

Spring 2022 Semester Course Reminders

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Dear Saint Louis University community,

I want to provide a few brief reminders as we return to in-person classes on Tuesday, Jan. 18. In this update, I will cover three topics:

- Reminders about course flexibility as we begin the semester
- Student feedback on absences
- Discontinuation of seating charts

Instructor reminders about course flexibility

As I outlined in my messages to the community earlier this week, we are anticipating an increase in positive COVID-19 cases at the start of the semester. Instructors and students need to remain flexible as we monitor the virus over the next few weeks, and part of that is how in-person classes may need to change.

I am reminding all instructors that they can move their in-person course online for a short period of time (i.e., approximately one week or less) if one of the following occurs:

- The instructor is isolating and feels well enough to continue teaching remotely during their isolation period
- The instructor's household member is isolating, or their child's school or daycare is closed temporarily due to the pandemic, and the instructor needs to provide care, but can still teach remotely during this time
- Enough students are isolating that it makes sense to move the course online for a short period of time

Instructors planning to make these temporary changes to course modalities should inform their chair/dean. This data will help inform our plans going forward.

The [Spring 2022 Faculty Guidance for Instruction](#) provides more details about scenarios instructors could encounter in the first few weeks of the semester. Please reference that document for further information.

Student feedback on COVID-19-related absences

In recent discussions with student leaders, I heard that students are concerned about the ability to stay up-to-date on their coursework should they be isolating due to COVID-19. As outlined in the [spring 2022 guidance](#), all instructors are expected to:

- Communicate with students early and often about any changes to course modalities so they know what to expect from class-to-class or week-to-week.

- Work with students who inform you of COVID-19-related absences to keep them on track in the class. The form this takes will vary depending on the situation and the kinds of courses you teach. For example, you could provide recordings of class sessions if appropriate, make course materials available in Canvas, provide notes or slides from class sessions, or work one-on-one with students.
- If you need assistance identifying appropriate options for your courses, a [consultation with the Reinert Center](#) may be helpful, or reference the Reinert Center's [guide on keeping students current](#).

I am also asking that, similar to the fall semester, instructors continue to provide reasonable flexibility, as much as possible without compromising learning, to students who need it due to COVID-19 circumstances. The situation is still very fluid, and flexibility will be paramount.

Discontinuation of seating charts

I appreciate everyone's efforts to support our Contact Tracing team last semester by collecting seating charts for all class meetings. This was a truly significant effort by both instructors and students, and it helped the contact tracers accurately assess whether we were experiencing any transmission in our classrooms.

After speaking with Dr. Rebmann, I learned that out of nearly 1,100 cases investigated as a suspected close contact in our classrooms, we only traced *one possible transmission* to a classroom or lab space in the fall (and it is very likely the transmission in that case occurred elsewhere). So, we have decided to discontinue the collection of seating charts for the spring semester. We will modify the spring guidance website accordingly.

However, as Dr. Rebmann continues to reiterate in her messages to the community, we must all continue to wear masks in indoor spaces on campus, monitor ourselves for any possible COVID-19 symptoms, and get tested if we have symptoms or are in close contact with a known positive case.

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I appreciate everyone's preparation for the spring semester, and I look forward to seeing everyone back on campus next week.

Sincerely,

Mike Lewis, Ph.D.
Provost