



Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science

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7/22/20—COVID-19 UPDATE—CAMPUS INSTRUCTION PLANS FOR CLASSES 161 AND 162 ONLY

As we get to the midway point of this Summer term, many students in Classes 161 (term 3) and 162 (term 2) have asked what is going to happen for the rest of the term (the Summer Non-Core students already know they will remain in Alternative Delivery). This correspondence is designed to begin to offer another option to enable pace and progression during this evolving state of the COVID-19 pandemic. While all of you have adjusted to the Alternative Delivery format, many of you have expressed the strong desire to return to campus classes...this memo will validate that we heard you!

As for the immediate future, Alternative Delivery with Zoom scheduled classes and its learning component will continue as is during the week of Monday, July 27, 2020 to Friday, August 1, 2020. In short, what you have been doing for the first half of the term, you will continue into next week. Accordingly, this update rescinds the July 9, 2020 memo stating that we would be back on campus, Monday, July 27, 2020.

However, based on the feedback we have received from many students we realize there is a group of students who would make the choice to come to campus classes if such classes were offered. We also realize there is a group of students who would prefer, for safety and health reasons, to continue in Alternative Delivery via Zoom and its learning. Appropriately, it seemed to be a reasonable consideration to see if PIMS could accommodate **both requests** (note: this message does not apply to the Non-Core Summer term as alternative delivery was established at the outset and will not change—this message is only for Classes 161 and 162).

While this first update will be followed by a more detailed correspondence early next week, a decision has been made to facilitate a plan for approval to begin offering campus in person instruction on Monday, August 3, 2020 simultaneously with the already scheduled Zoom lectures. While the July 9, 2020 PIMS COVID update referred to guidance offered by the Allegheny County Health Department to mitigate the spread by limiting “gatherings or events to 25 or less”, a subsequent plan offered by the Pennsylvania Department of Health defined gatherings and events further clarifying the potential to restart in person instruction but **only those who make that choice when available**. A gathering or event is defined by the Pennsylvania Department of Health:

What is an event or gathering?

An event or gathering is a temporary grouping of individuals who interact for defined purposes, that takes place over a limited timeframe, such as hours or days. For example, events and gatherings include fairs, festivals, concerts or shows and groupings that occur within larger, more permanent businesses, such as shows or performances within amusement parks, individual showings of movies on a single screen/auditorium within a multiplex, business meetings or conferences, or each party or reception within a venue. Similarly, groups of people who share a space within a building in the ordinary course of operations, such as in an office building, classroom, production floor or similar regularly occurring operation of a business or organization, are not "events or gatherings."

How do these Orders apply to schools?

The Orders do not affect classroom settings but do restrict school activities outside of the classroom that are not related to educational instruction. School activities and gatherings not related to educational instruction that are held indoors are limited to no more than 25 people. This includes meetings, assemblies, etc. Activities and gatherings held outdoors are limited to no more than 250 people.

From the previous definition, it becomes clear that in person instruction may be offered under limited circumstances with an emphasis on safety and health. It is understood that the evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused uncertainties for all. We “heard” the feedback from those who really wanted their campus experience, yet we respect the decision for others to “keep Zooming.”

Therefore, this plan, which is forthcoming, will hope to offer the best of both worlds subject to **student choice and faculty availability** (faculty members may opt of providing in person instruction so those classes will not be offered in the “simulcast” manner—a list will be provided next week).

We believe that a significant investment in technology has enabled us to be able to teach on campus to those students in attendance while broadcasting the Zoom in concert with the classes. Perhaps what may be even more beneficial is that all classes/Zooms will be recorded and shared to students by those instructors offering such a service—thus you can literally relive the class as many times as necessary whether you were in attendance or “Zoomed.” It is the opinion of all involved in this project, that offering in person classes to those who make that choice while simultaneously Zooming the effort is literally everything we can do during these extraordinary times.

Please know that if/when our plan is validated, we will follow up with a correspondence which should be no later than next Tuesday. In any case, whether you are going to attend the campus offerings or keep Zooming, **NO TIME SCHEDULES WILL CHANGE!** For example, if you are in Class 162 and scheduled for Embalming I on Mondays from 10:25AM to 11:15AM and Tuesdays from 9:30AM to 10-20AM, your attendance is mandatory—**BUT** it will be **YOUR CHOICE** for in person or alternative delivery. At this point, testing will continue using the itslearning method, but phase 2 of this plan may offer changes in that regard.

Finally, admittance to the building will be based on all guidance from the CDC and Pennsylvania Department of Health protocols. Obviously, if you want to come to class but do not pass the wellness check, you should have a “back up” plan to attend the class via Zoom. Please also understand that some instructors simply may opt out of this type of teaching, so they will continue to just offer their “normal” Zoom lectures.

In closing, we wanted all to know that we “hear” you and your requests, but we must strike a balance with the safety and health considerations needed in the midst of this everchanging situation. We hope you find it is yet another creative way we are trying to keep you making pace and progression during the pandemic. To that end, we suggest you begin to think about your schedule for the week of August 3, 2020 and, if you need to make arrangements to be in Pittsburgh to attend in person instruction or “stay home” and continue zooming—next week Dean Burns will seek a definitive decision.

Stay safe and stay healthy!