
HOUGHTON COLLEGE COVID-19 RESPONSE

SPRING 2022 GUIDANCE AND PROTOCOLS | Updated 1/10/2022

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INTRODUCTION

As Omicron is emerging as an extremely transmissible coronavirus variant, public health officials and institutions are grappling with how to respond to the extremely rapid rise in cases. Given the resources it takes to respond to each case (and potential case), the incredible rapid rise in cases, and the growing evidence that Omicron causes less severe illness than previous variants, we are all attempting to find the balance between reasonable risk/transmission mitigation and a sustainable response.

Considering the transmissibility of Omicron, it is a near certainty that cases on our campus will rise as students arrive from all over. While we will not be able to prevent transmission altogether, it remains a priority to reduce transmission, or at least the rapid rise of transmission. As a campus community, we remain committed to actions to protect those who are vulnerable to severe outcomes, both on-campus and off-campus, to prevent wide-spread disruptions to campus life, and to prevent campus resources from being overwhelmed.

Federal and State guidelines for response, especially around isolation, quarantine and contact tracing, are rapidly evolving requiring our institutional approach to evolve as well. Updated NYS Guidelines for Isolation and Quarantine were released on 1/4/2022, which shortened isolation and quarantine periods. Further changes are likely to occur. We expect that Allegany County Department of Health will end formal contact tracing and cease issuing formal quarantine orders, as many other counties in New York have done. The Erie County DOH, which Houghton Buffalo is overseen by, stopped these practices in late December.

In light of all of that, our current response measures are aimed at continuing to minimize transmission while maintaining sustainable procedures

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Thoroughly evaluate and minimize risks based on available information**
- **Limit impact on student's academic progress**
- **Minimize transmission on campus and curb significant outbreaks due to our limited capacity for care**
- **Promote public safety measures which protect vulnerable populations**
- **Reduce unnecessary risk by stewarding our resources well**

SUMMARY OF ADJUSTED APPROACH

Due to the high transmissibility of new variants of COVID-19, as well as evolving understandings of the role vaccination plays in public health measures, Houghton's approach to learning in the midst of the global pandemic must evolve as well. To continue to provide an on-campus experience for students, then, we now must recognize that:

- With higher transmissibility and vaccination providing less protection against transmission, while still providing high protection against severe symptoms, we anticipate many more cases among students, staff, and faculty, including among our vaccinated population.
- Our aim, then, is to enable students, staff, and faculty to live, work, and learn in an environment in which they are at low risk for serious complications from COVID-19 enabled by easy access to vaccination and universal masking practices

MITIGATION MEASURES

VACCINATION

Houghton College continues to strongly encourage all students, staff and faculty to be vaccinated and to get a booster shot, if eligible. Vaccination will not be required except for those in off-campus academic programs.

MASKING

Properly fitting, clean masks must be worn by all individuals regardless of vaccination status inside campus buildings. Masks are not required in one's private office or residence hall room. We strongly recommend individuals wear either KN95 masks, N95 masks, or to wear two masks, if possible.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Classes, where available, will maintain social distancing. Students, staff, and faculty are encouraged to practice social distancing at all times.

TESTING

On-site testing is available for students. Due to national decreases in testing supplies, priority will be given to testing symptomatic students. We encourage individuals to purchase at-home testing kits for use throughout the semester. Athletics will follow Empire 8 and NCAA guidance on testing. PCR testing will be offered to students requesting post-exposure testing, and will be used to confirm negative rapid antigen test results in highly suspected cases.

TRAVELLING OFF-CAMPUS DURING THE SEMESTER

All students are encouraged to limit time spent off-campus this semester, as travel is a primary way the virus has been introduced to campus. Students are highly encouraged to be tested for COVID-19 three days after they return to campus from spending a night off-campus using an at-home testing kit, which are widely available. We are unable to provide testing on-campus for this purpose.

VISITING CAMPUS

Individuals visiting campus must follow masking and social distancing policies. Visitors (except for approved Admissions guests who are escorted by an Admissions representative) are not allowed in residence halls, townhouses, classrooms, or the seating areas of the dining hall. Overnight visitors are not permitted in college housing at this time.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

CLOSE CONTACT

Someone who was less than 6 feet away from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more (for example, three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes) in the 24-hour period prior to someone testing positive for COVID-19.

- Close contacts who have received a booster shot or their second dose of the Pfizer/Moderna vaccine less than six months ago, or the Johnson & Johnson vaccine less than two months ago without symptoms will not be required to self-quarantine.
- Close contacts who are symptomatic regardless of booster/vaccination, those who are unvaccinated, and those who are past either the six-month (Pfizer/Moderna) or two-month (Johnson & Johnson) window of their vaccine will be required to self-quarantine if they are listed as a close contact of someone who tests positive.

FULLY VACCINATED

A person who has received a booster shot or their second dose of the Pfizer/Moderna vaccine less than six months ago, or the Johnson & Johnson vaccine less than two months ago.

- A fully vaccinated person who does not have any COVID-19 symptoms will not be required to self-quarantine by the local Health Department if they come into close contact with a person with COVID-19.

ISOLATION

A person who tests positive for COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status, must enter into a period of isolation for at least five full days, with Day 0 being the day they were tested.

- A person in isolation who is no longer symptomatic may be released on day 6 from isolation and must continue to wear a mask around others (indoors and outdoors) for a least five additional days.
- A person in isolation who is or remains symptomatic on day 5 will need to remain in isolation for at least 10 days.

QUARANTINE (OR SELF-QUARANTINE)

For people named as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, a separation from others to decrease potential transmission of COVID-19. Individuals need to be in quarantine after being named as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 for at least five full days, with Day 0 being the last day the close contact was exposed to someone who has tested positive.

- A person in quarantine who is or remains symptomatic on day 5 will need to remain in quarantine for at least 10 days following their exposure to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

EVALUATION OF SYMPTOMATIC INDIVIDUALS

OVERVIEW

- Students, staff, and faculty are expected to monitor themselves daily for symptoms of COVID-19. Please do not attend in-person events or activities if you have any of the highly suggestive symptoms of COVID-19, listed below.
- Students presenting to the Health Center with symptoms consistent with COVID 19 will be tested with a rapid antigen test. We are unable to test staff and faculty at the Health Center.
- **If that test is positive**, they will be moved to an isolation room to complete their required isolation.
- **If the test is negative**, the student will be instructed to self-isolate until symptoms are better. If symptoms persist or are worse after 48 hours, repeat rapid testing should be done.
 - For highly suggestive symptoms (fever, chills, moderate to severe cough, loss of taste and smell, muscle aches), a PCR will be sent and formal precautionary isolation will be considered while waiting for PCR confirmation.
 - For mildly symptomatic students who have a documented/known exposure to a positive case, a PCR will be done for confirmation and they will be instructed to self-isolate (in their room) until PCR result is back.

TESTING POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

OVERVIEW

- Any student who tests positive will move to an isolation room--either on campus or at home, if that is a safe option for the student and family--and will be asked to notify their close contacts of the exposure, providing these names to the Health Center.
- On-campus isolation facilities are not available for staff or faculty.
- Duration of isolation will be at least 5 days, with day 0 being the date of their positive test.
- If student is asymptomatic, or symptoms are resolving, s/he will be released at the end of day 5.
- If the student is still symptomatic, isolation will be extended for another 5 days (for a full 10 days).
- If the Health Center determines a student requires an extension of their isolation due to persistent symptoms, the college will consult with the Department of Health for their final decision on an extension.
- If released after 5 days, individuals are required to wear a well-fitting mask whenever they are around other people (indoors and outdoors) for an additional 5 days.

RESPONSE TO POSITIVE CASES

We will isolate positive cases and instruct contacts that we become aware of to self-quarantine. The Health Center will issue isolation and self-quarantine directions to positive cases and those who are identified as close contacts. Students are highly encouraged to isolate or quarantine at home, if able. Positive cases will receive public health orders from the Department of Health. Prioritized contact

tracing will be performed, as we are able, with an email being sent to a positive case's roommate and any other close contact that CCT becomes aware of, outlining CDC/NYSDOH recommendation for quarantine, and instructing them to self-quarantine.

We will periodically update campus on case numbers on campus on our COVID-19 website.

DURING ISOLATION

- An instructional email will be sent to each student in isolation, outlining expectations and providing contact numbers for any needs.
- ***Cases will be asked to notify their close contacts of their exposure. The Health Center will send an email with self-quarantine instructions to these close contacts which invites them to reach out to the Health Center if they have questions.***
- Student must stay in their room except to go to the bathroom and to get meals to bring back to their isolation room to eat.
- Students cannot have visitors in their room during isolation.
- Students should notify professors, coaches, and other college personnel directly that they will be out of classes/practice. If they need confirmation of illness, they should share their isolation instruction email.
- For academic concerns, students should communicate with professors directly, or reach out to the Dean's office if they need additional support.
- For meals, students will pick up food at a designated place at a designated time. They will be required to wear an KN95 (or N95) mask while leaving their isolation room to pick up their meal to bring back to their room. NOTE: If outside and not around other people, their mask can be removed.

CONTACT TRACING

OVERVIEW

- Prioritized contact tracing will be completed by the Health Center, with close contacts being instructed to self-quarantine at home, if possible, or on-campus if unable to do so off-campus.
- As a matter of routine, roommate(s) of a positive case will be sent an email notifying them that they have been exposed and reviewing criteria and expectations for self-quarantine.
- Any student who tests positive will be asked to notify their close contacts, share these names with the Health Center, and invite close contacts to contact the Health Center with questions.
- Students who believe they are a close contact of a positive case but have not been formally contacted by the Health Center should reach out to the Health Center for instructions for self-quarantine.
- Students who contact the Health Center or other CoronaCare Team members, after learning of their exposure from the case, will be sent an email containing self-quarantine instructions.
- Any asymptomatic student requesting post-exposure testing—even if not quarantining-- can schedule an appointment for PCR testing with the Health Center.

- Any symptomatic student with known exposure should be tested regardless of whether they are required to quarantine or not.

SELF-QUARANTINE

As per NYSDOH recommendations, all individuals who are unvaccinated, or who are vaccinated and not boosted if eligible for booster, should quarantine. Fully vaccinated students with boosters and those who have tested positive within 90 days are exempt from quarantine. If symptomatic, these students should be tested and self-quarantine until PCR results are back and symptoms are better.

ELEMENTS OF SELF-QUARANTINE

- Students will not need to move to a different room, but if they prefer or if circumstances warrant (e.g. another roommate perhaps not meeting criteria for quarantine), student can choose to go home (if that is a safe option for student and family) or request to move to a designated quarantine room on campus.
- Duration of the quarantine should be at least 5 days with day 0 being last day they interacted with the person who tested positive. The date of exposure should be assumed to be the date of notification unless student determines differently based on conversation with the positive case.
- If students develop symptoms during that time, they should contact the Health Center to be tested, and extend their quarantine until symptoms have resolved and a test has come back negative.
- Post-exposure testing at day 5 will be offered and encouraged but not required. The student can schedule an appointment for testing with Health Center.
- If a student who is self-quarantining tests positive, either due to symptoms or from routine post-exposure testing, s/he will need to isolate as above.
- Student should stay in their room except to go the bathroom and to get meals to bring back to their room to eat. (They should not attend classes, athletic practice, or other social/campus events).
- Students cannot have visitors in their room during quarantine.
- Students should notify professors, coaches, and other college personnel directly that they will be out of classes/practice. If they need confirmation of illness, they can share the self-quarantine instructional email they receive from the Health Center.
- Meals must be picked up to go and eaten in their self-quarantine room.
- Student should wear a well-fitting mask, preferably KN95, when they go to pick up meals.
- For academic concerns, students should communicate with professors directly, or reach out to the Dean's office if they need additional support.
- Regarding chapel, students should notify the Kim Cockle (kim.cockle@houghton.edu) that they will not be able to attend during quarantine. Livestream chapel will be available to them but if ***they provide notification, they will not be marked absent for missing in-person chapel during the period of self-quarantine.***

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Students will be asked to communicate directly with their professors about staying connected with class while they are in isolation or self-quarantine. If confirmation is required by the professor, students can share the isolation or self-quarantine email they receive from the Health Center with professors, as needed. Students are encouraged to contact the Dean's Office if they need additional support after communicating with professors.

Please direct any questions about this plan to the PREP Team using the "Questions" submission form on our COVID-19 Website (www.houghton.edu/COVID-19).