

# COVID-19 Phased Plan for Returning Employees to Work



*Division of Human Resources,  
Employee Diversity  
and Wellness*

## **Disclaimer**

This planning document and related response plans are based on the current state of the COVID-19 Global Pandemic and related Federal and South Carolina declared States of Emergency. Guidelines, recommendations, or planned procedures contained herein are based on guidance documents issued from multiple federal and state agencies as adapted to the Winthrop campus. These documents may be altered, revoked, or amended by any, or all, of the following: changes to the state of the pandemic within the United States or the State of South Carolina, changes to any previously issued state or federal regulatory guidance, issuance of new pertinent guidance by any state or federal regulatory agency, Executive Orders issued by either the President or the Governor, federal or state legislation, or new widely accepted public health best-practice recommendations.

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# Winthrop University COVID-19 Phased Plan for Returning Employees to Work

*Winthrop takes the safety of employees and those in the campus community seriously, and to that end, we are implementing an incremental and flexible approach to returning employees to the workplace and resuming campus operations. The phased plan includes short-term and long-term planning on returning employees to work and returning to normal operations.*

## **PHASE I**

Effective June 1, 2020, FTE employees who are not able to work from home will be returned to their normal workplace on Winthrop's campus. During Phase I Winthrop will continue to focus on maintaining critical operations and employees who have been working from home will continue to work from home. In addition, some employees may require direct supervision while working on campus. If this is the case, supervisors, who may otherwise be able to work from home, may be required to also return to their campus work place. Depending on the availability of work, temporary employees who are not able to work from home may be returned to work, but supervisors are not required to return temporary employees. Student employment may continue in a work from home capacity unless otherwise approved by the divisional vice president or the provost.

### **Office Environment**

Winthrop has been, and will continue to follow CDC, OSHA, and DHEC guidance regarding thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting campus buildings and workspaces. These specific processes will be ongoing for the foreseeable future. Employees should regularly clean frequently touched surfaces in their immediate work space (door handles, phones, keyboards, desktops, etc.). Facilities will clean and disinfect high-touch

surfaces twice per day. Employees need to clean their own work areas and common equipment (phones, copiers, etc.).

Employees should practice social distancing in common areas such as conference rooms, break rooms, and hallways.

During Phase I, offices with high traffic from campus constituents or the public must not allow walk-in traffic. Campus constituents and members of the public must be seen by appointment only. Office entry doors must remain locked and visitors should be provided a designated number to call upon arrival.

When possible, items should be left in a secure drop box outside the office door. Areas with high traffic from campus constituents or the public may contact Facilities Management to discuss the installation of a Plexiglas shield in certain work spaces. Writing utensils and other items used by the public should be cleaned regularly by employees in that business area.

### **Expectations of Employees to Follow Public Health Guidance**

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to protect the campus community, all Winthrop employees are required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and follow CDC protocol for self-care. Prior to returning to work on campus, employees will be required to review

expectations of employees to follow public health guidance while on Winthrop's campus, to review the expectations of employees to self-monitor and respond to symptoms or exposure, to review the required training and resources, and to complete the online acknowledgement for returning to work on campus. All of this information will be available on the [COVID-19 Information for Employees](#) section of the HR website under the Faculty and Staff Return to Work Notification, Training, and Resources section.

Until further notice, employees will be required to [wear protective face coverings](#) at all times, except when the employee is working alone in a private office. Specifically, face coverings must be worn when the employee leaves their private work space and in all face-to-face interactions. Currently Winthrop is supplying face coverings and other PPE for facilities employees based on CDC guidelines for employees in certain professions. For their own comfort and convenience, employees are encouraged to bring their own face covering when possible.

### CDC Protocol for Social Distancing

- Stay at least 6 feet from other people
- Do not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings

### CDC Protocol for Self-Care

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going into the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

## Employees

- At the time of publication of this communication, according to DHEC, symptoms of COVID-19 include shortness of breath, coughing, fever of 100.4 °F or greater, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and/or new loss of taste or smell.
- If you are experiencing symptoms or are sick, do not come to work.
- If you become ill while at work, notify your supervisor, **GO HOME IMMEDIATELY, CONTACT YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER,** and contact Human Resources, Employee Diversity, and Wellness at [FSCOVIDReporting@winthrop.edu](mailto:FSCOVIDReporting@winthrop.edu), indicating a phone number at which an HR representative can reach you or call 803/323-2273 and indicate your need to discuss a COVID-related situation. An HR representative will contact you with additional information and instructions.
- If you are or appear visibly sick, your supervisor may require you to go home. (Supervisors should use discretion in determining when to send an employee home, taking into consideration symptoms associated with general allergies and the common cold.) Please contact the office of Human Resources, Employee Diversity, and Wellness for assistance.
- If you have been in close contact with any person known to have been diagnosed with COVID-19 **DO NOT COME TO WORK.** You must first notify your supervisor that you are taking sick leave or working remotely and then contact Human Resources, Employee Diversity, and Wellness at [FSCOVIDReporting@winthrop.edu](mailto:FSCOVIDReporting@winthrop.edu), indicating a phone number at which an HR representative can reach you or call 803/323-2273 and indicate your need to discuss a COVID-related situation. An HR representative will contact you regarding the need to self-quarantine and additional instructions. Should symptoms arise during your self-quarantine, you should follow [CDC guidance regarding what to do if you are sick](#). If you were diagnosed and have recovered from the COVID-19 virus, contact Human Resources, Employee Diversity, and Wellness at [FSCOVIDReporting@winthrop.edu](mailto:FSCOVIDReporting@winthrop.edu), indicating a phone number at which an HR

representative can reach you or call 803/323-2273 and indicate your need to discuss a COVID-related situation. An HR representative will contact you to give you clearance to return to work.

- Known reckless behavior on the part of any employee may result in a requirement to self-quarantine and/or in disciplinary action.

## Guidance for Managing Employee Concerns

Winthrop will continue to follow federal, state, and healthcare guidelines to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus on campus; however, some employees may have special circumstances that cause a greater degree of concern when returning to work on campus. To the extent possible, HR will work with employees and supervisors to allow work from home for employees with high risk circumstances, with family members with high risk circumstances, or those impacted by child care availability. Continued work from home options should be considered for these employees to the extent possible. When work from home is not possible for employees with high risk circumstances or child care issues, employees may consider the Emergency Paid Sick Leave, Advanced Sick Leave, and/or Emergency Family Medical Leave if applicable to their particular circumstances.

While we do want to provide as much support to our employees as possible, an employee may not refuse to report to work if there are no options available for telecommuting or leave. Even if an employee has accrued paid leave, if they do not meet the eligibility criteria or have exhausted the options available specific to the COVID-19 pandemic, the employee must follow the directive to report to work. Supervisors and employees who have specific concerns should e-mail [HRHelp@winthrop.edu](mailto:HRHelp@winthrop.edu).

## Vehicle Travel

If employees must be in vehicles or travel in vehicles to perform their job duties, during Phase I, only one employee may be in the vehicle at a time to the extent possible. In situations where the work requires a crew or more than one person in a vehicle at the same time, all occupants must wear

face coverings.

## Non-Essential Travel

All non-essential travel continues to be prohibited.

## PHASE II

Phase II will be implemented on July 6, 2020. The implementation of Phase II will continue a gradual return to normal operations. During Phase II supervisors should implement a plan to allow a reduced on campus work schedule resulting in approximately 50% of the workforce being in an office at any given time. While during Phase II, campus offices will be required to remain open and operational; supervisors are strongly encouraged to schedule a combination of employees working on campus and working from home in order to reduce the number of employees working in a common work space and allow safe social distancing. Supervisors will work with individual employees to schedule on campus work and work from home. Until further notice, supervisors and employees should use the Temporary or Emergency Telecommuting Guidelines when allowing employees to work from home.

## Office Environment

During Phase II supervisors must continue to employ the guidance issued for Phase I that allows for safe social distancing and cleaning of high-touch surfaces in the workplace. With more employees on campus in Phase II, supervisors may additionally consider reassigning a work location, scheduling meetings using conference calls or one of the online meeting platforms and modifying work practices to reduce the likelihood of personal interaction with others (e.g., install secure drop boxes for the delivery of documents or develop online forms and processes).

## Expectations of Employees to Follow Public Health Guidance

Prior to returning to work on campus, employees will be required to review expectations of employees to follow public health guidance while on Winthrop's campus, to review the expectations of employees to self-monitor and respond to symptoms or exposure, to review the required training and resources, and to complete the

online acknowledgement for returning to work on campus. All of this information will be available on the COVID-19 Information for Employees section of the HR website under the Faculty and Staff Return to Work Notification, Training, and Resources section.

During Phase II, employees must continue to adhere to the guidelines for social distancing, self-care protocol, and wearing face masks as required in Phase I. Also during Phase II, employees continue to be required to notify Human Resources when an employee is suspected to have been exposed to COVID-19, is experiencing symptoms, or has tested positive for the virus. See Phase I guidance for additional information.

### Guidance for Managing Employee Concerns

Winthrop will continue to follow federal, state, and healthcare guidelines to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus on campus; however, some employees may have special circumstances that cause a greater degree of concern when returning to work on campus. To the extent possible, HR will work with employees and supervisors to allow work from home for employees with **high risk circumstances**, with family members with high risk circumstances, or those impacted by child care availability. Continued work from home options should be considered for these employees to the extent possible. As daycare operations and regular child care options begin to normalize, employees should make arrangements for child care. Special circumstances may be discussed with supervisors and HR if necessary. When work from home is not possible for employees with high risk circumstances or child care issues, employees may consider the Emergency Paid Sick Leave, Advanced Sick Leave, and/or Emergency Family Medical Leave if applicable to their particular circumstances.

While we do want to provide as much support to our employees as possible, an employee may not refuse to report to work if there are no options available for telecommuting or leave. Even if an employee has accrued paid leave, if they do not meet the eligibility criteria or have exhausted the options available specific to the COVID-19 pandemic, the employee must follow the directive to report to work. Supervisors and employees who

have specific concerns should e-mail [HRHelp@winthrop.edu](mailto:HRHelp@winthrop.edu)

### Vehicle Travel

If employees must be in vehicles or travel in vehicles to perform their job duties, during Phase II, only one employee may be in the vehicle at a time to the extent possible. In situations where the work requires a crew or more than one person in a vehicle at the same time, all occupants must wear face coverings.

### Non-Essential Travel

All non-essential travel continues to be prohibited.

## PHASE III

Phase III will be announced and implemented at a date to be determined according to guidance from the SC Department of Administration/SC Human Resources Division and Winthrop's Interim President. During Phase III, Winthrop will continue to follow federal, state, and local guidance in determining when the risks of infection associated with the COVID-19 pandemic event have been mitigated and the protocol and other measures required in Phase I and Phase II (see above) may be discontinued or altered. Phase III will require most employees to return to their campus workspaces while adhering to requirements regarding workplace safety, with the exception of those with unique situations. During Phase III, supervisors are encouraged to be sensitive to employees with high risk circumstances and allow work from home to the extent possible. As daycare operations and regular child care options begin to normalize, employees should make arrangements for child care. Special circumstances may be discussed with supervisors and HR if necessary. In addition, we will continue to follow healthcare and environmental guidelines for providing a safe work environment, including guidance for environmental health and safety and social distancing.

Winthrop will determine when the Temporary or Emergency Telecommuting Guidelines will be discontinued. At that time, the Winthrop University Telecommuting Policy [policy currently being developed] must be followed in allowing employees to work remotely.

# General Office Etiquette

*Winthrop's divisions were charged by the Interim President with developing plans to return to work safely, taking into account guidance from the COVID-19 [Phased Plan for Returning Employees to Work](#), the CDC, and other sources. With varied content particular to each area, the plans were designed to keep faculty and staff members, students, visitors, and others safe upon returning to the workplace following the March 2020 campus closure due to COVID-19. All plans covered general office etiquette as indicated below, with few exceptions.*

## Identification of Sick and/or Infected Faculty or Staff Members

All faculty and staff members are expected to monitor any symptoms related to COVID-19 each day before reporting to work. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and DHEC, these symptoms may include:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever of 100.4 °F or greater
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

Any faculty or staff member who is sick and experiencing **symptoms of COVID-19** should not report to work. They should notify their supervisor that they will need to take sick leave, and contact their healthcare provider and Human Resources, Employee Diversity, and Wellness at [FSCOVIDReporting@winthrop.edu](mailto:FSCOVIDReporting@winthrop.edu), indicating a phone number at which an HR representative can reach you or call 803/323-2273 and indicate your need to discuss a COVID-related situation.

If faculty or staff members become sick at work with symptoms of COVID-19, they should leave work immediately. notify their supervisor

that they will need to take sick leave, and contact their healthcare provider and Human Resources, Employee Diversity, and Wellness at [FSCOVIDReporting@winthrop.edu](mailto:FSCOVIDReporting@winthrop.edu), indicating a phone number at which an HR representative can reach you or call 803/323-2273 and indicate your need to discuss a COVID-related situation. Human Resources also should be informed if a faculty or staff member is suspected of possibly being ill with COVID-19 because of symptoms displayed at work or if a faculty or staff member suspects he/she may have been exposed to the virus through contact with an individual who has tested positive.

If a faculty or staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19, he/she will be expected to self-isolate according to DHEC and CDC guidance. Those who are well but have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 should also notify Human Resources and follow the [CDC's recommended precautions](#). They will be asked to self-isolate to protect other colleagues.

## Expectations for Sharing the Workplace with Colleagues

Faculty and staff members are expected to follow public health guidance, complete the requirement to review the COVID-19 training/ resources and complete the acknowledgment prior to returning to work on the Winthrop campus. All of this information is available on the COVID-19 Information for Employees section of the HR website under the Faculty and Staff Return to Work

Notification, Training, and Resources section.

## Hygiene Practices

In addition to the aforementioned expectations, faculty and staff members should follow these hygiene practices:

- Hand washing – wash hands often for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, especially after being in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or touching your face. If soap is not readily available, clean hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, and wash hands after touching your face.
- Coughing/sneezing – if you are in a private setting and do not have a face mask or covering, remember to cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Then, throw the tissue away in the trash. Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water is not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Follow the recommendations of the CDC for the care and cleaning of non-disposable face masks and coverings (routine washing in a washing machine suffices, based on frequency of use).

## Use of Face Masks/Coverings and Social Distancing

Winthrop's policy is to require campus-wide universal **masking/face covering** unless individuals are outdoors or in private offices or rooms. This requirement reflects suggested guidance from the CDC and evidence that masks and face coverings can reduce potential exposure to COVID-19 among groups of people. The university will make the following provision of masks:

- The university will make washable, reusable face masks available to every faculty and staff member who does not have a mask for their personal use. These will be to use at work and will be available upon Phase 2 of the return to work plan.
- The university will provide visitors who are on official campus business a single, disposable mask if they do not have one.

Faculty and staff members will be required to wear a face mask or covering when moving around offices and interacting with other colleagues, students, or visitors. Masks and face coverings will not be required if the faculty or staff member is working alone in his/her office and the door is closed.

Similarly, faculty and staff members also should practice **social distancing** and remain at least six feet apart from students, colleagues and visitors. Social distancing will be accomplished in the office setting through a number of general protocols.



## Appointment-Only Visits

Emphasis will be placed on avoiding face-to-face communication as much as possible. During the working from home period, the campus community learned that a great deal of work can be accomplished via telephone, email or one of the virtual meeting platforms.

When in-person visits are required, visitors generally will be asked to **make appointments** where possible. Some offices will not initially allow walk-in customers or visitors. How a particular office handles this will be communicated on the office's website, on signage at the office entrance, and on any phone recordings for the office. It is imperative to communicate this protocol so as not to inconvenience colleagues, students and others. Likewise, as protocols adapt, any changes should be noted and communicated in the same ways.

Typically, those with appointments will need to call a front desk number or knock when they arrive, and a faculty or staff member will allow entry. Signage outside the office also will typically indicate where items may be safely dropped off and picked up. Mail will typically be left outside the office where agreed upon with the postal employee.

Reflecting the campus-wide protocol, students/colleagues/visitors will be required to wear a face mask or covering when visiting an office. Visitors will be kept to a minimum number, preferably with no more than one visitor waiting in a lobby or welcome area at a time. Appointments will be scheduled so waits are minimized or eliminated. In offices with wait seating, some seats will be eliminated and others will be appropriately socially distanced. Plexiglas barriers will be placed at front desks or at the desks of employees who typically have face-to-face contact with students/colleagues/visitors.

## Socially Distanced Meetings if Required

When possible, meetings should not be face-to-face. The use of telephone, email or one of the virtual meeting platforms would be preferred to limit interactions among individuals.

Larger conference spaces may be utilized when face-to-face meetings are required. The Environmental Health and Safety task force is

working with staff to review seating capacities for classrooms and other meeting rooms requested by staff across campus. Whenever face-to-face meetings must be held, in addition to the mask and social distancing requirements, work surfaces and high-touch surfaces also must be cleaned following the conclusion of the meeting. This is the responsibility of the meeting host.

For **external appointments** where faculty and staff are representing Winthrop, masks must be worn and social distancing must be practiced even when the meeting is not held on campus.

## Work Space Modifications

Ideally, faculty and staff will have a private office or, if none is available, a work area that is adequately socially distanced from other employees. Divisions will identify and **utilize available offices/work areas** where possible, and they will modify common work areas to provide additional space and privacy. Where this is not possible, Plexiglas barriers and other modifications will be implemented to reduce close contact. This will be increasingly important as the university moves toward August reopening.

## Traffic-flow Management

Directional signage within offices will be added as needed to direct the traffic flow of faculty, staff, students and visitors. Arrows on floors to indicate traffic flow may be used. Some doors may be closed; others may be designated for particular individuals to use. All of these efforts will help minimize any unintentional close contact among individuals and comply with social distancing requirements.

Planned traffic flow restrictions in hallways must be approved by Environmental, Health and Safety to ensure compliance with fire codes. Traffic flows restrictions in all stairwells are prohibited for this same compliance issue.

## Queue Protocol

Markings or stickers with 6' spacing indicated will be placed in areas where "customers" (students, employees, visitors) typically wait for services. Marking to indicate where not to stand also may be used.

## Common Areas and Use of Office Equipment

Faculty and staff should generally avoid gathering in common areas. Shared use of telephones, calculators, staplers, scissors, etc., is prohibited. Any office copiers and/or network printers will be disinfected throughout the day by users. Copier cleaning supplies will be provided by Printing Services, and instructions on cleaning the machine will be posted nearby. Locations of copiers or networked printers may change if necessary (for example, from a small closet or space to a larger common area with more ventilation).

For offices that utilize a break room or common space for lunch, food preparation should be kept to a minimum and avoided when possible. Employees should stagger breaks so that only one staff member is in the area at a time. Disinfecting wipes should be used to clean refrigerator, microwave and other handles. Faculty and staff are encouraged to pack lunches in insulated bags or small coolers if they prefer not to use shared appliances in break areas.

## Cleaning and Disinfecting

Staff members are encouraged to clean and disinfect their personal office spaces, including door knobs, each day before leaving the office. Facilities Management staff will regularly clean and disinfect common frequently touched surfaces and equipment (office door handles, restroom door handles and surfaces, vending machines, etc.). Employees are discouraged from drinking from communal use water fountains.

## Mail Operations

Where possible, mail will typically be delivered outside of offices so that postal employees can remain in hallways to limit their moving about in offices. Some offices may choose to pick up their mail from the post office.

## Signature items

To limit the number of forms being passed among employees and offices for approvals, electronic signature systems will be used wherever possible.

