

UNCG Social Distancing Policy

Social Distancing: A public health best practice measure designed to limit the spread of infection by simply “...**putting distance between yourself and others to prevent the disease’s spread**” (Wells, Government Health IT, October 30, 2006 and the University of California Irvine, Pandemic Influenza Social Distancing Policy). Implementing social distancing measures “intended to decrease opportunities for close contact among persons in the community, thereby decreasing the potential for influenza transmission among people and possibly slowing the spread of a pandemic” (Guilford County Department of Public Health Pandemic Flu Plan, 2007 pg. 13, iv).

Social distancing measures may include:

- maintaining a personal distance between yourself and a person showing symptoms of illness;
- limiting public gatherings;
- closing schools, colleges, universities, and large child care centers;
- restricting or prohibiting public events; and
- closing public libraries, houses of worship, stadiums, and recreational facilities.

Determining at what point and at what level of social distancing measures to employ is a difficult decision. Social distancing measures could remain in place between 4-8 weeks (the University of California Irvine, Pandemic Influenza Social Distancing Policy). The federal, state, and local governing authorities may provide guidance in making the determination. Those authorities are likely to follow CDC and WHO recommendations.

In the event a novel flu strain achieves a WHO Phase 4 category, social distancing measures are likely. The severity of the measures are dependent upon the epidemiology of the flu strain, its response (if any) to anti-viral medications, the availability of effective medications, specific at-risk groups, the proximity of confirmed infection to a particular locale, and other factors. Most preparedness experts agree that instituting distancing measures early rather than later is most effective. The UNCG Emergency Preparedness and Response Team (EPART) is the body responsible for making recommendations regarding the implementation of social distancing measures to the University’s Crisis Management Group (expanded Executive Staff).

The following guidelines will be used by EPART to determine the need for social distancing:

WHO Phase 4 - Limited human to human transmission of novel influenza virus abroad; small number of local cases may begin appearing, however all are either imported or have clear epidemiologic links to other cases.

WHO Phase 5 - Sustained novel influenza virus transmission inside a 500 mile radius of campus with a large number of cases identified.

WHO Phase 6 – Numerous local cases identified with sustained human to human transmission that overwhelms the community’s capacity to provide adequate care.

Possible Social Distancing Measures	WHO Phase 4	WHO Phase 5	WHO Phase 6
Accept personal responsibility to avoid contact with others if symptomatic.	Should be part of an on-going community educational program that begins in WHO Phase 3 and describes symptoms and encourages people to seek care, especially those in high risk groups.		
Create social distancing groups (individuals with whom you have close contact) and avoid contact of less than 3 feet to non-group members.	Try to limit contacts outside of social distancing group (within reason) when the initial local cases are identified.		
Avoid contact with crowds or public places/gatherings- implement good infection control hygiene measures if group or personal contact is necessary.	Likely a personal measure to take in this phase.		
Restrict public gatherings on campus to only essential (academic and business) functions.		Implement as number of local cases rise or evidence suggests sustained growth inside a 500 mile radius. Restrict meetings whenever possible. Conduct business and academic programs via telephone, email, Blackboard or any other available means.	

	WHO Phase 4	WHO Phase 5	WHO Phase 6
Prohibit public gatherings with the exception of classes.		Implement as number of local cases rise or evidence suggests sustained growth inside a 500 mile radius. Conduct business and academic programs via telephone, email, Blackboard or any other available means.	
Close the University and its ancillary functions, including residence halls.		Implement as number of local cases rise or evidence suggests sustained growth inside the 250 mile radius. Implement the use of personal protective equipment when in contact with others, even within your social distancing group.	
Provide accommodations for those students who remain on campus due to travel restrictions, illness, etc.			Require the use of personal protective equipment for all contacts. Ill students will be segregated from well students.