

Reclosing Protocols: CUNY's Guide for Safely Closing On-Campus Operations

(November 2021)

Governance

Should the Chancellor authorize a campus to close down operations after reopening, that campus should apply the same governance structure as laid out in its reopening plan. Pursuant to that structure, campuses will monitor the criteria included in these guidelines to determine if circumstances warrant consideration of re-closing and if so, then request permission from the Chancellor to close down. Campuses should develop re-closing plans (following the guidelines set out herein) and ensure that those plans include the criteria listed below to determine the circumstances that warrant closure. These criteria should replace any other criteria included in campus plans.

The process to shut down will be informed by a report on the rate of infection on the campus. This report will be provided by the Campus Coronavirus Liaisons who will report daily to the Campus Reopening Committee and to the Chancellery/COO's Office on COVID-19 exposures. This data, along with local and state data and guidance, will guide the campus in their evaluation of circumstances that may warrant closure, and when such circumstances are identified, campuses will bring that information to the Chancellor, who will make the final decisions as to whether a campus must scale back in-person activities or pursue closure.

Circumstances that may Warrant Closure

- While CUNY's intention is to move forward and bring more activity back to campus over time, CUNY campuses must also be prepared to reverse the reopening if the situation dictates.
- CUNY will continue to follow thresholds previously provided by New York State for determining when campus activities should be considered for scaling back or closure: Whenever the lesser of 100 individuals or 5% of the total on-campus population – inclusive of students, faculty, and staff – of a CUNY campus test positive for COVID-19 within a rolling 14-day period, CUNY Central Office will consult with campus leadership to determine the best course of action for scaling back campus activity.
- The Chancellery/COO's Office and the Campus Reopening Committees will monitor a range of internal and external criteria when assessing whether a ramp down or closure of campuses is required.
 - External monitoring criteria should include:
 - Federal, New York State, and New York City regulatory guidelines and mandates
 - Infection/health system status at the local, state, regional and nation-wide level
 - Status of resources and infrastructure to combat contagion (e.g., PPE, health system capacity, testing and tracing)
 - Compliance of the greater public with COVID-19 protocols (e.g., group gatherings, social distancing)
 - Reclosing status of neighboring universities
 - Internal monitoring criteria should include:

- Spread of infection on campus (i.e. via data reported by Campus Coronavirus Liaisons and surveillance testing programs - metrics on current caseload, new flu-like symptoms, rate of spread)
- Status of resources and infrastructure to combat contagion on campus (e.g. University health system capacity, PPE resources, testing & tracing resources).
- Campus internal monitoring will be informed by the surveillance testing program and the requirement for students and faculty/staff to self-diagnose/report symptoms, as well as the regular reports on COVID-19 exposures on their campus that should be provided by the Campus Coronavirus Liaisons to the Campus Reopening Committee and the SVC for Institutional Advancement.
- Campuses must monitor health conditions using the criteria above and look for warning signs that infection may be increasing.
 - Coronavirus Campus Liaisons have primary responsibility for collecting accurate and complete data about each individual on their campus with possible exposure to the coronavirus and for sharing that information with the Campus Reopening Committee and the SVC for Institutional Advancement.
 - Campus Coronavirus Liaisons should report information from their campus as well as surveillance testing results.
 - Campuses should consider developing dashboards to actively display and monitor the situation on campuses.

Ramp Down Guidance

- A CUNY campus should expect to only close buildings/areas within its particular campus if the suspected exposure or positive findings that occur reflect confidence in a low level of risk to the wider campus community. This will allow deep-cleaning and disinfection of buildings, premises or grounds. This should be coupled with notifications to potentially impacted students, faculty and staff, and ramp down measures being applied e.g. testing (referrals to City testing sites) and tracing of members of the campus community, moving classes to remote learning, asking employees to work remotely, etc. for the short duration of such limited closures.
- The ramp down response to the local and community health situation within a campus, a community or the City as a whole, should be made following CUNY's governance process outlined above, in which the Campus Coronavirus Liaisons must report data and consult with the Campus Reopening Committee and the CUNY Chancellor/COO's Office. Final decisions on shutting down particular buildings/areas within campuses, individual campuses, or multiple campuses, as appropriate, will be made by the Chancellor/COO's Office in consultation with local/State authorities.
 - The reopening plan for the CUNY campuses proposes stages, moving from a soft reopening to full operations as described in the Phasing Section of the CUNY Guidelines for Safe Campus Reopening. Depending on which stage of reopening CUNY is in, closure of a campus or campuses may involve reverse engineering to lower stages, up to and including a total shutdown.
- Campuses should actively prepare plans and procedures to be ready to close particular buildings/areas within campuses, or to close campus-wide, in the event of a resurgence of the virus, and return to essential service and workforce restrictions.
- Campuses/Central should make a checklist of tasks that stopped during the previous shutdown in order to "reverse engineer" the closing and be prepared for any future campus-wide closings.

- Campuses should be ready to deploy distance learning modalities with as few employees on campus as possible, to instruct only those who have been designated as essential staff to report to work, and to transition to distance working for all non-essential staff.
 - This should include readiness to deploy targeted distance learning modalities if necessary due to targeted shutdowns of particular buildings/areas impacted by COVID-19.
- Campuses should have communications plans in place to address questions from students, faculty and staff.
- In the event of a campus-wide shut down or a targeted shutdown of particular areas on a campus, school presidents and deans can decide at their discretion what facilities, such as libraries and laboratories, are essential.
 - Managers of CUNY staff who are not able to remotely perform all of their job duties should look for ways to minimize everyone's potential exposure, including: where possible, combining remote and on-premises work; staggering schedules to enable employees to use public transit during off-peak times; implementing staffing rotations; condensing work weeks, with more hours but fewer days as during the summer; and, for those who are working on-site, utilizing stringent social-distance strategies).
 - To minimize the risk to essential staff including ITS personnel, custodians, public safety officers and facilities staff, general access to campuses/campus areas that are shutdown should be limited to the extent possible. E.g. Access to impacted areas should be limited except by appointment. Campuses can be contacted for specific information.
- Establish protocols for ramping down research and moving to remote work. The protocols should follow Research Continuity guidance on the [Guidance on Academic Continuity to Campuses](#) page, including:
 - Securing Personal Health Information (PHI).
 - Policy for Commercialization of Research
 - Requirements for non-Human Animal Research
 - Safety practices for Human subject research
 - Plans for equipment/facilities that require human attention and/or supplies for operation
 - Updating any data use agreements that may be affected by shifting to remote platforms
 - Setting procedures for tissue and other non-IACUC Materials

Distance Learning Guidelines and Tools

General

- At the initiation of CUNY-wide or campus-wide closure, campuses should begin fully online programs and courses. Faculty, students and staff should be prepared to operate in full distance education mode until such time as a decision to reopen is made.
 - Campuses should draw on their earlier experience in which 95 percent of CUNY's 50,000 course sections were converted to distance learning instruction, and 95 percent of CUNY faculty and staff worked remotely.
 - Distance learning, and student support services to be provided remotely include mental health counseling; advisement; library, enrollment management, and career engagement services; student life; development; and inclusion programming.
 - Move libraries online, eliminate fines, support learning and research.
 - Deliver distance education in accordance with the regulatory requirements provided by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) (including responding to all mandatory requirements such as the MSCHE Annual Institutional Update), and the New York

State Education Department (NYSED). Refer to the [Guidance on Academic Continuity to Campuses](#) page, section on 'Accreditation and Regulatory Issues' for details.

- Campuses should decide which functions need to remain open; these may include dormitories, libraries, research facilities, daycare centers and mission-critical venues that support our students.
 - Specific programs, such as those requiring on-site skills assessment or campus laboratory access to meet licensing or accreditation requirements that require interim campus access to support critical programming should be allowed to request approval by a College's president or dean and be subject to the social distancing provisions. See the [Guidance on Academic Continuity to Campuses](#) page, section on Distance Learning & Reopening Plans for details.
 - If the course's learning outcomes cannot ultimately be achieved via distance learning and cannot adhere to social distancing requirements, the courses could resume once the closure is lifted, at which time faculty and students would work to make up for lost time. Given the circumstances, students could also opt to withdraw from the course, or receive a grade of incomplete if appropriate. For in-progress continuing education courses, colleges should communicate options available to students who decide to drop or cannot continue with coursework. See the [Guidance on Academic Continuity to Campuses](#) page, section on 'Financial Aid and Other Types of Support' for details.

Technology Platforms, Tools & Resources for Distance Learning

- Campuses should continue to support professional development opportunities for faculty and staff on effective online teaching and provision of remote student support services.
- Campuses should continue to purchase tablets and laptops for students who need it in order to continue to fully participate in distance learning. Students should be encouraged to take advantage of current offers by cellular carriers and internet service providers to provide free in-home broadband and mobile hotspot services.
- There are a number of technology tools available to support campus staff who need to work from a remote location. Many of these tools are used every day by college and staff. These systems and services, used by staff and administrators, include on-line access from anywhere to CUNYfirst, DegreeWorks, Blackboard, Microsoft Office 365 for Education (this includes OneDrive and the Cloud versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams and SharePoint), Dropbox and WebEx. There are extensive user guides and training videos available to our CUNY workforce that will allow familiarization with these invaluable tools.
- CUNY's Virtual Desktop environment and many similar Virtual Desktop environments at the colleges provide students, faculty, and staff with remote access to some of the software products commonly found in computer labs across the University.
- CUNY's academic systems, including its learning management platform Blackboard and Cloud collaboration tools Microsoft Office 365 for Education and Dropbox and EAB Navigate, can be helpful ways to deliver academic instruction in a remote/online manner.
- CUNY's [Guidance on Academic Continuity to Campuses](#) recommends vendor relationships be examined in the context of a closure:
 - CUNY should consider the need to update contract terms with any vendors used to support telecommuting and virtual classrooms.
 - Determine any Cloud-based Adobe Licenses that need to be expanded for students.
 - Use available assistive technology services to increase the accessibility of online learning.
 - Ensure that essential platforms (e.g., Blackboard) are universally compatible with students' personal devices.

- Work with vendors to address any data capacity issues that may arise as more users migrate to online platforms.

Academic Policies and Requirements

The section on Academic Policies, Requirements, and Deadlines in the [Guidance on Academic Continuity to Campuses](#), provides up to date guidance during shut-down scenarios on:

- Grade Policy
- Student Progress and Discipline
- Graduation
- Admissions Policy.

Support for Specific Populations: Equity and Inclusion

- Each campus will offer mental health and wellness services to students via tele-counseling and tele-health in a manner consistent with services provided on campus under regular circumstances. Establish whether these may need to be scaled up to meet increased demand.
- Set protocols for accommodating international students.
- Determine academic policies for Student Veterans, National Guard & Reservists who may face difficulty in completing their studies if called to active duty.
- Meet the needs and ensure accommodation for students with disabilities.
 - CUNY offers a variety of University-wide guides and tutorials to faculty members to help make their online content accessible to students with disabilities.
 - The CUNY Assistive Technology Services (CATS) and Media Accessibility Project (MAP) support CUNY students with disabilities with software available to students for free at-home use.
 - The guide “Reasonable Accommodations: A Faculty Guide for Teaching Students with Disabilities” was developed specifically for CUNY faculty and includes helpful information in accommodating students with disabilities in distance learning, including Technology in the Classroom. Additional considerations for accommodating students with disabilities can be found at [Considerations for Reopening Facilities & Services in Stages](#).
- CUNY Start/Math Start, CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP), and the Adult Literacy Program should once again move their instruction online.
- Pursue campaigns that promote greater engagement with trainings aimed to reduce sexual violence (such as CUNY’s SPARC training).
- Adult and Continuing Education Programs:
 - Campuses should continue to activate existing and new training programs to address immediate workforce priorities such as telehealth and medical scribes. Some campuses have the capability to provide online training, complemented by virtual simulation for clinical skills, and on-site competency-based assessment of students in CUNY’s state-of-the art high fidelity clinical simulation center located at Bellevue Hospital. Furthermore, the University’s faculty have extensive expertise and capacity to support any number of short-term training programs.
 - For information on Employer/Employee Resources Related to the Impact of COVID-19 and Adult and Continuing Education Financial Management, refer to the Academic Continuity Guidance on Adult and Continuing Education.
- For more detail, refer to the Student Success, Equity & Inclusion section of CUNY’s [Guidance on Academic Continuity to Campuses](#). (OAA Continuity)

Continuity for Students and Student Life

Research

For updated guidance on research-related continuity, please refer to the Research Continuity section in the most recent [Guidance on Academic Continuity to Campuses](#) webpage.

Internships

For information on Legal Guidance for Internship Agreements, Guidance for Credit-bearing Internships, Guidance for CUNY Students Working in Internships, Guidance for Campus- Based Internships, see the Guidance on Academic Continuity section on [Internships](#).

Clinical Placements

For information on NYS Contact Tracer Initiative, NYC Resource Navigators, Clinical Placements in Education Programs, Health Professions Credit Considerations for Clinical and Field Experiences, and Clinical Placements — HHS Programs, see the Guidance on Academic Continuity section on [Clinical Placements](#).

Fees, Financial Aid and Other Types of Support

Campuses, in coordination with Central, should provide additional support to students in the event of another shutdown. The [Guidance on Academic Continuity to Campuses](#), Financial Aid and Other Types of Support section and Student Payment Modifications section, provides up to date guidance during shut-down scenarios on:

- Financial Support
- Dorm Fees Policy
- Student Activity Fee Policy
- Student Payment Modifications

Continuity for Staff and HR Issues

Protocol for Establishing Essential Personnel

- Each campus president and dean should determine which personnel are needed on campus. Essential personnel are defined as anyone whose job function is essential to the effective operation of their agency or authority, or who must be physically present to perform their job, or who is involved in the COVID-19 emergency response. There are many employees who have been deemed essential, but whose jobs can and will be performed remotely, if so authorized by their supervisor. It is important to note that as we navigate this emergency, the members of our campus communities who can be expected to be classified as essential employees may shift over time, depending on campus, University, city, and state needs.
- If the campus is required to close, the campus should consult with the University on an extension of the notification deadline for reappointments and non-reappointments of adjuncts and non-teaching adjuncts, and adding provisions as agreed with PSC (e.g. allowing full-time faculty and adjuncts to hold office hours through distance technology). Refer to the [Guidance on Academic Continuity to Campuses](#), section on Shared Governance and HR Issues, for details.
- It is important to remember that only supervisors have the authority to determine if an employee can telecommute. Therefore, it is essential that all supervisors and department heads, whether they work on the teaching or non-instructional faculty or professional staff, on a campus or at

CUNY Central, maintain a steady and open line of communication with their teams to ensure that expectations are communicated in a clear manner. As circumstances are subject to change on the ground, the presidents and deans may change the composition of those employees designated essential to meet the academic and operational needs on our various campuses.

Guidelines for Flexible Work Arrangements/Remote Work Guidelines

- If needed, a full conversion to distance education is intended to dramatically reduce the density of the City and CUNY campuses. To maximize the number of employees who could telecommute or otherwise significantly limit their time on campus, campuses should once again implement flexible work arrangements, even extending them to many employees whose services have been deemed essential. These guidelines have the goal of minimizing faculty and staff exposure to the virus and maximizing social distancing as part of community mitigation strategies set by the CDC. Some of the remote work accommodations include: flexible scheduling, telecommuting, staggered work shifts and condensed workweeks.
- Managers have been instructed to remain as flexible and accommodating as possible. Furthermore, as these Guidelines are implemented, managers are instructed to work closely with HR directors to communicate clear expectations and maintain continuous support and supervision. Accommodations have been, and will continue to be made, for any employee who is in a high-risk category for COVID-19 or anyone who shares a household with a person in a high-risk category. These individuals, including those who have been deemed essential, should communicate their circumstances to supervisors and the campus Human Resources office.

Communication

In the event that the University may be required to scale back on-site operations or reclose a building, a campus, or the university, CUNY should continue using its two-pronged communications: centralized communications from the chancellery and the provost's office on policy and information important to the University community as a whole and campus specific communications on information relevant to the campus specific plan.

Communications should include:

- Sharing information with staff, students, and faculty without increasing fear and stigma.
- Communicating steps being taken to prepare and how additional information will be shared.
- Communicating changes to campus schedules or functions, and any resources to help the community adjust to new campus behaviors.
- Communicating information students/faculty/staff can use to protect themselves from infection, and the actions taken by the University to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 (e.g., disinfection routine, health policies for staff, and health & safety measures in place).
- Establishing formal and informal routes of communication for students/faculty/staff to express concerns, questions, comments, and feedback.