



UNIVERSITY OF
ST. THOMAS

UST REOPENING

STUDENT FAQ

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges and questions for the fall semester, but *together we can and will overcome those challenges*. Please read this FAQ, and let us know any additional questions you might have at stayhealthy@stthom.edu

Thank you, Celts!

FAQ

01

Opening of Campus

Is the University opening for in-person classes in the fall and, if so, when?

Yes! UST classes will begin as scheduled on August 24, but will be starting in the online environment. The face to face components of courses that are designated as in-person or hybrid will begin after Labor Day on September 21, depending on the conditions presented by the pandemic at that time.

What is the current schedule for classes in the fall? Will there be a fall break, and will there be classes after Thanksgiving?

There are two key differences to the fall academic calendar: Fall break will not be observed this semester to facilitate a new model for the end of the year. Following Thanksgiving break, the remainder of the semester will be completed online. This measure is being taken to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 back to the UST campus following the heavy travel that typically occurs during Thanksgiving break, when many students return home to visit family.

How will incoming students receive new student orientation?

Although the informational portion of orientation will be conducted online, there will also be an in-person component designed with safety in mind. It is important that we continue to engage as a community, and that we continue to celebrate our new and graduating students. On August 17, a car parade will be conducted to welcome freshmen and transfer students. Drive-thru service will provide students with IDs, UST T-shirts and giveaways, and a new Microsoft Surface for each freshman. Look for more information from Student Activities as the event draws near!

What plans should international students make for the Fall semester?

Recent developments you may have seen in the media appeared to threaten the visas of new international students. Those issues impact only new international students at institutions that are operating exclusively online. UST is offering some classes in hybrid format, and our international students can rest assured that their status is not currently in jeopardy. New or current international students should reach out to the International Student and Scholar Services office at 713-525-3503 isss@StThom.edu with any questions or concerns.

What happens if the University has to go fully online again?

None of us can be sure of the future course of this pandemic. What we can be sure of, is that UST has prepared for every possible contingency. If conditions worsen and UST is forced to go fully online once again, students can count on a smooth transition, and course content specifically designed for such an occasion. We will be engaged and connected, no matter the delivery method.



FAQ

What is UST's health and safety plan for the Fall 2020 semester?

UST's plan is extensive. Since February, our Emergency Task Force, led by Chief H.E. Jenkins, has been meeting twice per week to assess, develop, and deploy safety protocols with the goal of exceeding recommended guidance. Arriving on campus will look different this semester. You will be greeted with informative signage, and directed to a temperature taking station. You will also be asked to complete an electronic self-evaluation to identify any potential symptoms of COVID-19. Campus will be marked with Lenny the Lion's pawprints in all heavily trafficked areas, to indicate where you can stand to safely physical distance, and staff members will be helping you from behind sneeze-guards manufactured right here at UST. If someone is diagnosed with COVID-19, they will be immediately quarantined and the University then activates a team of trained contact tracers to mitigate the exposure risk as quickly as possible. If one of our classroom environments has potentially been exposed, that classroom will be immediately closed and sanitized top to bottom by facilities personnel who have been recently trained with new state of the art electro-static sprayers.

Do I have to wear a mask on campus?

Yes, all UST faculty, staff, students, and visitors to our campus must wear a mask at all times, both while indoors and outdoors. A branded, UST mask will be provided to each student. Appropriate use of face masks or coverings is critical in minimizing the risks to others around you, as you can spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick. The mask or cloth face covering is not a substitute for physical distancing. You may wear either a disposable mask or a cloth face covering that covers the mouth and nose. Other types of loosely fitting face coverings such as bandanas are not permitted. Students who fail to comply with this policy may be subject to action under the Code of Student Conduct.

What campus facilities will be open?

All essential facilities needed to serve students will be open, but hours and usage may be slightly modified or limited for safety reasons. Some facilities, including the library, have gone to great lengths to be modified to provide enhanced student study areas and internet connectivity. Please use the campus directory to contact specific offices prior to your visit with any questions you may have.

How will classes be structured to ensure safety (physical distancing)?

UST is fortunate to have small class sizes, and that is really helping with both online instruction and physical distancing. Inside the classroom, students will be spaced 6 feet apart and wearing masks, and your instructor will be wearing PPE as well. If a hybrid or purely in-person class was unable to be accommodated by the size of a particular classroom, that class has been assigned to a larger room, or divided into two groups that will alternate between in-person and online instruction. Large facilities normally reserved for events are being repurposed for academics as well.

FAQ

What will on-campus housing look like?

The residence hall will be open, and all students will be tested for COVID-19 before move in. The University will facilitate testing free to students if it is not covered by that student's insurance. Feedback gathered from students indicated that many felt they needed to live on campus in order to be successful, so UST is opening housing with a new approach that keeps safety as a top priority. The residence halls will be occupied at a limited capacity, with many students living in single occupancy rooms. In some situations, double occupancy requests will be allowed if the students meet specific criteria and sign a waiver. Common areas will be restricted, and temperatures will be taken before students enter Guinan Hall.

What is the protocol for visitors to campus?

For health and safety reasons and to reduce density on campus, visitors will not be allowed.

Where should I report if I receive a confirmed positive test for COVID-19?

Anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 should not come to campus, and should immediately contact the University Police Department at stayhealthy@stthom.edu so that UST can implement quarantine and contact tracing protocols. The University is here for you, and prepared to help you with resources and online instruction until you are able to safely return to campus.

What should I do if I am concerned about being exposed?

We should all be educated and judicious about the risk of exposure. Taking care of ourselves and our own health is the best way to take care of each other. The most effective way to minimize exposure is to follow guidelines established by the CDC and other groups with similar expertise. These resources and more are available to you at stthom.edu/stayhealthy

What is the current guidance regarding University travel?

UST is suspending university sponsored international travel for business or study through December 31, 2020. Students who travel outside the United States for significant reasons such as family illness or death must inform the Dean of Students prior to leaving. UST is also prohibiting all non-essential university-related domestic travel through December 31, 2020. Essential trips should be coordinated through the Office of Emergency Operations. Students are encouraged to avoid personal travel to countries with a CDC Level 2 or 3 Travel Health Notice related to COVID-19. Although the University cannot prohibit personal travel, be aware that personal travel could affect your ability to return to the University campus. Students who have traveled for any reason to countries with a CDC Level 2 or Level 3 Travel Health Notice related to COVID-19 will not be allowed to return to any part of the University campus, including locations other than the main campus, for 14 calendar days after leaving the aforementioned countries. Students who do not comply with these restrictions may face disciplinary action. Once the student has returned from travel outside the US, they must reach out to Office of Emergency Operations (UST PD) before returning to campus. Individuals who have been in close contact with travelers who were in countries with CDC Level 2 or Level 3 Travel Health Alerts for COVID-19 should contact healthycelt@stthom.edu.

FAQ

03

Classes – In person, Online & Hybrid

When will I know the format of my fall courses? Will my section be online or in-person, how can I tell?

The delivery format of your course is what we call *Instruction Mode* and is currently listed on your fall courses. Any change to your course instruction mode will be reflected on the course by the Registrar's Office as soon as we received notification of the change. At this time, fall courses are listed with the following instruction modes:

- **In-person** – All students meet in the assigned room at the same time. *Please note that, even if your course is listed as In-person, if you do not feel comfortable meeting in the classroom, please notify your instructor and they will be happy to assist you.*
- **Hybrid** – All students meet in the assigned room at the same time, but some of the course utilizes online learning.
- **Online Asynchronous** – Students take the course online at their own pace during the semester; there are no strict meeting times.
- **Online Synchronous** – Student take the course online during the semester, but have specific meeting times where the class will meet together via an online platform such as Zoom or Blackboard.
- **Hy-Flex** – Students can attend as if the course is either **In-person OR Online Synchronous**.

Each of your courses will be labeled with one of these instruction modes. To view each one, go to your *Student Homepage* in myStThom, click *Search Classes and Register*, and click each course – the instruction mode appears under the *Class Details* tab (screenshot attached).

What if I have a question about my fall 2020 course?

If you have questions about the general format of your course prior to the start of the semester (including when, where, and how the class will meet) please review your schedule in MyStThom. The first class meeting for ALL courses will be virtual, and your instructors will help to explain the format and instruction mode for each course during that first meeting, especially if the course includes face-to-face instruction. The Registrar's Office will also be happy to assist you if you have any questions. Please contact us at 713.525.2150 or registrar@stthom.edu.

How will the university determine who can attend in-person classes?

Sections that are listed as Hybrid Hy-Flex will have the option of an in-person element. Those sections will also be available fully online should a student not wish to attend in-person. Just as students are being given the option to be 'online only', Faculty were given the same choice. Many faculty opted to remain strictly online for the fall semester, so those sections listed as online will not be available in-person.

FAQ

03

Classes – In person, Online & Hybrid

Do I have an option in how I participate if one option is preferable to me or not available?

Students enrolled in Hybrid or Hy-Flex course sections will have the option of attending fully online if they do not wish to attend in-person. If your course is listed as online, there will not be an in-person option.

What if a class is held in-person, and I do not feel comfortable attending?

No student will be asked to attend in-person if they wish to be fully online. Every classroom has been equipped with technology to livestream and/or record the lecture for delivery through BlackBoard.

How can I meet with my academic advisor in the fall 2020 semester?

You can call or email your advisor. Many advisors will also meet with you through Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate. You may also reach out to the Office of Academic advising and they will be glad to assist you at (713)831-7227 or at advising@stthom.edu

What will the grading policy be?

UST is returning to normal grading policies for the fall semester.

Will there be changes to Library operations?

Yes. Many of the library's book stacks have been relocated to provide additional study spaces and internet connectivity. Students in a hybrid schedule can utilize this space for online classes on days when they come to campus for in-person classes. Any student with connectivity issues at home should also consider this a valuable resource.

Will there be changes to the Academic Calendar in terms of add/drop or refund deadlines?

No. These dates currently remain unchanged.



FAQ

What do I do if I do not have adequate internet service at home?

Don't worry, you have options. UST has wireless access in the library and computer labs available to you. If you prefer to solve your home connectivity, there are resources available. CeltCare has already helped hundreds of students solve their challenges with financial awards, and still stands ready to help those who still struggle with accessibility. celtcare@stthom.edu

What can I do if I can't connect to Zoom, Blackboard or other platforms during class time?

Contact your professor to work out a solution. There are many ways that student's needs can be accommodated if you discuss your needs with faculty beforehand.

How do I let my instructor know that I will be taking a course online?

All courses will begin online, with in-person components beginning in September. If you plan on remaining online, simply let your professor know before hybrid classes begin the in-person component.

Will I be able to meet with my faculty member in-person?

In most cases, faculty will conduct office hours virtually. Students with special requests should reach out to their professor individually.



FAQ

Will students living on campus be required to self-quarantine when they arrive?

No. Students living on campus will be tested for COVID-19 in the days before move-in. Student Athletes will also be tested before reporting to campus. We will be restricting guests for the first two weeks at minimum.

Can two people request to be roommates?

Yes. There is a process and criteria for requesting a roommate/double occupancy. Interested students can contact residence life at (713)525-3836 or residencelife@stthom.edu. Most students who will be in double occupancy rooms have requested a specific person by name who they know well and plan to have frequent interactions with. At this time, only 35 students will be in a double with a roommate assigned by Residence Life.

What will the campus dining experience be?

Meal service will continue throughout the semester, and protocols for service are currently being finalized. Dining services will include increased grab and go options for students, tables that are physically distanced, and an increase in the number of spaces where students can eat (Crooker cafe, Ahern, Crooker patio, etc.).

Will there be a change in pricing for student housing and meals?

No. Because housing and meal plans will continue to be offered throughout the semester, there is no change to the pricing for those who elect for a double room. If a student selects a single room, there is a cost increase for that single room (the cost is 1.5x that of a double room.)

FAQ

What will student life on campus look like?

We will provide a set of environments and services to support Main Campus student life in ways that are structured to reduce density, maintain physical distancing, and provide for virtual participation. On-campus events and activities may be modified during the Fall 2020 semester based on health and safety guidance.

We realize how important community and social bonds are to student well-being. As we get closer to the fall semester, more information will be available regarding continuity plans for student activities and services, keeping in mind the needs of our population both in-person and virtual.

What will the academic and co-curricular experience be like for students who are virtual?

We must connect and thrive as a community, whether virtual or in-person. Many resources have been invested in making the academic experience engaging and fulfilling. UST has upgraded to BlackBoard Ultra, hired a team of instructional designers to assist faculty in developing online courses, and outfitted all of our classrooms with high tech 86 inch smart screens.

On the student life side, teams are dedicating their creativity and activity budgets to creating new contactless in-person experiences that will be rolled out throughout the semester.

How can I continue to develop in my faith? When will the Chapel be open?

Campus Ministry will continue providing spiritual support for students and opportunities for prayer, worship, reflection, service, and fellowship. The majority of these will be offered virtually at the beginning of the fall semester. The Chapel of St. Basil will continue to be open daily for private prayer, and Confessions and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will be offered multiple times per week. When it is appropriate to resume public Masses for our University community, we will offer public Masses in accordance with both Archdiocesan and state guidelines, and the Sunday 10:30 am Mass will continue to be livestreamed via the Campus Ministry Facebook page. All staff members are available for individual spiritual direction and pastoral care via Zoom - email campusministry@stthom.edu.

What University services and support will be available virtually?

From counseling to career services, advising to events, UST is prepared to offer virtual experiences when in-person is not an option. Simply reach out to the office you would like a virtual appointment with and request a meeting.

Has a decision been made on Athletics for the fall?

At this time, all UST and SCAC fall and winter athletic competition has been postponed until January, 2021. Our student-athletes, teams, and coaches will be allowed to practice and prepare for spring competition. The SCAC President's Council will meet periodically to reassess the landscape of college athletics to see if adjustments to the sports schedules should be considered. A Conference Scheduling Task Force is meeting and will be proposing a new scheduling model to shift fall and winter sports schedules into the spring semester.

FAQ

Will the fitness facilities at Jerabeck available for use?

The Jerabeck Activity and Athletic Center (JAAC) will open in early September to provide recreational and workout opportunities and facilities for our students. Reservations will be required to use any of the JAAC facilities.

How can students get access to mental health assistance?

There are several ways students can get access to mental health assistance. We offer free counseling services to all of our students, who can access more information and make an appointment at <https://www.stthom.edu/Campus-Student-Life/Counseling-Services/Index.aqf>. In addition, we are piloting a Wellness Success Coaching this semester, led by Debra Moyer, moyerd@stthom.edu, on stress management and overall health, that is a bit more proactive. Finally, each freshman, through their Freshman Symposium class, will have a designated Success Coach who is trained in the basics of mental wellbeing and stress management.

What Main Campus student programs activities will be allowed to happen on campus?

During the early parts of the semester, we are planning to still host smaller physically distanced programmatic events on campus, mainly targeted towards our residential population. Most larger events are currently virtual, some of which have an optional physically distanced component (for example the drive through celebration we are planning for a part of orientation). As circumstances and conditions allow, we hope to be able to offer more physically distanced face-to-face events. We also plan to have select buildings that house student service personnel to be open and staffed on a limited capacity and available for students.

Will there be Study Abroad in the fall?

No. Because of travel restrictions and safety concerns, students will not be able to study abroad.

When is it okay for student workers to return to on-campus work?

Student workers will be allowed to return to work on an individual basis based on the needs of the department, but will work virtually when possible. Supervisors will make this determination for student workers to return.

How can students find study groups?

Students who are interested in forming or finding study groups can do so in many ways, including via our Tutorial Services, via our UST student app, or asking their Peer Mentors for classes such as Freshmen Symposium and select other classes. Often students also form their informal study groups within their classes, or within student organizations to which they belong.



FAQ

Will the University continue to charge the same tuition rates for the Fall 2020 semester?

We will not be changing our tuition for the fall. The University, however, will be providing all undergraduate students in the fall \$500 in additional financial aid to help with the financial challenges they may have. Our financial aid department will also be working with students who have additional financial needs on helping fill those needs.

Our focus over the summer has been to prepare for a robust educational experience for our students for the fall knowing that a large number of our classes will need to be held virtually and on a hybrid basis until such time that the COVID-19 situation is much more under control. In this regard, our faculty and staff have been working diligently to provide our courses in blended modalities to enable all students to (i) gain the knowledge required within their degree, (ii) have access to their courses from wherever they are, and (iii) continue to move toward completing their degree and achieving their academic goals. In addition, we will be offering a variety of skills workshops to students to enhance their overall learning.

How is UST helping students and families who have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?

UST is working around the clock to help students and their families impacted by the pandemic. Over one million dollars in CeltCare funds have already been awarded, and the University has raised more than one million more to continue that effort. Chromebooks have been made available to students who need them, and all freshmen will receive a Microsoft Surface laptop in the coming weeks. In short, if you are in need of assistance of any kind; financial, emotional, or spiritual, reach out for help. celtcare@stthom.edu

What should a student do if their family's financial situation has changed and they may be in need of additional financial aid?

Don't hesitate to reach out for help. We have resources in place designed to assist you. Contact the financial aid office or celtcare@stthom.edu and let us know your needs.

If a student's financial aid package includes on-campus work study employment, will there be remote student jobs available for the fall?

Yes. In most cases, virtual jobs can be arranged in one of our departments. The pandemic may change how we operate, but UST is growing and there is still plenty of work to be done, in-person or virtual.