

## Requesting a COVID-specific Need for Fully Online Learning in Spring 2022

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Dear students,

As we look ahead to spring, we are again planning for in-person classes for the vast majority of our traditionally in-person offerings. Our extremely high vaccination rate on campus makes this possible, and we are fortunate to be seeing extremely low COVID-19 infection rates on campus.

However, we recognize that the continuing pandemic means some of you may need to learn fully remote for one more semester in the spring due to COVID-19-specific circumstances. Just as we did for fall, we will consider requests based on personal medical conditions, international visa/travel issues caused by COVID-19, and very limited other personal circumstances that directly result from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on lessons learned from the fall, we are making a number of changes to these processes. The changes should allow us to finalize reviews more quickly and to provide additional information to help students understand what is and is not possible for their particular situations. All changes were supported by students, staff, and faculty who developed our fall process.

You will find detailed information about how to request an exception due to COVID-19-specific circumstances on [this web page](#). Obviously, this information does not apply to students who are enrolled in fully online programs or who are in the School for Professional Studies or the School of Medicine.

I want to highlight several key aspects of the updated process:

- Fall 2021 exceptions do not automatically apply to spring. If you had an exception this semester and need to request one for spring, you must initiate a new request.
- Students will not simply “Zoom in” to in-person classes. This means each student who receives an approval to learn fully online will have a unique set of course options identified that make it possible to remain on track. Those options may include a combination of fully online courses, independent or directed study courses, and/or deferring an experiential learning requirement until you can be on campus.
- An exception is not guaranteed. A particular school/college or program simply may not be able (or in some cases allowed) to provide online options for every course you may need in order to move forward in your program of study. We will do our best to provide appropriate alternatives in those cases where a COVID-19-specific circumstance appears to warrant fully online learning. However, some programs may have accreditation restrictions, experiential learning requirements, personnel limitations, and/or other factors that do not allow us to offer an online option.
- The deadline for continuing students to submit a request is **November 1**. (The deadline for new, incoming students is **November 15**.) The reason for a firm deadline is to ensure reviews can be completed and alternative online course options identified while students are still finalizing their spring schedules.

- Students approved for fully online learning in the spring will learn online for the entire spring term. Because online course options are created specifically for each approved students' situation, students cannot begin online and then come to campus later in the semester.
- Students with approved exceptions to learn fully online should not be on campus for any activities. If you can safely live on campus and engage in in-person activities on campus, you can safely attend classes in person.
- Only requests that demonstrate (and support with documentation) a clear COVID-19-specific reason why a student cannot learn on campus will be considered. Students with other, non-COVID-specific circumstances may wish to explore alternatives to being on campus in the spring, such as a Leave of Absence, a reduced course load, etc.
- Requests that do not demonstrate a clear *need* to be fully virtual due to a circumstance directly linked to the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be approved. Students who are experiencing non-COVID-specific situations may have other options available to them (e.g., Leave of Absence, reduced course load, etc.). The criteria for COVID-specific situations that may warrant an exception are described more fully [here](#).
- It is important to know that students who are not approved for a fully online exception still may be able to register for online courses at SLU, depending on course availability and their own degree progression.

I know this continues to be a challenging time for our campus community, for so many reasons. It is my strong hope that each of you will be able to join us for in-person classes in the spring. For those who can't, know we continue to be here for you.

Best regards,

Mike Lewis, Ph.D.  
Provost