Background

As per the *University of Toronto Policy on Non-Medical Masks or Face Coverings*, wearing non-medical masks or face coverings is required in all common-use indoor University spaces, including classrooms and common areas in residences at the University of Toronto. [https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/non-medical-masks-or-face-coverings-policy](https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/non-medical-masks-or-face-coverings-policy)

Face covering in the context of the policy means a mask, balaclava, bandana, scarf, cloth or other similar item that covers the nose, mouth and chin without gapping. Face masks with clear components to allow lip movement to be visible, provided these masks cover the nose, mouth and chin without gapping, are considered appropriate face coverings and meet the criteria of this policy.

University spaces (including University-owned and leased spaces) include classrooms and residences, whether restricted-access or open to the public. Examples of common-use spaces include lobbies, elevators, hallways and corridors, stairwells, washrooms, service desks, cafeterias and lunchrooms, common areas in residences or study lounges, meeting rooms, classrooms, research and teaching labs, shared or open-space offices, and other locations used in common where practicing physical distancing may be difficult or unpredictable, such as libraries. In leased spaces, occupants may also be subject to the policies and guidelines of the building owner or manager.

Informal Disability Related Accommodations

It is understood as part of the *UofT Policy on Non-Medical Masks or Face Coverings* that students may have a medical condition including a physical condition, mental health condition, or other health concern that makes it difficult to wear a mask or face covering, including a medical condition that makes it difficult to breathe, or to put on and remove a mask or face covering without assistance: [https://www.provost.utoronto.ca/planning-policy/joint-provostial-and-human-resources-guideline-on-nonmedical-masks-at-the-university-of-toronto/](https://www.provost.utoronto.ca/planning-policy/joint-provostial-and-human-resources-guideline-on-nonmedical-masks-at-the-university-of-toronto/) Members of the University community generally should not ask colleagues, students, or others at the University for supporting documentation or other proof regarding exemptions or accommodations to the UofT Policy.
Formal Disability Related Accommodations

In specific circumstances where individual health and safety is at risk (e.g. two students required to be in close proximity not wearing masks, presence of immunocompromised individuals in the space), a student who is unable to wear a non-medical mask may be asked by a manager or academic administrator to provide supporting documentation to the University through Accessibility Services on a confidential basis. Accessibility Services will then work with the following to determine any options and/or reasonable and appropriate alternatives for the student to participate in the University activity:

- the student, to better understand the individual disability related barriers to wearing a mask or face covering, and alternatives that may be possible (e.g. face shield);
- the manager/academic administrator/instructor to better understand the specific health and safety concerns that have been raised (including impact of the student not wearing a mask on others in that space), the unique details of the space/context they manage and any relevant learning outcomes and core competencies the student is required to demonstrate that may be relevant if this is an academic or teaching environment;
- the University of Toronto Environmental Health & Safety Office to ensure that the recommended accommodation plan is aligned with current health and safety requirements.

While a student’s self report of their concerns and circumstances may suffice, in specific cases where Health and Safety concerns have been raised, further information could be asked for from a health care provider to better understand the disability related barriers to wearing a mask. In such instances, Accessibility Services will work with the student to obtain this information, but only where it is relevant to the current context and situation.

Please note that at no point will a specific diagnosis (if known to Accessibility Services) be provided to the manager/academic administrator/instructor who has raised the health and safety concern; rather the particular limitations or barriers a student is facing in wearing a mask will be communicated on a need to know basis in order to better understand alternatives or options that may be available in that setting so that a student may be able to participate where possible.

The uniqueness of each setting a student will find themselves in requires a specialized analysis to be done in each area a student finds themselves; for this reason a mask exemption or alternative process that has been established in one particular context does not necessarily carry over into all areas and contexts in which a student may find themselves.

While Accessibility Services will work to collaborate and problem solve as much as possible to find reasonable and appropriate alternatives to allow a student to fully participate in the activities of the University, it does not ultimately have authority or jurisdiction to establish what constitutes a safe work or study environment. Ultimately, such determinations will be made by
those overseeing and responsible for the specific space in consultation with UofT Environmental Health and Safety.

**Contacting Accessibility Services**

If you are not currently registered with your campus accessibility office, please reach out to discuss mask alternatives as soon as possible:

- University of Toronto Mississauga, [Accessibility Services](#)
- University of Toronto Scarborough, [AccessAbility Services](#)
- University of Toronto, St. George [Accessibility Services](#)

Students who are already registered with Accessibility Services for a medical/disability related should contact the accessibility office at the home campus to make an appointment to speak with their advisor.

**Other Processes**

Please note that University teaching and learning activities may take place in areas not under the jurisdiction of the University (e.g., hospital, practicum sites). In such cases, the policies of that space will need to be taken into consideration and appropriate exemption processes for the off-site location must be followed for the use of non-medical masks. In these situations, please consult Accessibility Services directly for additional information about next steps as soon as possible.

Please note, the University of Toronto Health and Wellbeing office operates parallel process regarding mask accommodations and exemptions. Where concerns are raised for students in the context of their employment relationship (e.g. Teaching Assistant, Student Employees) that office should be contacted for further discussion and information: [https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/culture/wellness/](https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/culture/wellness/)

**Next Steps**

Once a mask exemption, or another reasonable alternative, has been established, it will be printed on the student’s Letter of Accommodation, or where the student is not already registered, a unique letter will be produced by Accessibility Services.