

Employee Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the relationship between this policy and the interim policy?

This [final policy](#) replaces the interim policy.

The final COVID-19 vaccination policy is the product of continued review of evidence from medical studies concerning the dangerousness of COVID-19 as well as the safety and effectiveness of vaccines for preventing infection, hospitalizations, and deaths from COVID-19, and for reducing the spread of this deadly disease. The final policy is also the product of consultation with the UC community that began in April, which revealed strong support for moving forward with a vaccination requirement now.

To maintain the health and well-being of the campus community and that of the general public, the COVID-19 vaccination requirement applies to students and employees alike, including faculty, academic appointees, staff, postdoctoral researchers, trainees, as a condition of their physical access UC facilities, as well as in-person participation in UC programs that may occur off-site (such as UC athletics programs or study abroad).

UC arrived at this policy after reviewing the safety and efficacy of the three vaccines approved at the time by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for emergency use, and after considering the severe risks presented by a virus that has killed more than 640,000 people in the United States alone as well as the rise of variants that are more transmissible and more virulent. Since then, FDA has licensed (fully approved) the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for individuals age 16 and above.

2. When does the final policy go into effect?

This final policy takes effect immediately, with a systemwide deadline for submitting proof of vaccination that depends on the location's calendar. That deadline also applies to requests for an allowable exception (on medical, disability, or religious grounds) or deferral (based on pregnancy).

The systemwide submittal deadline is two (2) weeks before the first day of Fall 2021 instruction at any University campus or school; or September 1, 2021, for locations that do not operate on an academic calendar (e.g., UCOP, ANR, medical centers, national laboratories).

3. Does this final policy require vaccination for all employees or only those who work on-site?

The requirement to provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination (or to submit a request for exception on medical, disability or religious grounds, or for a deferral based on pregnancy) takes effect for all faculty, academic appointees and staff as a condition of in-person access to UC locations or programs two weeks prior to the first day of instruction at the campus or school in the fall 2021 academic term (or, for locations not on academic calendars, September 1, 2021). Even if the employee's job does not ordinarily require them to work on-site, they would still need to provide

proof of full vaccination (or submit a request for exception or deferral) before physically accessing UC facilities, such as to attend mandated staff meetings or trainings in person.

The University continues to encourage all individuals to be vaccinated even if they will not be on-site at UC locations this fall. Vaccination against the virus that causes COVID-19 is a critical step for protecting the health and safety of our communities and ending the pandemic.

4. Will this requirement apply to union-represented employees?

Yes, in accordance with any applicable collective-bargaining requirements.

5. Does this requirement apply to postdocs on the same basis?

Yes, the policy requires postdoctoral researchers and trainees, who are accessing a UC facility or program in person to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, subject to the allowable exceptions (on medical, disability, or religious grounds) or deferral (based on pregnancy).

6. How can employees get vaccines? Will UC offer vaccinations?

UC encourages faculty, academic appointees and staff to look for opportunities near their homes to be vaccinated, such as at local pharmacies. In California, you may also seek a vaccination appointment online at myturn.ca.gov or by calling 1-833-422-4255 Monday through Friday from 8 am to 8 pm or Saturday and Sunday from 8 am to 5 pm.

All locations that are campuses and medical centers will offer COVID-19 vaccination on-site or maintain a list of nearby and accessible off-site locations offering vaccination to people covered by this policy. This provision of the policy is not intended to restrict an individual's choice of provider but to maximize their access to the vaccine.

7. Will non-exempt employees and hourly academic appointees receive paid time off to receive the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) vaccine?

Yes, non-exempt employees and hourly academic appointees may take up to four hours of paid time to obtain each dose of the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) vaccine. Employees and appointees must provide advance notice to their supervisor. If an employee or appointee needs more time for this purpose, they may request Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) (Reason 3(d)) for the additional time. Berkeley Lab employees should contact Berkeley Lab HR for assistance.

8. Is this a one-time mandate or will I be required to get boosters or annual shots?

This is a permanent policy. Infectious disease experts anticipate that annual or more frequent boosters will be necessary, and receipt of boosters will be required, consistent with product labeling, in the same way that the initial vaccination is required by this policy and subject to the same exceptions and deferrals.

9. What does “fully vaccinated” mean? Does it refer to one or two shots depending on vaccine? Does it include a period of time after the dose for an immune response?

A person is considered “fully” vaccinated” when two weeks have passed since they completed a COVID-19 vaccine series (for example, 1 dose of the Janssen/J&J vaccine, or 2 doses within no more than 12 weeks of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine) as well as any boosters consistent with manufacturer’s instructions and applicable agency approval, authorization, or listing.

10. How do I demonstrate proof of vaccination? Who will maintain the documentation?

Individuals covered by this policy must submit proof of their vaccination to their Location Vaccine Authority. This requirement can be satisfied by providing a copy of the individual's CDC vaccination card or non-U.S. equivalent; official documentation issued by a State vaccine registry; or an official medical record.

Individuals covered by this policy who seek an exception (on medical, disability, or religious grounds) or deferral (during pregnancy) must complete the request form and submit it to their location’s Responsible Office. Model forms have been published with this final policy for adaptation or as-is use by each location. Employees should use the forms adopted by their location. Details will be communicated by each UC location to its employees.

11. Are medical exemptions or disability or religious accommodations allowed?

Yes. Requests for an exception based on a medical exemption, disability, or religious belief will be considered. Employees whose requests are pending or have been granted will still be subject to special requirements such as increased surveillance testing. Model forms have been published with this final policy for adaptation or as-is use by each location. Employees should use the forms adopted by their campus. Details will be communicated by each UC location to its employees.

12. Why is UC allowing exceptions for reasons other than medical exemption (e.g., for reasons other than a contraindication or precaution to receiving the vaccine established by the CDC or the manufacturer)?

The University is required by law to offer reasonable accommodations to individuals who qualify for an exception to the vaccination requirement based on their disability, as well as to employees who object to vaccination based on their sincerely-held religious belief, practice, or observance. A decision was made to apply the COVID-19 vaccine mandate consistently across all groups of individuals covered by this policy. Vaccination against the virus that causes COVID-19 is a critical step for protecting the health and safety of our communities and ending the pandemic.

13. I am pregnant. Will I be eligible for a medical exemption?

No, but, unless you work in a University health care facility, you are eligible for a deferral throughout your pregnancy until the time that you return to in-person work or instruction, as applicable, following pregnancy. You may also be eligible for a disability accommodation. It is

important to understand, however, the additional risks you and your baby will be exposed to if you contract COVID-19 during pregnancy:

- According to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), “pregnant people and recently pregnant people are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 when compared with non-pregnant people. Severe illness includes illness that requires hospitalization, intensive care, or a ventilator or special equipment to breathe, or illness that results in death. Additionally, pregnant people with COVID-19 are at increased risk of preterm birth and might be at increased risk of other adverse pregnancy outcomes compared with pregnant people without COVID-19.” By contrast, [researchers have found](#) that COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy may protect babies from COVID-19 infection through the placenta before birth and through breastfeeding afterwards.
- [A recent study performed by UC researchers](#) concluded that risk of very preterm birth, which occurs at less than 32 weeks of gestation, was 60 percent higher for people infected with COVID-19 at some point in their pregnancy, while the risk of giving birth at less than 37 weeks (all preterm births) was 40 percent higher in those with infection. For those who also had hypertension, diabetes and/or obesity as well as COVID-19, the risk of preterm birth rose 160 percent.
- There is currently no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause female or male fertility problems.

Accordingly, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends that all eligible individuals, including those who are pregnant or lactating, be vaccinated. The University strongly supports vaccination for all students, trainees, personnel, and patients who do not have contraindications to one of the vaccines. *Note: those who work in University health facilities or clinics are subject to an [order issued in early August by the California Department of Public Health](#) that does not allow for exceptions or deferrals based on pregnancy, and therefore must have their first dose of a one-dose COVID-19 regimen or their second dose of a two-dose COVID-19 regimen by September 30, 2021.*

14. I was recently diagnosed with COVID-19, and/or I had an antibody test that shows that I have natural immunity. Does this support a medical exemption?

You may be eligible for a temporary medical exemption (and, therefore, a temporary exception), for up to 90 days after your diagnosis. [According to the US Food and Drug Administration](#), however, “a positive result from an antibody test does not mean you have a specific amount of immunity or protection from SARS-CoV-2 infection ... Currently authorized SARS-CoV-2 antibody tests are not validated to evaluate specific immunity or protection from SARS-CoV-2 infection.” For this reason, individuals who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or had an antibody test are not permanently exempt from vaccination.

15. How do I apply for an exception or deferral?

Individuals covered by this policy who seek an exception (on medical, disability, or religious grounds) or deferral (during pregnancy) must complete the request form and submit it to their

location's Responsible Office. Model forms have been published with this final policy for adaptation or as-is use by each location. Employees should use the forms adopted by their location. Details will be communicated by each UC location to its employees.

16. If I have applied for or been granted an exception or deferral, what non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) will I be required to observe?

See [Appendix A: COVID-19 Prevention Strategies](#), which describes required NPIs. Additional safety measures may be deemed necessary, depending on the circumstances, by local public health, environmental health and safety, occupational health, or infection prevention authorities, including the Location Vaccine Authority. In that case, a person who has received an approved exception or deferral (or whose request is pending) will be informed of any additional requirements.

17. Will a vaccine that is under emergency use authorization and not final FDA approval satisfy the requirement?

Yes, all COVID-19 vaccines offered under emergency use authorization (EUA)—or full approval by the FDA, as granted to Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine on August 23, 2021—will satisfy the vaccination requirement.

18. What if I am not eligible for a vaccine?

All people ages 12 and older across the United States are now eligible to receive a vaccine. Employees who are eligible for a vaccine but wish to decline it may qualify for an exception (on medical, disability, or religious grounds) or deferral (based on pregnancy) under the policy.

To allow time for processing such requests, employees should submit their requests as soon as possible, and no later than the submittal deadline: two (2) weeks before the first day of Fall 2021 instruction at any University campus or school; or September 1, 2021, for locations that do not operate on an academic calendar (e.g., UCOP, ANR, medical centers, national laboratories).

19. Who will pay for the vaccine?

Initial supplies have been paid for by the federal government. Vaccines administered by the University to consenting covered individuals as part of the COVID-19 Vaccination Program (e.g., during vaccine clinics or at employee health or occupational health offices) are administered free of charge. In addition, all of the University's health plans cover CDC-recommended vaccines administered by an employee's primary care physician or at a local pharmacy.

20. Will the University accept internationally approved vaccines even if not authorized or approved in the United States?

Yes, if the vaccine authorized by the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO).

The [World Health Organization \(WHO\) has developed a process](#) for assessing and listing unlicensed vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics during a public health emergencies. Through that process, a number of vaccines not available in the United States have received Emergency Use Listing (EUL). A document summarizing the status of a wide range of international vaccines can be found [online on the WHO's website](#) (click on link to status of COVID-19 vaccines in the EUL/PQ evaluation process). The University will, consistent with [CDC](#) and CDPH guidance, accept proof of full vaccination with any international vaccine that has been authorized for emergency use by WHO through the EUL process. People who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination series with one of these vaccines *do not need* additional doses with an FDA-licensed or -authorized COVID-19 vaccine, at least initially (but may be subject to subsequent booster requirements). Those who are not fully vaccinated generally will be required to receive an FDA-licensed or -authorized vaccine no less than 28 days after their last international vaccination (but may consult with the Location Vaccine Authority or designee to discuss eligibility for a temporary medical exemption). In the interim, they will be treated as if they are not fully vaccinated.

21. I was vaccinated in a country where the government increased the time between first and second vaccines longer than US labeling. Do I have to be revaccinated?

No. If you have proof of completing a series of any FDA-licensed or FDA- or WHO-authorized vaccine consistent with your country's implementation, you will be considered to have been fully vaccinated.

22. What if I experience flu-like symptoms as a result of the vaccine, and I cannot work?

Employees should contact their supervisors or local human resources offices for instruction but as a general matter, accrued sick leave, vacation, and/or PTO may be used to take time off as needed to recover. Before September 30, 2021, employees may also request EPSL (Reason 3(e)) for that purpose.

23. I am at high risk for severe illness if I contract COVID-19 (e.g., immunocompromised) and even though I have been vaccinated, I know that no vaccine is 100% effective. Do I have to come to campus if my co-workers or students are not all vaccinated? What accommodations will be made for me?

Please contact your local disability services office to discuss your situation and possible accommodations.

24. How will enforcement work for failure to participate in the program?

Efforts will be made to encourage participation in the COVID-19 vaccination program prior to the implementation date. Requirements related to employee compliance are generally addressed in Appendix F of the policy; note that, for health care workers, the [August 5, 2021 CDPH](#) order requires that they have their first dose of a one-dose regimen or their second dose of a two-dose regimen for COVID-19 by September 30, 2021, unless they decline the vaccine on one of the limited grounds recognized by the order. See FAQ #25 below for more information. Students

who fail to participate by being vaccinated or requesting an exception or deferral on or before the implementation date will be barred from physical presence at University facilities and programs, and may experience consequences as a result of non-participation, up to and including dismissal from educational programs.

25. How does the [August 5, 2021 California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\) order](#) regarding COVID-19 vaccination of health care workers affect employees at the University’s Medical centers, health professional schools, and clinics?

The August 5, 2021 CDPH order requires that health care workers have their first dose of a one-dose regimen or their second dose of a two-dose regimen for COVID-19 by September 30, 2021 unless they decline the vaccine on one of the limited grounds recognized by the order.

- Importantly, some exceptions and deferrals available under the University’s SARS-CoV-2 policy are ***not*** available to workers and trainees in health care settings under the CDPH order. Specifically, Covered Individuals under the UC policy who work, train, or otherwise access any UC health facilities – including medical centers, ambulatory surgery centers, Student Health Services, Counseling & Psychological Services, and other campus- and school-based medical and behavioral health clinics – may decline vaccination only based on “Qualifying Medical Reasons” or “Religious Beliefs” under the CDPH order.
- “Qualifying Medical Reasons” include only CDC-recognized contraindications and precautions. This corresponds with the University policy’s definition of Medical Exemption. Although the University is also allowing temporary medical exemptions under its policy for covered individuals who have been diagnosed with or treated for COVID-19 in the last 90 days (see FAQ #14 above), this would not be a qualifying medical reason under the CDPH order unless the treatment constitutes a CDC-recognized contraindication or precaution.

For these reasons, after September 30, 2021, the University will be unable to grant or continue to honor the following for health care workers: (a) medical exemptions based on COVID-19 diagnosis or treatment within the last 90 days – unless the treatment qualifies as a CDC-recognized contraindication or precaution, (b) exceptions based on disabilities that are not CDC-recognized contraindications or precautions, or (c) deferrals.

The CDPH order requires that any declination based on qualifying medical reasons be supported by a written statement from a “physician, nurse practitioner, or other licensed medical professional practicing under the license of a physician” (that is, a physician, a nurse practitioner or other advance practice nurse, or a physician’s assistant).

Covered individuals should use the University’s medical exemption and/or disability exception request form to decline the vaccine for qualifying medical reasons under the CDPH order. That form includes a certification for the health care provider to complete. Likewise, covered individuals should use the University’s religious exception request form to decline the vaccine for religious beliefs under the CDPH order. Additional information is available in [Frequently Asked Questions](#) attached to the order. The CDPH order, like the University’s policy, requires individuals who are not fully vaccinated but are permitted to be physically present on the basis of an approved exception to comply with non-pharmaceutical interventions to help avoid preventable transmission of COVID-19.

26. I'm a new University of California employee hired on or after October 20, 2021. What's my deadline for complying with this policy?

Complying with this policy is a condition of employment. If you're a Covered Individual as defined by this policy, you must do one of the following no later than 14 calendar days after your first date of employment: (a) provide proof that you have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 Vaccine; or (b) if applicable, submit a request for Exception or Deferral. If you submit proof that you have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 Vaccine but you have not yet completed the COVID-19 Vaccine series, you must then provide proof that you are Fully Vaccinated no later than eight weeks after your first date of employment. Covered Individuals subject to the August 5, 2021 California Department of Public Health (CDPH) order must be in compliance with the CDPH order as of their start date. Please see FAQ #24 and FAQ #25 for more information on the CDPH order. And Covered Individuals who are student employees must provide proof of Full Vaccination or, if applicable, submit a request for Exception or Deferral no later than the first date of instruction for the term when they first enroll.