

CTS Covid-19 Policy - July 12, 2021

Vaccinations

Chicago Theological Seminary requires all students to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 in order to attend in-person classes (including semester face-to-face classes, flex classes, hybrid classes, and intensive classes), CTS events, or to be present on campus for any reason at any time, unless they have received an exemption. CTS will continue to offer a robust selection of online courses, allowing unvaccinated students to continue their progress toward a degree. Please see Covid-19 Vaccination Policy for Students (beginning on page 3) for complete details including information for exemptions.

Chicago Theological Seminary requires all staff and faculty to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 in order to work on site at CTS, to attend CTS events, or to be present on campus for any reason at any time, unless they have received an exemption. Where possible, CTS will continue to allow remote work options, allowing unvaccinated staff and faculty the ability to continue their employment at CTS. Please see Covid-19 Vaccination Policy for Employees (beginning on page 5) for complete details including information for exemptions.

Please keep in mind that there are significant privacy concerns about asking individuals for their vaccination status on an ad hoc basis. Faculty, staff, and students should refrain from asking individuals about their vaccination status.

Social Distancing

In alignment with the City of Chicago's guidance, CTS is revising our social distance guidance.

- Outdoors – Social distancing restrictions, including capacity and density restrictions, are no longer in effect for outdoor spaces.
- Indoors – Social distancing restrictions are being lifted for indoor spaces for fully vaccinated individuals.
- Dining – Exempted individuals should maintain at least 6 feet distance while eating or drinking indoors; distancing restrictions are no longer in effect for vaccinated individuals while eating or drinking indoors.
- Moving and Gathering – Members of the CTS community are encouraged to move with purpose in common areas or spaces with large groups of people; please avoid congregating.

Masking Requirements

- Outdoors – Masks are not required for people who are outdoors on CTS grounds.
- Indoors – Everyone is expected to continue to wear a face covering over the nose and the mouth at all times while in the CTS building, with narrow exceptions.
- Private spaces – An Individual can remove their face coverings if they are in a private room/office alone, with the door closed, or while eating or drinking.

We expect many members of our community will choose to maintain distance and use face coverings for various reasons, and we request everyone to act with consideration and understanding regarding these choices.

Surfaces/Use of Spaces/Hand Sanitizing

Recent epidemiological data indicate Covid-19 is not spread through physical contact with surfaces. Therefore, the use of water fountains, coffee makers, microwaves, etc., is once again permitted across CTS.

Restrooms, elevators, and stairwells can be used at normal capacity.

Hand sanitizer, disinfecting spray and cleaning wipes are available in several locations in the CTS building, including the South reception desk, the North and South main entrances, outside the Learning Commons, and on the landings of the 2nd and 4th floors. As part of general health and safety guidelines, people are encouraged to wash hands frequently, use hand sanitizer, and disinfect high-touch surfaces. CTS staff will no longer be sanitizing spaces and surfaces throughout the day.

Additional Questions

For additional information, please read the FAQ section of this document carefully, beginning on page 7. Also, please reference the Academic Matters note from Interim Dean Mikva dated July 12, 2021.

COVID-19 VACCINATION POLICY - STUDENTS

I. Purpose

Consistent with its commitment to providing and maintaining a learning environment that is free of recognized hazards, Chicago Theological Seminary has adopted this policy to safeguard the health and well-being of employees and their families; our CTS students and visitors; others who spend time in our facilities; and the community from infectious conditions that may be mitigated through an effective vaccination program. This policy is intended to comply with all state and local laws. It is based upon guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and public health and licensing authorities, as applicable.

II. Scope/Applicability

This policy applies to all graduate and non-degree students who attend classes on campus or who plan to be on campus for any reason beginning September 1, 2021. **Students refers to persons enrolled at CTS and ACTS (Association of Chicago Theological Schools) students who opt to take CTS in-person courses.** CTS classes for Fall 2021 begin Tuesday, September 7.

III. Policy

Chicago Theological Seminary requires any student, who intends to take in-person classes at CTS, to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 on or before August 16, 2021 in order to be permitted on CTS premises, unless they have received an exemption. Students may apply for medical or religious exemptions under the standards set forth below. Those who receive an exemption from the vaccination requirement may be subject to best practice public health safety measures for unvaccinated students, including face-covering requirements, testing protocols, and/or other safety measures while present on campus. To establish that they have received a vaccination, students must present written evidence of immunization from the designated vaccination site or from another authorized healthcare provider via email to Joey Rodil, Admissions & Student Records Coordinator, at joey.rodil@ctschicago.edu. **Please send us a PDF with your COVID vaccination record. You may take a photo, but save the file as a PDF before sending it.**

IV. Vaccine Administration

Students are fully vaccinated no earlier than two weeks after receiving the final recommended dose(s) of an FDA- or WHO-approved COVID-19 vaccine or a COVID-19 vaccine granted Emergency Use Authorization by the FDA. Students are responsible for scheduling and obtaining their vaccines.

V. Request for Exemptions

Religious/Philosophical Exemptions

Chicago Theological Seminary will approve exemptions to the vaccine mandate in circumstances where a student's sincerely-held religious or philosophical beliefs, observances, or practices conflict with the vaccination requirement. Students must submit a written exemption request to Associate Dean Emily Vogt detailing how the vaccine requirement conflicts with a particular, sincerely-held religious or philosophical belief, practice, or observance on or before August 16, 2021. The exemption form is found at this [link](#). General philosophical, scientific, moral, personal, or medical objections to immunizations in general, or the COVID-19 vaccines specifically, may be recognized for the religious exemption.

Medical Exemptions

Chicago Theological Seminary will approve exemptions to the vaccine mandate in circumstances where a student has a medical condition precluding the vaccine. Students requesting a medical exemption must submit to Associate Dean Emily Vogt a request [form](#) on or before August 16, 2021.

The medical exemption request form must be completed by a licensed, treating medical provider (MD, DO, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant) detailing the applicable CDC contraindication for the COVID-19 vaccine.

VI. Policy Modification

Government and public health guidelines and restrictions and business and industry best practices regarding COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines are changing rapidly as new information becomes available, further research is conducted, and additional vaccines are approved and distributed. Chicago Theological Seminary reserves the right to modify this policy at any time in its sole discretion to adapt to changing circumstances and business needs, consistent with its commitment to maintaining a safe and healthy workplace and living and learning environment.

VII. Non-Retaliation

Chicago Theological Seminary prohibits any form of discipline, reprisal, intimidation, or retaliation for reporting a violation of this policy or any other health and safety concern.

VIII. Intentional Misrepresentation or Failure to Comply

Intentional misrepresentation contained in the request for an exemption or failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action which may include suspension/expulsion.

COVID-19 VACCINATION POLICY - EMPLOYEES

I. Purpose

Consistent with its commitment to providing and maintaining a workplace that is free of recognized hazards, Chicago Theological Seminary has adopted this policy to safeguard the health and well-being of employees and their families; our CTS students and visitors; others who spend time in our facilities; and the community from infectious conditions that may be mitigated through an effective vaccination program. This policy is intended to comply with all state and local laws. It is based upon guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and public health and licensing authorities, as applicable.

II. Scope/Applicability

This policy applies to all employees who will be working on campus at any time beginning September 1, 2021.

III. Policy

Chicago Theological Seminary requires all employees to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 on or before August 16, 2021 in order to be permitted on campus premises, unless they have received an exemption. Employees may apply for medical or religious exemptions under the standards set forth below. Those who receive an exemption from the vaccine requirement may be subject to best practice public health safety measures for unvaccinated employees, including face-covering requirements, testing protocols, and/or other safety measures while present on campus. To establish that they have received a vaccination, employees must present written evidence of immunization from the designated vaccination site or from another authorized healthcare provider via email to Michele Carr at mcarr@ctschicago.edu. **Please send us a PDF with your COVID vaccination record. You may take a photo, but save the file as a PDF before sending it.**

IV. Vaccine Administration

Employees are fully vaccinated no earlier than two weeks after receiving the final recommended dose(s) of an FDA- or WHO-approved COVID-19 vaccine or a COVID-19 vaccine granted Emergency Use Authorization by the FDA. Employees are responsible for scheduling and obtaining their vaccines and may get the vaccine during their regularly scheduled work hours contingent on supervisor approval. Chicago Theological Seminary will pay employees for time spent getting the vaccine if done during their regular work hours. Supervisors must approve employee leaves to obtain the vaccine during working hours to minimize business interruptions.

V. Request for Exemptions

Religious/Philosophical Exemptions

Chicago Theological Seminary will approve exemptions to the vaccine mandate in circumstances where an employee's sincerely held religious or philosophical beliefs, observances, or practices conflict with the vaccination requirement. Employees must submit an exemption request form to Michele Carr detailing how the vaccine requirement conflicts with a particular, sincerely-held religious or philosophical belief, practice, or observance on or before August 16, 2021. The exemption form is found at this [link](#). General philosophical, scientific, moral, personal, or medical objections to immunizations in general, or the COVID-19 vaccines specifically, may be recognized for the religious exemption.

Medical Exemptions

Chicago Theological Seminary will approve exemptions to the vaccine mandate in circumstances where an employee has a medical condition precluding the vaccine. Employees requesting a medical exemption must submit to Michele Carr a request form on or before August 16, 2021 using this [form](#). The medical exemption request form must be completed by a licensed, treating medical

provider (MD, DO, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant) detailing the applicable CDC contraindication for the COVID-19 vaccine.

VI. Policy Modification

Government and public health guidelines and restrictions and business and industry best practices regarding COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines are changing rapidly as new information becomes available, further research is conducted, and additional vaccines are approved and distributed. Chicago Theological Seminary reserves the right to modify this policy at any time in its sole discretion to adapt to changing circumstances and business needs, consistent with its commitment to maintaining a safe and healthy workplace.

VII. Non-Retaliation

Chicago Theological Seminary prohibits any form of discipline, reprisal, intimidation, or retaliation for reporting a violation of this policy or any other health and safety concern. Employees are also expected to report work-related injuries and illnesses, and Chicago Theological Seminary will not discharge, discriminate or otherwise retaliate against employees for reporting work-related injuries or illnesses or good faith health and safety concerns.

VIII. Intentional Misrepresentation or Failure to Comply

Intentional misrepresentation contained in the request for an exemption or failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action which may include termination/dismissal.

FAQs

What does this policy mean for classes?

In March, CTS noted plans for [2021-22 in the Academic Matters](#) FAQ. Information in that document pertaining to classes, course schedules, modalities, the Learning Commons, and Commencement has not changed. Briefly, **courses will be delivered: face-to-face (in-person at CTS with some Canvas support); online (synchronous and asynchronous sessions employing Canvas and Zoom); hybrid (online with required face-to-face sessions); and flex (online with some face-to-face sessions and an online alternative for those who cannot participate in the specified face-to-face sessions).** All Summer 2021 courses are currently online and will run through August 20, 2022. See the [course schedule](#), Campus Café or the Registrar for specifics.

Here are dates as noted on the [2021-22 Academic Calendar](#). Fall 2021 semester opens on September 7th. The class add/drop period runs from September 8 through September 17. J-term 2022 commences January 3. As of today, J-term 2022 intensive courses will be face-to-face. Spring 2022 semester starts January 31st.

Again, CTS will offer in-person classes beginning Fall 2021. For persons opting not to take face-to-face courses, CTS will continue to provide online courses so students may complete their degree programs online. The exception to this is PhD students. Per the Association for Theological Schools (ATS), PhD students must complete half of their classes in residence. The waiver from ATS and the Department of Education granted through June 30, 2021 that allows PhD students to take all their courses online has expired and will not be extended. However, [SEVIS, or the Student Exchange Visitor Program](#) will continue to allow international doctoral students to take online courses. PhD students with questions about course modality should contact Associate Dean Emily Vogt, PhD Program Director. CTS is accredited by ATS.

What about CTS-Bayan classes?

Bayan and CTS offer an MDiv and MA with specific foci. [Bayan](#) employs a hybrid modality for its courses. While a portion of the work is online, there are required weeklong, in-person sessions. Bayan courses will meet in-person at CTS on October 10-15 and October 17-22, 2021 and March 13-18 and March 20-25, 2022. These dates could change. For additional information about Bayan classes, contact Munir Shaikh at munir.shaikh@ctschicago.edu or the Registrar, Tina Shelton, tina.shelton@ctschicago.edu.

What about building access?

All staff, faculty and students must use their keycard for entry as the doors will remain locked. We ask that you do not hold doors open for other people as we will be using the keycard swipe as a contact tracing measure. All guests and visitors must sign in at the South Reception desk. *Please note that key card access will be deactivated for any staff, faculty, and students who do not submit proof of vaccination or receive an exemption by August 16, 2021.*

What are the classroom protocols?

Faculty, students, and TAs are required to wear masks while in the classroom. Students refers to those enrolled at CTS and ACTS students who are opting to take CTS in-person classes. Faculty and students should be reminded not to leave handouts or other materials in the classroom and to thoroughly wash their hands.

Who is responsible for cleaning classrooms?

A cleaning service will continue its weekday services, but CTS staff will no longer be sanitizing spaces and surfaces throughout the day. As previously noted, hand sanitizer, disinfection spray and cleaning wipes are available in several locations in the CTS building, including the South reception

desk, the North and South main entrances, outside the Learning Commons, and on the landings of the 2nd and 4th floors. As part of general health and safety guidelines, people are encouraged to wash hands frequently, use hand sanitizer, and disinfect high-touch surfaces. CTS staff will no longer be sanitizing spaces and surfaces throughout the day. However, a cleaning staff will continue its weekday services.

What if I am an online student with no intent of taking CTS courses in-person?

Whereas the policy centers on CTS and ACTS students who are planning to take courses in-person at CTS, online students who do not intend to come to campus are exempt from submitting proof of vaccination. If at any time an online student desires to enroll in an intensive course or any in-person class at CTS, or to attend any event at CTS, or to otherwise be on campus at CTS, proof of full vaccination will be required or the student must request an exemption.

Will I be able to study in the Learning Commons?

The Lapp Learning Commons is [open](#). Hours of operation are Monday to Thursday 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.CT. Beginning the Fall 2021 semester, the Learning Commons will be open Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. CT with evening hours on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to 9 p.m.CT. If you wish to visit the Learning Commons, you must adhere to all protocols related to wearing a face mask, sanitizing areas, and disinfecting your hands. Curbside pickup will no longer be available in the fall. The library stacks are now open and students are able to directly explore and handle books on their own. In addition, the course reserves collection is available for checkout. Group study rooms will remain available for PhD students to reserve for individual use for the duration of the semester. The Learning Commons can do limited scans of reading materials that are not available in digital format and can provide virtual reference services via email and Zoom. Please email library@ctschicago.edu or the Director of the Learning Commons, Yasmine Abou-El-Kheir, yasmine.abou-el-kheir@ctschicago.edu, if you require assistance.

What about Common Areas?

All persons are required to wear masks while visiting common areas such as the kitchen spaces, meditation room, third-floor student area, hallways, restrooms, fourth-floor dining hall, and both chapels. Masks do not have to be worn in personal offices or in private study areas. Disposable masks are available at the South Reception desk.

What about New Student Orientation?

New students will have the option to attend a low density, in-person orientation. For those who opt not to come to CTS for this event, the complete orientation program is online. For additional information contact Rev. Amy Aschliman, Asst. Director of Student Formation and Community Engagement at amy.aschliman@ctschicago.edu.

What about staffing at CTS?

CTS staff and faculty are still encouraged to work remotely, as they are able, in an effort to limit the number of persons in the CTS building. Most staff and faculty members are in their offices on occasion, and some are regularly present several days per week. If a student needs to meet with a particular staff or faculty person, that student should email the staff/faculty member in order to arrange a time to meet either in person or virtually.

What about other CTS Events?

Beginning in the fall there may be some low-density, small on-campus events that meet local, state, and federal public safety guidelines. Larger events such as the Annual C. Shelby Rooks Lecture will take place online. We are hopeful about the spring, making plans for events—including Commencement—to be held in-person.

Does this mean visitors will be allowed on campus?

As the COVID-19 pandemic persists, visitors to CTS are restricted to those explicitly invited and hosted by a faculty, student, or staff member. This includes ACTS students who opt to take CTS in-person courses. Visitors must wear a face mask at all times. Face coverings need to fully cover the nose and mouth and have ear loops to securely hold them in place. CTS expects every person who enters the building to adopt precautions designed to mitigate the risk of viral transmission. Please know CTS shares this in the spirit of hospitality and generosity.

I'm planning ahead, so what about Commencement?

CTS Commencement is scheduled for May 13, 2022 at 2 p.m. CT. Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, IL, the site for our ceremony, is quite spacious and should be able to accommodate our graduates and loved ones in safety and comfort. Prospective 2022 graduates should be in touch with their advisors and Tina Shelton in the Registrar's Office, tina.shelton@ctschicago.edu. Persons who participated in virtual commencement in 2020 and all scheduled to participate in 2021 virtual services are invited to walk in the 2022 ceremony. Individuals graduating in May 2021 should have already received pertinent information.

While we are planning for an in-person event, our plans are subject to any Covid restrictions that may be in place at that time by the CDC, state or local guidelines, or Trinity UCC.

What if I have a concern?

These times are still uneasy. CTS is here to journey with you. If you have academic concerns, please go directly to the respective professor. If you do not receive a timely response, feel free to contact the Interim Academic Dean, Dr. Rachel Mikva, rmikva@ctschicago.edu. (Dean Crowder is on sabbatical.) Students may also complete the [anonymous complaint form](#) found on the website. Faculty advisors as well as the Student Government Association are also student advocates. Additionally, there is an academic grievance process outlined in the [Student Handbook](#).

If you have pastoral or spiritual concerns, connect with Asst. Director of Spiritual Formation and Community Engagement, Amy Aschliman, amy.aschliman@ctschicago.edu.

To report non-compliance with this COVID-19 policy, contact Director of Facilities, Shauna Warren shauna.warren@ctschicago.edu.