

Responsible RestartOhio: Higher Education Minimum Operating Standards and Recommended Best Practices

The objective of this document is to summarize the minimum operating standards Ohio's colleges, universities and technical centers will adhere to as they begin to transition back to in-person, on-campus operations. Higher education plays a critical role with respect to the economic resurgence that lies ahead. They are the economic engine of towns and communities across the state; a producer of talent to fuel essential workforce pipelines; and a beacon of opportunity drawing individuals to our great state in search of the opportunity that accompanies a postsecondary credential.

As our campuses seek to re-engage in more normal operations, the health and safety of students, faculty, staff and campus visitors must always be the number one priority. Our institutions will move cautiously and carefully to ensure that the standards and best practices contained in this document, which are highly informed by the latest guidelines from the Ohio Department of Health, local health departments and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), can be faithfully executed. As public health experts learn more about the best ways to combat the COVID-19 virus, these standards may be revised and updated accordingly.

1. Phasing

- a. Minimum operating standard: Campus re-population should occur in thoughtful and strategic phases.
 - i. Recommended best practice: Stratify and organize phasing based on necessity and risk.
 - ii. Recommended best practice: Consider structuring the phasing process into a sequence that includes early return, main return, and later return, with an opportunity for campus administrators to review lessons learned at each interval and adapt accordingly.

2. Facilities/Sanitation

- a. Minimum operating standard: Campuses must comply with all relevant state and CDC guidelines.
 - i. Recommended best practice: Regular hand washing will be required of all employees.
 - ii. Recommended best practice: Hand sanitizer and surface sanitizing supplies will be placed in all high contact locations.
 - iii. Recommended best practice: Disinfection of high contact areas, including communal restrooms and shared shower facilities, will occur at regular intervals throughout the day.

- iv. Recommended best practice: Faculty, staff, and students should clean and sanitize surfaces and equipment in their own workspace, classroom or lab, as appropriate, throughout the day.
- v. Recommended best practice: Shared tools and equipment will be sanitized after each use.
- vi. Recommended best practice: Campus and building access points will be modified to best allow for 6' physical distancing. One-way entrance/exit and clearly marked foot traffic patterns will be utilized.
- vii. Recommended best practice: Clear signage emphasizing the use of facial coverings and reminding all to perform daily symptom assessments will be installed at appropriate building entry points and other areas throughout campus.
- viii. Recommended best practice: Keep certain non-essential buildings, facilities, and common areas closed to focus cleaning staff efforts on the areas most heavily utilized by faculty, staff and students.
- ix. Recommended best practice: In areas outside of classrooms where close interaction between individuals may occur, campuses should consider the use of shielding (such as plexiglass) to protect faculty, staff and students.
- x. Recommended best practice: Campuses should stagger class start and end times to allow enough time for cleaning in between classes, and limit foot traffic in hallways and elevators at any given time.
- xi. Recommended best practice: Protocols will be established for deep cleaning should someone in the campus community test positive for COVID-19.

3. Health Monitoring/Facial Coverings/PPE Requirements

- a. Minimum operating standard: Campuses must comply with all relevant state and CDC guidelines.
 - i. Recommended best practice: Require all campus employees and students to wear a facial covering, except for one of the following reasons:
 1. Facial coverings in the campus setting are prohibited by law or regulation;
 2. Facial coverings are in violation of documented industry standards;
 3. Facial coverings are not advisable for health reasons;
 4. Facial coverings are in violation of the campus' documented safety policies;
 5. Facial coverings are not required when working alone in an assigned work area;

6. Facial coverings are not required when the student is alone in a residential setting;
7. There is a functional (practical) reason not to wear a facial covering on campus. (Campuses must provide written justification, upon request, explaining why a facial covering is not required on campus. At minimum, facial coverings (masks) should be cloth/fabric and cover an individual's nose, mouth, and chin.)
 - ii. Recommended best practice: If facial coverings are an impediment to academic content delivery, consider the use of clear facial shields or other physical barriers (such as plexiglass).
 - iii. Recommended best practice: Require all campus employees and students to conduct daily health assessments, which should include taking their temperature with a thermometer and monitoring for fever, coughing or trouble breathing.
 - iv. Recommended best practice: Establish a dedicated HR team to monitor infection reporting and assess/evaluate special accommodation requests.
 - v. Recommended best practice: Consider strategic utilization of campus mass communication systems (i.e. text and email alerts) to promote healthy prevention measures, notify stakeholders of heightened risk factors, update facility or classroom closure information, etc.

4. Residence Halls

- a. Minimum operating standard: Campuses must comply with all relevant state and CDC guidelines.
 - i. Recommended best practice: Where practicable, campuses should de-densify living arrangements to the greatest extent feasible.
 - ii. Recommended best practice: Campus mental health and substance abuse strategies should be strengthened and re-focused to address specific issues of isolation and loneliness associated with de-densified living arrangements.
 - iii. Recommended best practice: Develop a plan for an appropriately-sized campus quarantine space/isolation area in the event it is needed.
 - iv. Recommended best practice: Consider a staggered or phased move-in process to minimize gathering sizes and reduce risk.

5. Course Scheduling/Academic Programming

- a. Minimum operating standard: Course scheduling and academic programming alternatives should be considered.
 - i. Recommended best practice: Utilize remote learning opportunities where practicable.

- ii. Recommended best practice: Consider utilization of staggered course/term start dates and non-traditional term lengths where appropriate.
- iii. Recommended best practice: Flexible course scheduling and a range of course delivery options should be made available with a particular focus on equity concerns.

6. Classrooms

- a. Minimum operating standard: Campuses must comply with all relevant state and CDC guidelines.
 - i. Recommended best practice: Establish maximum occupancy rates for each classroom to ensure minimum 6' physical distancing capacity in all directions.
 - ii. Recommended best practice: Minimum 6' physical distancing guidelines will be clearly marked and communicated in classrooms and common areas. In areas where this may not be easily achievable (i.e. labs), consider the utilization of dividers or other physical barriers or divide labs into multiple sessions to ensure that distancing occurs.
 - iii. Recommended best practice: Work stations should be wiped down with surface sanitizing supplies after each class.
 - iv. Recommended best practice: Consider the use of non-traditional spaces (gyms, theaters, auditoriums, etc.) for classes if needed to achieve 6' physical distancing capability.
 - v. Recommended best practice: Consider developing procedures for classroom ingress and egress, along with the use of staggered class times, to minimize the presence of large crowds.
 - vi. Recommended best practice: Allow sufficient time between classes to allow safe egress, entry and cleaning.

7. Dining Facilities

- a. Minimum operating standard: Campuses must comply with all relevant state and CDC guidelines.
 - i. Recommended best practice: Use disposable utensils to the greatest extent feasible.
 - ii. Recommended best practice: Increase the frequency of surface cleaning.
 - iii. Recommended best practice: Provide take-out meals instead of dining room services.

8. Retail Operations

- a. Minimum operating standard: Campuses must comply with all relevant state and CDC guidelines.

- i. Recommended best practice: Consider no cash and minimize touch for transactions.
- ii. Recommended best practice: Consider delivery and pick up services if feasible.

9. General Office Environments

- a. Minimum operating standard: Campuses must comply with all relevant state and CDC guidelines.
 - i. Recommended best practice: For employees, working from home will remain the preferred option for all who can effectively carry out their duties from home.
 - ii. Recommended best practice: As employees return to campus, consider rotating work schedules and staggering hours of operation to decrease concurrent on campus presence.
 - iii. Recommended best practice: Adopt a policy to address non-compliance with facial coverings and other relevant PPE requirements.
 - iv. Recommended best practice: In general office environments where minimum 6' physical distancing is challenged, consider the utilization of dividers or other physical barriers.

10. Student Activities and General Campus Events

- a. Minimum operating standard: Minimum 6' physical distancing must be preserved to the greatest extent feasible.
 - i. Recommended best practice: Consider virtual rather than in-person student activities and general campus events where practicable.

11. Campus Visitors

- a. Minimum operating standard: Campuses must comply with all relevant state and CDC guidelines. Minimum 6' physical distancing should be preserved to the greatest extent feasible.
 - i. Recommended best practice: Campus visitors should wear a facial covering.
 - ii. Recommended best practice: Visitors to residence halls should be limited.

12. Testing

- a. Minimum operating standard: To the extent available, testing should be included as an element within each campus' re-population plan, in consultation with state and local health officials.

13. Study Abroad and International Travel

- a. Minimum operating standard: Campuses must comply with all relevant state, CDC and State Department guidelines.

14. Gyms/Recreational Facilities

- a. Minimum operating standard: Campuses must comply with all relevant state and CDC guidelines.

15. Athletics

- a. Minimum operating standard: Campuses must comply with NCAA, NAIA and NJCAA guidance and state guidelines for opening.
 - i. Recommended best practice: Minimum 6' physical distancing should be observed at all times to the greatest extent feasible. Reconfigure locker rooms and other shared facility spaces if necessary.
 - ii. Recommended best practice: Sprays and wipes should be provided and every piece of equipment cleaned before and after each use.
 - iii. Recommended best practice: Campuses should consider a staggered return of athletes to campus.
 - iv. Recommended best practice: Campuses should encourage activities to be conducted outside where feasible.
 - v. Recommended best practice: A risk analysis for athletic travel should be completed before all trips.