergency Response Team (CERT) has been developing plans to resume activities on campus, in alignment with state and federal guidelines, with an eye towards fall and the start of the new academic year. In May, we began to allow some research labs to reopen on campus—again, aligned with public health protocols and in a careful, phased fashion. Now, we are relying on this community to pull together again as we begin a phased approach to resuming other on-campus operations and activities. In this document you will find a great deal of information about how we’re planning to come together again to teach students, conduct research, and move forward as a university.

We know you have many questions, and very likely some concerns, and we hope this document answers them for you as it guides our return to campus and sets expectations for the “new normal” on campus. Please read it carefully and connect first with your supervisor with questions. WPI has numerous resources, included throughout this document, to help you.

Every employee, every faculty member, every student, and every visitor to our campus will play a role in WPI’s success in adapting to a new way of learning, working, and interacting. Until there is a reliable vaccine, we all must continue to follow the health and behavior guidelines from our local, state, and federal public health partners.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to each other and to WPI.
I. Looking Ahead & Overarching Principles

The WPI community showed remarkable resilience, energy, persistence, patience, and enthusiasm as we quickly shifted in D-Term to technology-enabled teaching, learning, and working. The extraordinary efforts of faculty and staff—and our students—helped us deliver more than 600 courses and projects, continue with critical research, and uphold our mission, all virtually.

As we prepare to resume on-campus activities and begin the new academic year, we are relying again on that community effort. Each and every person in our community will be asked to observe new health and behavior guidelines from our local, state, and federal public health partners.

There are several principles that will guide you as we return to work on campus:

**Health & Safety** – The health and safety of our community remains our top priority, and the university is deeply committed to continuing to do all we can to help mitigate the spread and the very human impact of COVID-19.

**New Normal** – The “new normal” on campus is different. This Return to Campus Guidance provides information on helping to providing a safe campus and how to protect the health of students, faculty, staff, and community members.

**Expert Guidance** – Our actions in returning to campus will be informed by society’s ability to manage the virus, science, medical and public health experts, and the guidance provided by local, state, and federal officials. We will be closely watching public health trends.

**Personal Accountability** – Each of us has a role to play in keeping the WPI community safe. All students, faculty, and staff working and learning on campus are expected to follow with these guidelines, including and especially personal healthy practices. This is absolutely critical to protect the health and safety of our community.

**Clear Communications** – We strive to provide important information about our guidelines clearly and frequently. Please submit any questions to WeAreWPI@wpi.edu.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** – We strive to consider the needs of all members of our community as we return to a "new normal" on campus, and always.

Our approach to returning to work on campus will be phased and deliberate and will require detailed pre-return planning on the part of everyone involved. This Return to Campus Guidance is intended to inform your actions as we return to campus. As our knowledge and understanding of the COVID-19 virus continues to evolve, our policies and plans will be updated as appropriate.

II. Phased Return

WPI recognizes and greatly appreciates our designated emergency personnel who have continued to report to campus for work since March 2020. Their dedication and tireless efforts have been invaluable in maintaining critical operations on campus during this pandemic.

We are now beginning a phased return to work on campus for all other employees as follows:

- Employees who have been working on campus continually since March 2020 should continue to do so based on their work assignment.
- A phased return of critical on-campus research has begun; researchers and graduate students are able to return to their labs following approval of their Research Lab Reopening Plans and in alignment with state and federal guidelines.
- While remote teaching and working will continue through the summer, certain teams will be needed on campus as we prepare for fall and the return of our broader community of students, faculty, staff, and service providers. Department and Division Heads will begin submitting Department Reopening Plans in mid-June 2020. Employees who can effectively work remotely must continue to do so until and unless otherwise notified by their supervisors.
To manage the phased reopening of campus, Department Heads and Division Heads will develop Department Reopening Plans specific to their operations that comply with the Office Spaces Checklist issued by Massachusetts. Department Heads and Division Heads must use the template available in here and submit their plans using the webform available here.

- Department Heads and Division Heads with employees designated as emergency personnel who have been working on campus since March 2020 must develop and submit their Department Reopening Plans as soon as possible.

- All other Department Heads and Division Heads should develop and submit their Department Reopening Plans consistent with WPI’s reopening pathways. Each Department or Division Head has been notified which Pathway their group falls into here.

- Please note that Principal Investigators (PIs) and center directors restarting lab work on campus should continue to follow the approval process in the Research Lab Reopening Guidance.

The Office Approval Committee will review submitted webforms (Department Information, Department Reopening Plans, and Personnel Lists). The Office Approval Committee is comprised of representatives from the Office of Environment Health & Safety (EH&S), Talent & Inclusion, Academic Affairs, and Facilities. The Office Approval Committee will make a recommendation to approve or deny each plan and submit this recommendation to the leadership of WPI’s Coronavirus Emergency Response Team (CERT).

The CERT leadership will officially approve or deny plans on a rolling basis. If a plan is approved, the Office Approval Committee will communicate this outcome to the Department/Division Head, who will be responsible for sharing their approved plans with their staff prior to returning to work on-campus. If a plan is denied, the Office Approval Committee will communicate next steps to the Department/Division Head, which may include revising and resubmitting the plan or delaying the return to work on-campus until a future date.

We know some questions remain unanswered as this process unfolds. WPI’s Return to Campus Guidance will be evaluated and updated regularly to ensure compliance with all federal, state, and local guidelines and best practices.

WPI is committed to supporting you through this unprecedented challenge. If you have any questions, please check the university’s Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources and Updates website and related FAQs or email WeAreWPI@wpi.edu.

A. Training & Acknowledgement

Prior to returning to campus, all employees must complete an online training on COVID-19, which includes safety information and precautions, such as social distancing, hand washing, proper use of cloth face coverings, daily self-checks at home, what to do if you are ill, and more. The training is intended to support employees as they adapt to the new work environment.

Employees must complete the training and submit an acknowledgment that they have read and understand this Return to Campus Guidance. The training is available here (WPI login and VPN required); the text of the acknowledgment is available here. All employees must complete the training and acknowledgment prior to returning to campus.

III. Safe Campus

A. Access to Campus

We can help reduce the spread of illness by limiting the number of people on campus, including students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

Since March, we have allowed campus access only to designated students, faculty, and staff who have been granted access to remain on campus, live in the residence halls, or work in the labs and buildings. Visitors are not permitted on campus at this time. As we resume campus operations, this visitor guidance will evolve, and we will notify the community.
Approved vendors are permitted in accordance with the vendor approval process that is in place. See the FAQ "How will vendors and deliveries to campus be handled?" All vendors visiting campus will be logged (name, contact information) by the department receiving the vendor.

WPI-sponsored domestic and international travel is not permitted at this time. Personal domestic and international travel is strongly discouraged. Anyone who returns to Massachusetts after engaging in personal domestic or international travel is required to self-quarantine and not come to campus for 14 days upon their return to the state. These travel restrictions do not apply to employees commuting from their homes to work on campus if they are permitted to work on campus.

B. Building Occupancy & Staffing

WPI has limited occupancy within on-campus office spaces to no more than 25% capacity. Starting no earlier than July 29, on-campus office spaces will be limited to no more than 50% capacity, in alignment with state guidelines. Employees are reminded to stay within their assigned working areas, when possible, to limit movement throughout campus and contact with others.

There are several staffing options departments and supervisors should consider for maintaining social distancing among employees in the workplace and decreasing congestion in buildings on campus and at entry points:

- **Remote Work/Telework** – Employees who can effectively work remotely must continue to do so, unless otherwise notified by their supervisor. Other remote work arrangements should be approved by the employee’s immediate supervisor and can be managed on a full or partial day/week schedule as appropriate. Employees working remotely somewhere other than their permanent residence designated in Workday must update their address in Workday as soon as possible; no additional approvals or forms are required.

- **Alternating Days** – Departments and supervisors should consider partial team staffing in the workplace on alternating days.

- **Staggered Work Arrival and Departure Times** – Departments and supervisors should consider staggering employee arrival and departure times by at least 30 minutes to reduce congestion in common areas of campus.

- **Staggered Lunch and Break Times** – Departments and supervisors should consider staggering the lunch and break times for employees.

Employees can also speak with their supervisors about other staffing options that achieve work goals and meets the employee’s needs.

C. Workplaces & Shared Spaces

Students, faculty, and staff should always ensure social distancing of 6 feet or more between themselves and others on campus, unless this creates a safety hazard due to the nature of the work or the configuration of the space.

Follow all building-specific signage, including elevator limits, one-way hallways and stair wells, restroom limits, etc. to ensure social distancing and minimizing the number of people in one place. Cloth face coverings are required on campus, especially in close spaces such as hallways, stairwells, elevators, restrooms, control rooms, and WPI-owned vehicles.

Open workplaces and cubicles may be reconfigured (if needed), using physical partitions to increase physical distance and by opening windows and doors on a regular basis to improve ventilation where possible. Shared common spaces, such as kitchenettes, breakrooms, and conference rooms, and high-density areas have been closed or reconfigured to allow for 6 feet of physical distancing. Dining options are not currently available on campus, except for Gateway Café, which operates only with prepackaged food. The Quorum will open for take-out only starting on July 8.
D. Conducting Meetings

As we resume our on-campus work, employees should continue to host meetings virtually.

On the rare occasion that a meeting must be conducted in-person, the number of attendees must be limited to no more than 10 people and attendees must sit at least 6 feet apart, with all participants wearing cloth face coverings. Others can join the meeting virtually.

E. Eating in the Workplace

To limit occasions of incidental contact, we suggest that employees bring meals from home for the foreseeable future. Gateway Café is open currently and the Quorum will open for take-out on July 8.

While it’s normally a part of our community life, communal food sharing has the potential to spread illness, and we discourage sharing food at this time. Practice good hygiene by washing your hands before and after eating, and clean and sanitize food preparation surfaces and high-touch areas. Face coverings are required moving about dining areas and kitchenettes on campus.

IV. Guidelines for Research

Research on campus is being phased in over the coming months, consistent with public health and safety guidelines and based on the access priorities designated by the Office of the Vice Provost for Research (VPR).

The Office of the VPR has created the Research Lab Reopening Guidance to help all research personnel resume on-campus lab work. Lab directors and Principal Investigators must review this guidance, develop and obtain approval for their Laboratory Reopening and Social Distancing Plans, complete training, and sign an acknowledgement, before returning to the labs; each researcher must also complete COVID lab safety training and sign an acknowledgement.

V. Healthy Practices for Individuals

A. Daily Self-Check of Symptoms

Everyone coming to campus will be expected to conduct a daily self-check of their symptoms prior to coming to campus. This is a two-step process:

1. Review the symptoms listed below and take your temperature. If you have no symptoms and no fever, you may come to campus.
2. If you have a fever or any symptoms, check your symptoms using the Massachusetts screening tool for COVID-19 located on buoyhealth.com.

If you have any of the symptoms listed below, do not come to campus. Follow the guidance in the section below titled “Stay Home if You are Sick & Return to Work Only When Cleared.”

Our understanding of COVID-19 continues to evolve. People with COVID-19 have shown a wide range of symptoms, including but not limited to:

- Fever (temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Wash Your HANDS
Cover Your FACE
Watch Your SPACE
Please seek emergency medical care immediately (call Campus Police at 508-831-5555 if you are on campus or 911 if you are off campus) if you are experiencing:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

This list is not comprehensive; please refer to the [CDC’s website](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) for the complete list of symptoms.

As with any illness, please call Health Services at 508-831-5520 (students) or your personal physician (faculty and staff) if you are experiencing symptoms that are concerning to you.

**B. Stay Home If You Are Sick & Return to Work Only When Cleared**

**i. When to Stay at Home or Leave Work**

You must stay home if:

- You are experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms (see above) – or
- The Massachusetts screening tool (buoyhealth.com) advises you to self-isolate or get tested – or
- You have tested positive for COVID-19 – or
- You have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, is being tested for COVID-19, or has COVID-19-like symptoms – or
- A member of your household tested positive for COVID-19, is being tested for COVID-19, or has concerning symptoms.

If you feel symptoms arise while on campus, please leave campus and return home immediately and notify your supervisor of your absence.

If you stay home or leave work on campus for the reasons above, you must:

- Remain at home and not return to campus.
- Contact your supervisor so that they can arrange for coverage and track the illness and absence rate in the office. Supervisors are instructed to keep personal health information of employees confidential.
- Call your physician for telehealth services and for your physician to determine whether COVID-19 testing is needed. Student employees can call Health Services at 508-831-5520.
- Work remotely if you are feeling well enough to work.
- Contact [Benefits@wpi.edu](mailto:Benefits@wpi.edu) to assist with COVID-19-related medical leave.
- Report any positive COVID-19 test, for either yourself or a close contact, to Health Services on this [form](https://www.wpi.edu/). Health Services will keep the personal health information of employees and close contacts confidential.

**ii. When You Can Return to Work on Campus**

You must remain at home and not return to campus until you have met the [CDC’s standards](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/recovery/return-to-work.html) (described below) and/or your physician or the Department of Health has cleared you to return to work on campus.

If you were experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms, you can return to work on campus after:

- 3 days with no fever, and
- Symptoms have improved, and
- 10 days since your symptoms first appeared.

If you were experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms and you tested positive for COVID-19, you can return to work on campus after:

- No fever, and
- Symptoms have improved, and
- 2 negative test results in a row, at least 24 hours apart.
If you tested positive for COVID-19 but you never had any symptoms, you can return to work on campus after:
- 10 days have passed since your COVID-19 test.

If you have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, you can return to work on campus:
- 15 days after your exposure to that person.

iii. WPI’s Actions After Being Notified of a Positive COVID-19 Test

Upon notice of a positive COVID-19 case on campus, WPI will notify the Worcester Board of Health and work with them to trace likely contacts on campus and advise close contacts to isolate, self-quarantine, or get tested for COVID-19, as appropriate.

WPI will also shut down areas of campus (as needed) and engage the EHS HAZMAT team, which has a specific protocol to properly deep clean and disinfect areas suspected of infection with COVID-19, in accordance with current CDC guidance.

C. Limiting the Spread of Germs

Each one of us can help decrease the spread of COVID-19. Make these behaviors part of your routine:
- Stay home if you are sick or experiencing any COVID-19-like symptoms and avoid close contact with others.
- Always wear a cloth face covering or mask in accordance with the guidelines below.
- Always maintain physical distance and stay 6 feet away from others.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and high-touch areas, such as your keyboard, phone, workstation, equipment, screens, doorknobs, and light switches.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your inner elbow.
- Throw out used tissues immediately and wash your hands.
- Avoid shaking hands, hugging, or touching when greeting another person.

The risk of virus exposure occurs outside of the workplace as well. When at home or away from campus, we encourage you to continue practices such as thorough cleaning, hand washing, social distancing, and wearing cloth face coverings to limit the chance of virus exposure.

D. Cloth Face Coverings

Massachusetts requires cloth faces coverings in public places – both indoor and outdoor – where social distancing is not possible, including classrooms and workplaces. You are not required to wear a cloth face covering if doing so is unsafe due to your medical condition or disability. In such cases, you must practice social distancing to the greatest degree possible.

You must wear a cloth face covering at all times while on campus, especially when physical distancing of 6 feet is not possible or when you are in a shared or close space (e.g., conference rooms, common areas, kitchenettes, hallways, stairwells, elevators, restrooms, control rooms, and WPI-owned vehicles). You are not required to wear a cloth face covering if you are sitting alone in a private office or residence.

Everyone on campus should provide their own cloth face covering or mask for their normal, day-to-day activity. WPI will provide masks and other Personal Protective Equipment (gloves, goggles, face shields) in specified settings, such as for Health Services employees and HAZMAT employees, when required by health and safety officials or regulatory agencies.

Cloth face coverings should:
- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- Be secured with ties or ear loops
- Include multiple layers of fabric
- Allow for breathing without restriction, and
- Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.
Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, or mouth when removing your cloth face covering, and wash your hands immediately before and after removal. When not in use, store your cloth face covering in a paper bag or Ziploc-style plastic bag, never in your pocket, purse, or briefcase. Change and launder your cloth face covering daily.

**E. Cleaning and Disinfecting Campus & Workplaces**

Regular cleaning with soap and water decreases the amount of the virus that causes COVID-19 on surfaces and objects, which reduces the risk of exposure.

The WPI Facilities staff cleans and disinfects all campus buildings at least daily and more frequently as needed. Facilities sanitizes frequently touched surfaces using safe but powerful hospital grade disinfectants and microfiber towels for greater surface cleaning impact, and uses a fogging machine that employs a mist to disinfect. Examples of frequently touched surfaces and high traffic areas include building entrances, door handles, elevator buttons (inside and outside), stairwells, water fountains, office doors/doors, light switches, classroom/lecture hall desks and tables, conference room tables, restrooms, etc. Facilities maintains all required cleaning logs.

Employees are expected to clean and disinfect their own personal workstations and shared spaces (such as conference rooms) between use. WPI has provided cleaning supplies for each workplace in centralized locations. You are encouraged to wipe down your workstation or shared space at the start and end of every work shift or organized activity. Frequent cleaning of surfaces and objects touched by multiple people (e.g., tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, touch screens, equipment, screens, computer keyboard and mice, phones, printer/copiers, coffee makers) is important. It is helpful to keep a checklist of the surfaces and items to clean, to avoid skipping anything.

Avoid sharing office materials and equipment, such as phones, computers, office supplies, printers/copiers, coffee makers. If you must share, remember to clean and disinfect after each use.

**VI. Employee Well-Being**

The well-being and health of our employees is of the utmost importance, particularly during this unprecedented time. Remember there are resources available to support you.

**A. COVID-19 Workplace Accommodations**

WPI encourages employees who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 to work remotely or arrange for an alternate work assignment.

According to the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov), some groups are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19:

- People 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well-controlled, including:
  - People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
  - People who have serious heart conditions
  - People who are immunocompromised (many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, autoimmune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune-weakening medications.)
  - People with severe obesity (body mass index of 40 or higher)
  - People with diabetes
  - People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
  - People with liver disease
  - People whose medical provider deems them at higher risk
If you have a disability or an underlying health condition, or live with someone with an underlying health condition, and you believe you are at risk coming to campus for work, please contact the Division of Talent & Inclusion.

B. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it is common to experience a wide range of thoughts and feelings. Support is available through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for WPI employees. More information is available here. For questions about the EAP Program, you may also contact the Division of Talent & Inclusion.
VII. Resources

A. WPI Resources

WPI’s Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources and Updates
www.wpi.edu/news/coronavirus

Questions
WeAreWPI@wpi.edu

COVID-19 Reporting Form:
wpi.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dhF4H8uRISSCmUd

WPI’s Guidance for Research
www.wpi.edu/news/coronavirus/guidance-research

Division of Talent & Inclusion
www.wpi.edu/offices/talent

B. International, Federal, State, and Local Resources

City of Worcester
www.worcesterma.gov/coronavirus

Worcester Board of Health
www.worcesterma.gov/public-health/board-of-health

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-updates-and-information

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Massachusetts Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplaces
/www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-mandatory-safety-standards-for-workplaces

Massachusetts Safety Standards for Office Spaces
www.mass.gov/lists/safety-standards-for-office-spaces

Massachusetts Safety Standards for Laboratories
www.mass.gov/lists/safety-standards-for-laboratories

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention Covid-19

World Health Organization
www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

Adapted from: Boston University’s Back to On Campus Work, Phase 1 Re-Entry