



DEPARTMENT of
GEOSCIENCES

College of Arts & Sciences

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Geosciences, ETSU
Academic Year 2020-2021
Plans & Policies

Fall 2020

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Introduction

To help facilitate the health and safety of students, researchers, staff (including non-departmental staff, such as custodians and facilities service employees), and faculty, the Department of Geosciences (GEOS) has developed plans and policies for all GEOS activities, including (but not limited to) classroom teaching, research and organizations (such as GeoClub). Our intention is to follow *best practices* by using State and University guidelines <https://www.etsu.edu/coronavirus/> and <https://www.etsu.edu/coronavirus/documents/modified-stage-2-etsu-base-operations-fall-2020.pdf> as a baseline, but also incorporate additional protection as may be appropriate to our Geosciences community, specifically for field and lab-based instructions. To be effective, we encourage students, faculty, and staff to adhere to these requirements and ETSU COVID-19 policies, even when conducting personal activities.

The department recognizes that there are/will be limitations imposed by the following policies, including lack of progress on student theses or faculty research from March 2020 until the pandemic's impairment of said activities ceases. Untenured faculty have the option to 'stop the tenure clock' based on university policy <https://www.etsu.edu/com/dean/documents/policy-on-tenure.pdf>. Graduate and undergraduate students are permitted to participate in research activities required for their academic course of study. Continuing graduate students may adjust their research project to complete their degree on time, and can be eligible for Thesis and Dissertation Scholarship <https://www.etsu.edu/gradschool/funding/scholarships.php>.

Key ideas driving this document:

- Individuals differ in the risk COVID-19 poses to them and to others in their household
- Individuals differ in their tolerance of this risk
- Individuals with the greatest tolerance of risk will not be allowed to impose their standards on others
- Individuals do not have to document or justify their own assessment of risk (i.e. medical conditions) to experience situations that make them feel unsafe

University policy

Individuals must comply with all University regulations, including daily self-assessment and reporting, before traveling to campus and following guidelines for self-quarantine when required. See the ETSU return to campus plans: <https://www.etsu.edu/coronavirus/>

Extending GEOS policy

Failure to follow these policies and protocols will be viewed as a violation of GEOS's workplace standards and health and safety requirements, possibly leading to disciplinary action for employees and students (https://www.etsu.edu/human-resources/documents/ppps/ppp70_progressive_discipline.pdf and https://www.etsu.edu/policies/documents/studentconduct_disciplinarysanctions.pdf). Though we hope the protocols listed here avoid situations where additional (personal) actions are needed, individuals should feel empowered to take reasonable steps and be even more cautious than described in this document, for their own safety. If one needs to leave a space because health and safety requirements are not followed, please do so immediately and report the situation to the GEOS department chair, Dr. Arpita Nandi (nandi@etsu.edu).

Mask protocol

Following the ETSU policy, all Geosciences faculty, staff, students, and other persons (including visitors, guests, contractors, etc.) will furnish their own mask and wear the mask according to COVID-19 Policy on Face Coverings <https://www.etsu.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety/face-coverings.php>.

Masks shall be worn on campus while:

- Inside Geosciences buildings and facilities
- Outside when physical distancing between persons cannot be maintained

Faculty, staff, and students who are unable to wear a mask due to a medical or other condition should contact Disability Services by telephone at [423-439-8346](tel:423-439-8346) or by email at littleme@etsu.edu to request accommodation.

We recognize that:

- The chance of an infected person passing on the disease is *substantially* lowered by wearing a mask.
- The chance of an uninfected person getting the disease is *somewhat* lowered by wearing a mask.
- Thus, choosing not to wear a well-fitted mask is not so much assuming risk to oneself, as imposing a risk on another without their consent. This is contrary to GEOS's community standard of care for each other.
- Masks must be worn properly: they should cover the mouth and nose. With a proper mask, it should be impossible to blow out a birthday candle: no one-way valves, no gaps on the side, no exposed nose.
- If an individual appears in a group setting, such as a classroom, without a mask, they will be asked to put a mask on, asked to leave the room if they do not comply, and/or reported to the GEOS department chair, Dr. Arpita Nandi (nandi@etsu.edu). This may lead to disciplinary action. The instructor has the right to dismiss a class session entirely if they believe doing so will reduce the risk of disease transmission.

Offices

- Even for faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergraduate students who have offices, or workspaces not shared with others, the safest place to work is still from home. If you have a private office at ETSU, you may work without a mask when you are alone and behind a closed door. If someone knocks, you are expected to answer the door wearing a mask.
- Graduate students who work in communal offices should practice social distancing (spatial and/or temporal). In practice, this means Graduate offices can only have two occupants, wearing masks and keeping 6 ft apart if two occupants are in the room at the same time.
- If needed, graduate students' office space will be relocated to faculty labs or unused classrooms. Please contact Dr. Nandi (nandi@etsu.edu) or Dr. Samuels (samuels@etsu.edu) in coordination with Julie Blevins (blevinjm@etsu.edu) if you need assistance with respect to graduate student office space in GEOS.
- In-person interactions in the GEOS departmental office continue to be restricted. The office will maintain high function via the use of online forms, alternative arrangements for receiving mail, e-signatures, etc. Drop-in meetings with office staff are suspended for fall 2020. Face-to-face meetings may be arranged by appointment.
- Faculty, staff, and graduate and undergraduate students will meet via Zoom, talk on the phone, and/or conduct business via email. In-person meetings should only be scheduled when absolutely necessary. Please contact GEOS department staff via email if you need assistance setting up an appointment.

Classes

- A large number of our courses this fall will be conducted remotely. Face-to-face instruction or tutoring will be restricted and will require that all persons wear well-fitted, protective masks, regardless of ability to social distance.
- For face-to-face classes, students must exit the classroom promptly. Students in the following class must not enter a classroom until all students in the previous class have exited.
- Sanitary wipes will be available, and students will be expected to clean their workspace upon arrival and before leaving the class.
- Six or more feet of social distancing is expected at all times.
- It is likely that students in some face-to-face classes will have to quarantine over the course of the semester, generally for two weeks at a time. Instructors will work with students to accommodate those in quarantine, so their learning is not impeded.
- Some students may wish to learn remotely throughout the semester. They should communicate this decision with each of their instructors by the first scheduled class meeting. If such an arrangement is impossible, due to the nature of some courses, the student should take another class (students should consult their academic advisor for guidance).

Research

Following the ETSU Provost Plan for Return to Academic Research Activities policy

https://www.etsu.edu/irb/documents/covid19_research_activities_update_6_24_20.pdf and Modified Stage 2 – Substantial Restrictions (modified base plan for Fall 2020 term

https://www.etsu.edu/irb/documents/covid19_research_activities_update_6_24_20.pdf, research activities are permitted with physical distancing and other safety measures.

- To minimize transmission risks, each group should consider the "pros and cons" of on-campus research and office time. Each lab group should prepare a written plan detailing any work that requires in-person or on-campus effort (see the point about safety plans below). Please review the COVID-19 Information for Researchers https://www.etsu.edu/irb/documents/covid19_research_activities_update_6_24_20.pdf
- Research rooms with common-use equipment will be used in the safest manner possible. Generally, no more than two persons per standard laboratory (~500-600 square feet) will be permitted. Each individual is expected to wear a mask and keep 6 ft apart if two occupants are in the laboratory at the same time. Exceptions will require approval.
- Best practices may include (but are not limited to) the use of a sign-up calendar to limit the number of people in a lab at any given time.
- If working in shifts, please coordinate with the GEOS office staff, so they can communicate with the custodial staff to minimize exposure.
- Graduate students are encouraged to work with their advisors/mentors to consider suitable projects that could be accomplished by maintaining University health and safety guidelines (such as meta-analyses, theoretical studies, analysis of in-house or external datasets, computer modeling, etc.). Graduate students should reach out to their advisors, members of their graduate committees, the GEOS graduate coordinator, and/or chair to discuss ideas or inquire about additional resources.
- Before initiating research in a GEOS lab, investigators must discuss the full safety plan with the research group in accordance with https://www.etsu.edu/irb/documents/etsu_researchsafetyguidelines_8_5x11.pdf. (Additional questionnaires are available in 'Request to Initiate or Resume Form' in https://www.etsu.edu/irb/documents/covid19_research_activities_update_6_24_20.pdf). If an individual in a research group setting refuses to follow the safety plan, they will be asked to

follow the plan or leave the laboratory. The incident must be reported to the investigator or the GEOS department chair, Dr. Arpita Nandi (nandi@etsu.edu). This may lead to disciplinary action.

Travel

- Social distancing is not possible in a vehicle, even a large university van. Air flow, even with windows open, is not sufficient. Department vans will not be used in fall 2020.
- Travel within the state and outside the state will follow ETSU policies <https://www.etsu.edu/coronavirus/documents/modified-stage-2-etsu-base-operations-fall-2020.pdf>. Please be aware of the unpredictable nature of travel restrictions, both through reaction to disease spread and new border policies of various states and nations. Also, be mindful of self-isolation restrictions that may apply for up to 2 weeks upon either arrival at, or return from, your destination.
- Before any research travel (with more than one person) is initiated, a full safety plan must be added to the travel authorization form before travel is approved.

Meetings

- All group meetings, such as departmental seminars, committee meetings, lab group meetings, and other discussion groups will take place remotely on Zoom or other platforms for the foreseeable future.
- Individuals needing computing support (home computers or internet access) should seek support from ITS (<https://www.etsu.edu/its/>) to request devices, for info on working remotely, or for other help. For additional assistance (e.g. captioning), individuals should contact ETSU Disability Services (<https://www.etsu.edu/students/ds/>).

Common spaces

- Communal areas (e.g. kitchens, mailroom, and restrooms) must be occupied by only one person at a time.
- Refrigerator, microwave, coffee maker, and other related kitchen gadgets will be unavailable for use in fall 2020.
- Restrooms are also communal spaces; one must regularly use soap and water or hand sanitizer to clean hands after touching the door, faucet, and toilet handles.

Helpful links

Health and Safety information

<https://www.etsu.edu/coronavirus/health-and-safety/>

<https://www.etsu.edu/coronavirus/documents/modified-stage-2-etsu-base-operations-fall-2020.pdf>

Face coverings policy

<https://www.etsu.edu/policies/health-safety/face-coverings.php>

COVID-19 Information for Researchers

https://www.etsu.edu/irb/documents/covid19_research_activities_update_6_24_20.pdf

Campus Rec currently offering many virtual activities

<https://www.etsu.edu/students/campusrec/athomerecreation.php>

Course Management for Teaching During COVID 19

<https://www.etsu.edu/coronavirus/documents/etsu-course-management-for-teaching-during-covid-19.pdf>

A link to the full policy on face coverings should also be included in syllabi.

<https://www.etsu.edu/policies/health-safety/face-coverings.php>

Information about course formats being offered this fall

<https://www.etsu.edu/coronavirus/students/fall-2020-classes.php>

How to read your course schedule

<https://www.etsu.edu/reg/fall2020formatting.php>

Sherrod Library online resources

<https://libraries.etsu.edu/home>

Classroom attendance is available in the FAQ's

<https://www.etsu.edu/coronavirus/documents/bucs-are-back-frequently-asked-questions-07-30-2020.pdf>