
HOUGHTON UNIVERSITY COVID-19 RESPONSE

FALL 2022 GUIDANCE AND PROTOCOLS | Updated 8/12/2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Guiding Principles	1
Adjusted Approach	1
Mitigation Measures.....	2
Vaccination	2
Masking and Social Distancing.....	2
Testing	2
Helpful Definitions.....	3
Masking	3
Close Contact.....	3
Isolation	3
Evaluating Symptoms and Testing Positive for COVID-19	3
Overview.....	3
During Isolation	4
Contact Tracing.....	5
Overview.....	5
Academic Support	5

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**

ADJUSTED APPROACH

Due to the high transmissibility of new variants of COVID-19, as well as an evolving understanding 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, one which adopts endemic strategies rather than an emergency management framework centered on pandemic strategies. To continue to provide an on-campus experience for students, then, we now must recognize that:

- With higher viral transmissibility, including breakthrough transmission in immunized individuals, we anticipate many more cases among students, staff, and faculty, including among our vaccinated population.
- While transmission rates remain high overall, severe outcomes (hospitalization and death) are occurring overall at a lower rate than during previous surges of the pandemic.
- We have reached a point at which we need to begin to shift our COVID-19 safety protocols towards a more self-managed approach to mitigation and treatment. In this, each student, staff, and faculty member is ultimately responsible for assessing their own risk, taking necessary precautions, monitoring for symptoms, procuring and using at-home tests, and communicating with their close contacts and the university, as necessary, if they test positive.

MITIGATION MEASURES

VACCINATION

Despite breakthrough infections, COVID vaccines continue to offer strong protection against severe outcomes, especially against illness leading to hospitalization and death, and, importantly for college students, evidence is mounting that they also reduce the risk of long-COVID. Therefore, Houghton University continues to strongly encourage all students, staff and faculty to be vaccinated and to keep up to date with any boosters for which they are eligible. That said, vaccination will not be required for any student, staff, or faculty member.

MASKING AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

While masking and social distancing will not be required on university property, masks remain an effective personal strategy to mitigate the risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19 as well as other viruses. We continue to encourage individuals to take sensible precautions if they are at high-risk for serious illness. As per CDC guidelines, individuals who have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive should mask for ten days following their last contact with a positive case.

TESTING

We encourage individuals to purchase at-home testing kits prior to arrival and bring them to campus for use throughout the semester. Individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 should use an at-home testing kit. Some home tests kits may be available through the Student Health Center (Provided by the Allegany County Department of Health) but this should not be anticipated as a primary source. On-site rapid testing will still be available for students through our Student Health Center, but may be in limited supply. PCR testing will still be available for students who require it depending on their individual clinical and/or exposure situation.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

MASKING

Masking refers to the use of a well-fitting, high quality (KF94, KN95, or N95) mask that covers both the mouth and nose. These masks have been found to be significantly more effective than cloth face coverings for reducing viral transmission.

CLOSE CONTACT

A close contact is defined as 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) within a 24-hour period during the 48-hours prior to the date of the person's onset of symptoms, or positive test (if they were asymptomatic).

- Individuals identified as close contacts are expected to follow current [CDC guidelines](#) regarding post exposure masking and safety.
- Individuals named as a close contact of someone who has tested positive are encouraged to test themselves at least 5 days after their last known contact with the individual who tested positive, or at anytime if they develop symptoms

ISOLATION

Isolation refers to keeping an individual who tested positive for COVID away from other people for the purpose of preventing transmission of the virus. 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 but 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 may need to remain in isolation for up to 10 days.
- Even if feeling better, Individuals in isolation should consider rapid testing after 5 days and waiting until they test negative before returning to campus, especially if roommates or housemates are vulnerable to severe illness or are highly concerned about contracting the virus.

EVALUATING SYMPTOMS AND TESTING POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

OVERVIEW

- Students, staff, and faculty with symptoms consistent with COVID 19 should test themselves with a rapid antigen at-home test.
- **If that test is positive:**
 - Anyone who feels they need medical attention should contact their personal health care provider (facutly/staff) or the Student Health Center (students)

- Faculty and staff must not report to work and begin a period of isolation.
- Students must not go to classes, work, or practices and must begin a period of isolation.
 - Students who are unable to isolate at home or off-campus should contact a residence life staff member to be moved to an on-campus isolation space. These spaces are very limited, so students are highly encouraged to isolate off-campus if at all possible.
- Students who test positive should email the Student Health Center at healthcenter@houghton.edu notifying staff that they tested positive for COVID-19 and indicating where they will be isolating (at-home or on-campus). Employees should let Human Resources know of their positive test, as well as their supervisor.
- Individuals who test positive should then notify their close contacts of the exposure (using the definition of a close contact above).
- 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 can be released on day 6. If the student is still symptomatic, isolation may be extended for another 5 days (for a full 10 days).
 - If the Student Health Center determines a student requires an extension of their isolation due to persistent symptoms, the university 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
 - As noted above, individuals in isolation should consider rapid testing after day 5 and waiting until they test negative before returning to campus, especially if roommates or housemates are vulnerable to severe illness or are highly concerned about contracting the virus.
- **If the test is negative:**
 - The ill student, staff, or faculty member should wear a mask until symptoms are better. If symptoms persist or are worse after 48 hours, **repeat rapid testing should be done. There have been numerous cases of people testing negative initially, even on multiple occasions, and then testing positive several days after symptom onset. Serial testing is an important aspect of rapid testing.**
 - In certain circumstances, PCR testing may be desired or needed depending on the clinical situation. Students can contact the Student Health Center to inquire about obtaining a confirmatory PCR test. Employees should contact their health provider or a local PCR testing provider to obtain a PCR test.

DURING ISOLATION

- The Student Health Center will provide isolation instructions to individuals who test positive as well as information they can pass on to their close contacts.

- Student isolating on-campus must stay in their isolation room except to go 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 university personnel directly that they will be out of classes/practice. If they need confirmation of illness, they should share their isolation instruction email they received from the Student Health Center.
- For academic concerns, students should communicate with professors directly, or reach out to the Provost'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 a 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.
- For medical needs during isolation, student should reach out to the Student Health Center.
- For non-medical needs, and for all needs after hours and weekends, students should reach out to on-call residence life staff.

CONTACT TRACING

OVERVIEW

- In accordance with procedures being used by Allegany County Department of Health in the general community, notifying close contacts of exposure will be left to the individual testing positive.
- As noted above, individuals identified as a close contact should follow CDC guidance for post exposure safety and masking, and should test themselves at least 5 days after the known exposure, or at any time symptoms develop.
- No formal contact tracing will be conducted by the university.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

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

Only individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 and are currently under isolation orders are excused from attending in-person learning and employment requirements.

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).