

University of California Employee Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is UC sharing a proposed policy? When will a final policy be ready?

The University is engaging its community in a discussion of the details of the proposed policy now, so students, faculty, academic appointees and staff will have ample time to obtain the vaccine ahead of the fall semester. UC is working on the details for faculty, academic appointees and staff and is sharing the proposed policy with labor leaders. UC expects that a final policy will be ready for the start of the fall 2021 term. The proposed policy is contingent on full approval of a COVID-19 vaccine by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and reasonable access to vaccine doses.

2. Does the proposed policy require vaccination for all employees or only those who work on-site?

Pending full approval of a COVID-19 vaccine by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and reasonable access to vaccine doses, the requirement to receive a COVID-19 vaccination would take effect for faculty, academic appointees and staff who may access UC facilities or programs in person starting in the fall of 2021. Faculty, academic appointees and staff who work only remotely would not be required to receive a vaccination for the fall but will need to be immunized before returning to a University location under the current proposed policy.

3. What are the consequences of non-compliance for employees?

We have seen strong interest in receiving a COVID-19 vaccine from people across California and the nation. We believe this demand will continue and most people will make the decision to be vaccinated against a virus that can cause serious disease and has killed more than half a million people in the United States alone. The proposed policy is contingent on full approval of a COVID-19 vaccine by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and reasonable access to vaccine doses. If the proposed policy is adopted as drafted, faculty, academic appointees and staff who choose not to be immunized and who do not receive an approved medical exemption or religious belief exception may be limited in accessing UC facilities.

4. How would these consequences be enforced?

UC campuses have systems in place for promoting compliance with health and safety policies and protocols, and those protocols have been enhanced during the past year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the differences in programs and facilities across the UC system, each campus will communicate to its faculty, academic appointees, staff, and labor representatives the details of procedures at each UC location.

5. What does “vaccinated” mean; does it refer to one or two shots depending on vaccine? Does it include a period of time after the dose for an immune response?

Under the proposed policy, UC would require faculty, academic appointees and staff to show proof that they have received a full dosage of a vaccine, which is either one or two shots depending on the type and manufacturer. The proposed policy is contingent on full approval of a COVID-19 vaccine by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and reasonable access to vaccine doses. The University would prefer that faculty, academic appointees and staff receive their full dosage at least two weeks before arriving for in-person work at a UC facility, but that is not a requirement in the proposed policy as currently drafted. The COVID-19 vaccines in use, like most vaccines, take time to stimulate an antibody response that creates resistance to illness. Physical distancing, mask-wearing and frequent hand-washing and cleaning are expected to continue to be crucial for daily campus life.

6. When would the proposed policy go into effect for employees?

Ideally, the proposed policy will go into effect for the fall 2021 term at each UC location. Because the dates for the start of fall terms are different across the UC system, each campus will communicate a specific date for faculty, academic appointees and staff to fulfill the requirement. UC already strongly encourages students, faculty, academic appointees and staff to voluntarily obtain a vaccination as soon as they are eligible and able to schedule an appointment. The requirement will be mandatory only after full approval of a COVID-19 vaccine by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and sufficient availability of vaccines for all faculty, academic appointees and staff who wish to be vaccinated.

7. Are medical exemptions or disability or religious accommodations allowed?

Yes. Medical exemption and religious belief exception requests will be considered, but if approved, may result in alternative safety precautions like increased surveillance testing.

8. Does the requirement apply to postdocs on the same basis?

Yes, requirements apply to postdoctoral researchers and trainees.

9. Who will maintain the documentation?

Faculty, academic appointees and staff will be advised on the process for providing vaccination information after a policy is finalized.

10. How will exemption requests be documented, and by whom?

Much of the infrastructure for reviewing compliance with health policies is already in place to support the University’s overall immunization policy. However, each campus is working through the details of the systems for faculty, academic appointees and staff who request exemptions.

11. How can employees get vaccines? Will UC offer vaccinations?

UC encourages faculty, academic appointees and staff to look for opportunities near their homes to be vaccinated as availability on or near each campus may be limited. Faculty, academic appointees and staff should check the state's vaccination website at myturn.ca.gov for appointment availability.

12. Will non-exempt employees and hourly academic appointees receive paid time off to receive the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) vaccine?

Yes, non-exempt employees and hourly academic appointees may take up to four hours of paid time to obtain each dose of the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) vaccine. Employees and appointees must provide advance notice to their supervisor. If an employee or appointee needs more time for this purpose, they may request Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) (Reason 3(d)) for the additional time. Berkeley Lab employees should contact Berkeley Lab HR for assistance.

13. What if I experience flu-like symptoms as a result of the vaccine? Does that mean I cannot work as scheduled?

Please contact your supervisor or local human resources office for assistance.

14. If one or more vaccines receive final FDA approval, will a vaccine that is under emergency use authorization and not final FDA approval satisfy the requirement?

Yes, all COVID-19 vaccines offered under an emergency use authorization (EUA) or full approval by the FDA will satisfy the vaccination requirement.

15. Is the COVID-19 vaccination requirement a permanent change to the University's immunization policy that will continue the requirement in future years?

Vaccination remains the most effective way to bring this pandemic to an end and to prevent a resurgence of the pandemic in local and campus communities. We strongly encourage everyone throughout all of our communities to be vaccinated as well as to continue physical distancing, mask-wearing and frequent hand-washing. If the proposed policy is approved as drafted, the COVID-19 vaccination requirement would be a permanent update to the University's policies and would take effect for the 2021-2022 academic year.

16. Does this requirement apply to visiting scholars and visiting students?

Yes. One of the main purposes of the vaccine mandate is to reduce the risks of being on campus, and it applies to all students, faculty, other academic appointees, and staff living, learning, or working on premises at any UC location or participating in University programs, like Education Abroad. The requirement is not premised on whether a person is a paid employee, but rather whether they are a student, member of the faculty, other academic appointee or staff entering a UC facility or participating in-person in a University program. Accordingly, the requirement does apply to visiting scholars and visiting students.

17. Will this requirement apply to union-represented employees?

Yes, in accordance with any applicable collective-bargaining requirements.

18. Is immunization against influenza still required?

The UC requirement for influenza vaccination is still in effect through June 30. A determination has not yet been made whether the influenza immunization requirement will be continued for the 2021-2022 academic year. Any changes or continuation of that requirement will be announced at a later date.