



Wesleyan AAUP Statement on COVID-19 Policies for the Spring Semester 2023

According to current CDC data, the COVID-19 community risk-level in Middlesex County is [high](#). The CDC recommends wearing a high-quality mask to contain the rising spread of the virus, driven by the extremely contagious XBB.1.5 strain. In light of the serious risk of (repeat) COVID-19 infections, the Wesleyan AAUP chapter urges the administration to implement the following policies:

1. Adopt an *opt-out* policy for masking in classrooms, labs, studios, and faculty offices. This policy would make classrooms mask-mandatory spaces by default. However, instructors have discretion to make their educational spaces mask-optional. An opt-out policy offers more consistent public health protection than an opt-in policy, and it respects that non-tenured and contingent faculty are especially vulnerable to reprisal from students who do not want to wear masks.
2. Mandate that students test not only before they return to campus, but also self-test for at least the first two and a half weeks of the semester.
3. Mandate that students self-report each positive test-result.
4. Improve the COVID-19 dashboard to ensure that it timely and accurately reflects all reported COVID-19 data and includes the current CDC community risk-level for Middlesex County.
5. Follow the lead of peer institutions such as Amherst, Williams, Smith, Pomona, and Wellesley and include a link to all COVID-19 policies and resources on the university homepage.

We welcome that Wesleyan's President and Medical Director are recommending indoor mask wearing and up-to-date vaccination. Nonetheless, the University's updated COVID-19 policy continues to downplay the health risks of (repeat) COVID-19 infections to individuals, the detrimental pedagogical effects of students missing classes, and the potential of student retaliation against instructors who require masking in the absence of a universal opt-out policy.

The Wesleyan AAUP chapter makes these requests in accordance with long-established AAUP policy standards for shared governance that invest the faculty with primary responsibility in all educational matters, including "the general method of instruction;" this principle is codified in Wesleyan's by-laws (Chapter IV, section 3). Matters of public health are matters of educational policy, and no public health measure affecting classroom instruction ought to be decided without cooperation with the faculty and its elected bodies of shared governance. Reaffirming our call for a rational and compassionate COVID-19 policy from September 2022, the Wesleyan AAUP chapter supplies the following uniform statement in solidarity for colleagues to use and amend on our syllabi.

COVID-19 Safety Syllabus / Moodle Statement: COVID-19 remains a major public health crisis and a threat to education. In line with CDC guidelines, to protect the particularly vulnerable among us and to preserve our ability to meet in person, masking is the default for our classroom and lab instruction. Please wear N95, KN95, or KF94 masks. Your mask should fit properly over both your nose and mouth. If you need a mask, please let me know. After the first two weeks of instruction, and upon evidence of low community spread (as defined by the CDC), we may decide to make masking optional after an anonymous survey of the class. Please test yourself at any signs of COVID-19 symptoms. If you have tested positive or have symptoms that you think are COVID-19 related, please do not come to class. We will make arrangements for you.