

Masking Alternatives for Instruction

Updated October 28, 2020

COVID-19 spreads primarily from person to person via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Studies and evidence on infection control report that these droplets usually travel around six feet (about two arm lengths). Therefore, the use of a face covering that fully covers your mouth and nose is required at all times while on campus, unless you are alone in an individual closed office space or are outside and can maintain at least six feet of physical distance from others. Face coverings provide limited protection to the wearer, but may prevent the virus from spreading to others by capturing or blocking respiratory droplets.

Due to concerns regarding the use of universal face masks/coverings and the ability to effectively lecture and instruct in certain situations, alternatives continue to be evaluated to determine if they can be used during lectures to improve visual and verbal communication (see table below). Factors such as breathability, user comfort, fit, and design are considered. Based on these evaluations, limited options are recommended. This is due to concerns with potential deficiencies associated with source control, breathability, comfort and design. Evaluations are ongoing and recommendations for alternative options during instruction may change over time. Alternative face mask styles that are not listed will require evaluation and approval from EH&S prior to use. Contact EH&S @ 314-362-6816 if there are questions concerning alternative face masks.

An alternative mask should only be used when the lecturer's visual or verbal communication is adversely impacted and/or affects students who rely on seeing the instructor's mouth when speaking. Instructors and staff who use an alternative mask must stay in a dedicated fixed zone in the room rather than circulating. This fixed zone must maintain physical distancing of at least six feet to further mitigate risk. A face mask/covering must be worn at all times with the exception of lecturing inside the fixed zone. The School or Department will determine and approve when alternative masks are necessary when lecturing or providing instruction.

This guidance was developed jointly with faculty representatives from the McKelvey School of Engineering and the Infectious Disease Division of the School of Medicine, and with user feedback from faculty in Arts & Sciences, Brown School, Law School and others.

The following table provides a summary of the anticipated pros and cons for each alternative device that has been evaluated to date. Please note that approval status of recommended styles may change over time based on ongoing research.

*Alternative Mask Style	Pros	Cons
 <p data-bbox="305 384 532 411">Mask with window</p>  <p data-bbox="253 646 557 674">e.g. XPRS™ / The Communicator™</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allows visual communication - Blocks aerosols, fluids and sprays for the user - Should block large droplets in user-exhaled air - Similar to traditional face mask/covering fit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - User comfort unknown - Unknown breathability - Unknown fogging or droplet accumulation - Rarely some individuals with certain medical conditions may not be able to wear
 <p data-bbox="350 741 483 768">Face Shield</p> 	<p data-bbox="610 741 1235 768">Not recommended based on the following concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recent studies have demonstrated limited source control - Ongoing data collection indicates source control dependent on distance to face and angle of shield - Potential glare; potential fogging or droplet accumulation - Must be used in conjunction with other measures 	
 <p data-bbox="318 1066 516 1094">Clear-Type Mask</p>  <p data-bbox="350 1266 483 1293">e.g. ClearMask™</p>	<p data-bbox="610 1066 1235 1094">Not recommended based on the following concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not designed for re-use - User comfort: hot - Poor breathability after 10 minutes - Mask moved around on face and difficult to adjust 	
 <p data-bbox="289 1388 548 1415">Enclosed Face Shields</p>  <p data-bbox="329 1665 508 1692">e.g. Humanity Shield™</p>	<p data-bbox="610 1388 1170 1415">Not approved based on the following concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial testing indicated potential build-up of CO2 levels inside the shield 	

*Alternative masks summarized in this table represent a general style or type, and not a particular brand. Styles similar to those depicted would be expected to have comparable pros and cons.