WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
RETURN TO CAMPUS GUIDANCE
May 2020

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I. **Looking Ahead**

Thank you for your perseverance and engagement during these unprecedented times. Since January, Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) has been working to mitigate the impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) on our university community. We are proud of the extraordinary efforts of our faculty, students, and staff to not only pivot to work and learn remotely, but also to observe new and challenging health and behavior guidelines from our local, state, and federal public health partners. By remaining off campus, practicing social distancing and hand washing, and wearing cloth face coverings, our community has helped slow the spread of this virus. Now, two months after significantly limiting access to campus due to the pandemic, we are looking ahead to resuming work on-campus.

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. Our actions in returning to campus must fall in step with society’s ability to manage the virus and the guidance provided by local, state, and federal officials.

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 begin to 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.

Each of us has a role to play in keeping the WPI community safe. All students, faculty, and staff working on campus are expected to comply with these guidelines. Lack of compliance will result in revocation of campus access privileges and may result in other disciplinary measures.

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.
- Research activities will resume incrementally in the coming months, consistent with WPI’s Research Lab Reopening Guidance.
- Remote teaching and working will continue through the summer. Employees who can effectively work remotely must continue to do so until otherwise notified by their supervisors.

To manage the phased reopening of campus, department heads will develop Department Reopening Plans specific to their operations that comply with the Office
Spaces Checklist issued by Massachusetts. Department head must use the template available in here in Appendix A and submit their plans to Talent & Inclusion.

- Department heads with employees designated as emergency personnel who have been working on campus since March 2020 must develop their Department Reopening Plan as soon as possible.

- Department heads who do not have employees designated as emergency personnel should review this Return to Campus Guidance and the Department Reopening Plan template and begin the process of drafting their plans. WPI will announce a future due date for submitting these plans for approval.

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

The Office Approval Committee will review submitted Department Reopening Plans. The Office Approval Committee is comprised of representatives from the Office of Environment Health & Safety (EHS), Talent & Inclusion, and Facilities. The Office Approval Committee will make a recommendation to approve or deny the 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 head and the department head 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 head, which may include revising and resubmitting the plan or delaying the return to work on-campus until a future date.

We acknowledge that some questions remain unanswered. 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.

Thank you for your thoughtful attention and coordination as we begin this reopening process. We are committed to supporting you through this unprecedented challenge. If you have any questions, please check the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources and Updates website and related FAQs.
A. Training & Acknowledgement

Prior to returning to campus, all employees must complete an online training on COVID-19 and 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.

The training will include up-to-date safety information and precautions, including social distancing, hand washing, proper use of cloth face coverings, daily self-checks at home, the importance of staying home if you are sick, when to seek medical attention, and the underlying health conditions that put someone at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

III. Safe Campus

A. Access to Campus

Limiting the number of people on campus, including students, faculty, staff, and visitors, reduces the chances of incidental contact that spreads illness.

Only designated students, faculty, and staff who have been granted access to remain on, or return to, campus may be on campus, live in the residence halls, or work in the labs and buildings. Visitors are not permitted on campus at this time.

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. This restriction does 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. Employees are reminded to stay within their assigned working areas, when possible, to limit movement throughout campus and contact with others on campus.

Employees who can effectively work remotely (telework) must continue to do so at this time.

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 doing so. Other remote work arrangements should be approved by the employee’s immediate supervisor and can be done on a full
or partial day/week schedule as appropriate. Employees working remotely somewhere other than their permanent residence must update their address in Workday; 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 separation 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 stairwells, 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), including by 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.

**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 during this uncertain time. Only Gateway Café is open currently. Remember that communal food sharing has the potential to spread illness so please do not share food. Practice good hygiene by washing your hands before eating, as well as cleaning and sanitizing your food preparation surfaces and high-touch areas. Face coverings are required when entering dining areas and kitchenettes on campus.

IV. Guidelines for Research

Research will resume in a phased approach 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 and all research personnel 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.

V. Healthy Practices for Individuals

A. Daily Self-Check of Symptoms

All employees permitted to work on campus and all students remaining on campus must 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 report to come to campus and follow the guidance in the section titled “Stay Home if You are Sick.”

People with COVID-19 have a wide range of symptoms, including, but not limited to:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever (temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Gastrointestinal symptoms, likes nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
Please seek emergency medical care immediately (call 911 or Campus Police (508-831-5555) if you are on 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) 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**

You must stay home if:

- You are sick or have a fever – or
- You are experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms – 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 concerning 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 return home immediately and notify your supervisor of your absence.

If you leave work or do not come to 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 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.
- You must remain at home and not return to campus until you have tested negative for COVID-19, completed the isolation process detailed by the CDC, and/or your physician or the Department of Health has cleared you to return to work.
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

Help keep the WPI community safe and 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 shared spaces while on campus (see below).
- Always maintain physical distance and stay six 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 normal, day-to-day activity. WPI will provide masks and other PPE (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/knobs, 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 mouse, phones, printer/copiers, coffee makers) is important.

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 upmost importance 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 (BMI) 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 [Heather Mulry](mailto:heather.mulry@wpi.edu) in Talent & Inclusion.

B. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds, 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](https://www.wpi.edu). 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  
https://www.wpi.edu/news/coronavirus

Questions: coronavirusquestions@wpi.edu

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

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

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

**B. International, Federal, State, and Local Resources**

City of Worcester  
http://www.worcesterma.gov/coronavirus

Worcester Board of Health  

Commonwealth of Massachusetts  

Massachusetts Department of Public Health  

Massachusetts Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplaces  

Massachusetts Safety Standards for Office Spaces  

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

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention Covid-19  

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

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

Department Reopening Plan

Department heads are required to develop a Department Reopening Plan that complies with the Massachusetts Office Spaces Checklist issued by Massachusetts and WPI’s Return to Campus Guidance.

Please use the template below to lay out your plans to manage your department’s operations while considering the social distancing, hygiene, staffing and operations, and cleaning and disinfecting practices required by Massachusetts and WPI.

You must submit this Department Reopening Plan to submit their plans to Talent & Inclusion.

Please respond to all questions in this form.

Name

Email Address

Department Name

Building(s)/Room Number(s)

Name and Employee ID: Please list the names and employee identification numbers of your department’s employees who would be returning to work on campus. Please note if an employee has lost or misplaced their WPI ID card and needs a replacement.
Rationale for Return to Campus: Explain why your department’s return to work on campus should be prioritized.

Social Distancing: Describe how your department will ensure social distancing (> 6 feet between individuals).

Consider and describe how your department will:

- Limit occupancy within their office space to no more than 25% of typical occupancy as of March 1, 2020.
- Ensure separation of 6 feet or more between individuals unless this creates a safety hazard due to the nature of the work or the configuration of the workspace.
- Close or reconfigure worker common spaces and high-density areas where workers are likely to congregate (e.g., break rooms, eating areas) to allow 6 feet of physical distancing; redesign work stations to ensure physical distancing (e.g., separate tables, use distance markers to assure spacing)
- Use physical partitions must separate workstations that cannot be spaced out (partitions must be taller than a standing workers). Please contact Facilities if your office will need physical partitions or if reception desks will need sneeze guards.
- Limit meeting sizes, ensure 6 feet of social distancing, encourage remote participation.
- Stagger work schedules, lunch and break times, regulating maximum number of people in one place and ensuring at least 6 feet of physical distancing.
- Minimize the use of confined spaces (e.g., elevators, control rooms, vehicles) by more than one individual at a time; all workers in such spaces at the same time are required to wear face coverings.
- Improve ventilation for enclosed spaces where possible (e.g., open doors and windows).
- Designate assigned working areas (e.g., floor, building) to individuals where possible to limit movement throughout the facility and limit contact between employees.
- Establish directional hallways and passageways for foot traffic if possible, to minimize contact. Post clearly visible signage regarding these policies.
- Limit visitors where feasible, and avoid congregation in common areas (e.g., lobbies)
Please note whether any physical modifications to the office spaces are necessary (floor markers, plexiglass shields, etc.) Provide office drawings and layouts whenever possible.

Hygiene Protocols: Describe how your department will apply robust hygiene protocols.

Consider and describe how your department will:

- Ensure access to handwashing facilities on site, including soap and running water, and allow sufficient break time for workers to wash hands frequently; alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol may be used as an alternative.
- Supply employees in the department with adequate cleaning products (e.g., sanitizer, disinfecting wipes). Please contact EHS if you need assistance in procuring such supplies.
- Require frequent cleaning and sanitation of all high-touch areas such as desks, door handles, and restrooms in the office.
- Avoid sharing use of office materials / equipment (e.g., telephones, printers/copiers) or disinfect equipment between use.
- Post visible signage throughout the site to remind researchers of the hygiene and safety protocols. Please contact EHS or Marketing & Communications for updated posters.
Staffing and Operations: Consider and describe how your department will:

- Ensure that all employees have completed training on up-to-date safety information and precautions including hygiene and other safety measures aimed at reducing disease transmission.
- Ensure that all employees wear face coverings when social distancing of 6 feet is not possible, except where unsafe due to medical condition or disability.
- Ensure that all employees continue to telework if feasible; external meetings should be remote to reduce density in the office.
- Established adjusted workplace hours and shifts (if working in-person, leverage working teams with different schedules or staggered arrival /departure) to minimize contact across employees and reduce congestion at entry points.
- Limit service providers on site; shipping and deliveries completed in designated areas.
- Comply with state and federal travel restrictions/guidelines. All WPI-sponsored domestic and international travel is currently prohibited.
- Employees must stay home if feeling ill.
- Employees who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 according to the Centers for Disease Control (e.g., due to age or underlying conditions) are encouraged to stay home.
- Employees are strongly encouraged to self-identify symptoms or any close contact to a known or suspected COVID-19 case to WPI.
- Encourage employees who test positive for COVID-19 to disclose to WPI on this form for purposes of cleaning / disinfecting and contact tracing.
- Post notice to employees of important health information and relevant safety measures as outlined in government guidelines. Please contact EHS or Marketing & Communications for updated posters.
- Log everyone who comes in contact with office to enable contact tracing, including temporary visitors (e.g., those doing material drop-offs).
Cleaning and Disinfecting: Describe how your department will incorporate robust cleaning and disinfecting protocols in the offices and shared spaces.

Consider and describe how your department will:

- Conduct daily cleaning and disinfection of the office (at least daily, and more frequently if feasible).
- Keep cleaning logs that include date, time and scope of cleaning.
- Conduct frequent disinfecting of heavy transit areas and high-touch surfaces in the office (e.g., doorknobs, handrails).
- Clean shared spaces (e.g., conference rooms) between use and supply cleaning products (e.g., sanitizer, disinfecting wipes). Please contact EHS if you need assistance in procuring such supplies.
- In event of a positive case, notify researchers that WPI shut down the site for a deep cleaning and disinfecting by the EHS HAZMAT team.

Other: What other plans will you put in place to reduce chance of COVID-19 transmission? How will you supervise and enforce your plans?

Ramp-down Plan: If required to ramp down your department’s on-campus presence, what steps will you take to restrict your department’s presence as soon as possible?