Return to Work FAQs

**Working Remotely**

I have been working remotely since the College moved to remote work in March. Will I be able to continue this arrangement?

In general, jobs that can be performed 100% remotely should continue in that mode. Our goal is to provide the best educational experience for our students while minimizing the number of staff working on campus to try to reduce the risk of the spread of the virus. You should reach out to your supervisor/department chair to confirm your current work arrangement and make sure you have what you need to complete your work remotely. IT has created a webpage with tips and resources for remote work. You are also encouraged to review the COVID-19 Remote Work Policy and to follow the Guidelines For Remote Work Arrangements for Staff.

I need to retrieve some things from my work location. Do I need to make special arrangements?

Yes, if a specific need arises requiring you to be on campus for a short period of time—for instance, to retrieve a piece of equipment or supplies—you can obtain permission in advance of coming to campus from your supervisor/department chair. You must then also notify the Amherst College Police Department (413.542.2291) just before you enter the building. You can also make a request to retrieve technological equipment and some furniture from campus locations via this form.

**Working on Campus**

When are staff expected to return to on-campus work?

Although we are implementing actions based on the state’s reopening plans, the status and protocol of the College has not changed and only those who have been authorized by their supervisor/department chairs may return to campus. Minimizing the number of staff on campus will help to minimize the spread of the virus.

What can I expect when I return to campus?

Faculty and staff coming to campus are expected to follow the College’s safety precautions, including completing the health status survey, wearing a mask at all times, social distancing, hand-washing, and frequent cleaning and disinfecting of their space.

How will I know if and when I need to return to work on campus?

Your supervisor/department chair will be in touch with you to coordinate your return to work on campus. You are also encouraged to follow all College communications, Planning Updates and the Daily Mammoth, and to visit the COVID-19 Updates webpage for more information.

I do not have enough work to meet my scheduled hours, but I am available to help out in other areas. How do I find out if there are needs in other departments?
You should work with your supervisor/department chair to identify possible options. Our goal is to be as flexible and creative as possible in finding work opportunities for staff. You can also visit the Remote Work Resource Exchange to learn about opportunities available in other departments.

**What if I want to work on campus before I am told to come back?**

Only those with permission may return to campus. You are welcome to speak with your supervisor/department chair if you have additional questions or concerns.

**It may take time for the College to return to “normal” campus operations. Will my position, shift or schedule change?**

It depends. To meet campus operational needs, you may be asked to make temporary adjustments to current duties, changes in shifts or schedules, or temporary reassignment to a different job. Supervisors/department chairs will be continually reevaluating departmental needs.

**I have been reassigned to work in a position I don’t want to perform or that I don’t feel prepared for. What are my options?**

In an effort to keep staff employed and paid, it may be necessary to make temporary changes that may result in the need to perform tasks different than those staff usually performs. This will require flexibility and adaptability. We encourage staff and supervisors/department chairs to work together in identifying duties based on the staff’s knowledge, experience and skills.

If you are not in agreement with the duties assigned, you are encouraged to discuss the assignment further with your supervisor/department chair or the Office of Human Resources (OHR) to find a solution.

If a staff member decides not to accept the position or duties assigned, they could request approval to use their accrued leave balances, accrue a negative balance or request an unpaid leave of absence. Certain positions will require staff to report to work on campus, particularly as the need for support for students on campus is expected to increase. In the absence of sufficient backup staff to support the operation, a leave request under these circumstances may not be approved.

**Compensation/Benefits**

**I am an essential staff receiving premium pay. Will premium pay be extended through the fall?**

The temporary Premium Pay Policy for essential staff has been extended through July 4, 2020. The College will assess the need to extend this temporary policy before that date and will inform the staff accordingly.

**What workplace planning has been done to prepare for the fall?**

Your division participated in a campus-wide workplace planning process to objectively evaluate each job using standardized decision criteria to determine whether the job duties must be performed on-campus, or whether all or some of the job duties can be performed remotely.
As the next step, your supervisor/department chair will be communicating with you about the results of the planning process. If your personal circumstances do not allow you to return to the work schedule and/or location identified in the plan, your supervisor will work with you to evaluate options such as remote work, a modified work schedule, and/or temporary reassignment. There may be situations in which these options are unavailable or unsatisfactory, for example:

1. **You feel that you are unable to return to on-campus work because of your own underlying health condition.**

   Your supervisor will not ask, and you are not expected to volunteer, personal health information. Contact the OHR who will work directly with you to explore your eligibility under the [Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)](https://www.dol.gov/fmla) for [short-term disability](https://www.dol.gov/fmla) or to request an [accommodation](https://www.dol.gov/fmla). If/when these options are exhausted, you will be able to:
   - request approval to use other [leaves](https://www.dol.gov/fmla), for example, vacation, floating holidays, etc.;
   - accrue a negative leave balance, capped at the maximum annual accrual for both vacation and sick time based on years of service; or
   - take an [unpaid leave of absence](https://www.dol.gov/fmla), if eligible and approved.

2. **You have an immediate family member with an underlying medical condition that makes them more susceptible to serious illness from COVID-19.**

   Contact the OHR who will work directly with you to explore your eligibility under the [Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)](https://www.dol.gov/fmla) or [extended family leave](https://www.dol.gov/fmla). If/when these options are exhausted you will be able to:
   - request approval to use other [leaves](https://www.dol.gov/fmla), for example, vacation, floating holidays, etc.;
   - accrue a negative leave balance, capped at the maximum annual accrual for both vacation and sick time based on years of service; or
   - take an [unpaid leave of absence](https://www.dol.gov/fmla), if eligible and approved.

3. **You are concerned about returning to on-campus work because of your age.**

   Contact the OHR to explore your options. If/when these options are exhausted you will be able to:
   - request approval to use other [leaves](https://www.dol.gov/fmla), for example, vacation, floating holidays, etc.;
   - accrue a negative leave balance, capped at the maximum annual accrual for both vacation and sick time based on years of service; or
   - take an [unpaid leave of absence](https://www.dol.gov/fmla), if eligible and approved.

4. **You have childcare issues that prevent you from returning to work.**

   Contact the OHR who will work directly with you to options such as:
   - requesting approval to use other [leaves](https://www.dol.gov/fmla), for example, vacation, floating holidays, etc.;
   - accruing a negative leave balance, capped at the maximum annual accrual for both vacation and sick time based on years of service; or
   - taking an [unpaid leave of absence](https://www.dol.gov/fmla), if eligible and approved.
5. You are worried about being infected and do not want to return to work.

You should contact your supervisor/department chair to request approval to use your accrued leaves or to request an unpaid leave of absence, if eligible and approved. Certain positions require staff to report to work on campus, particularly as the need for support to students on campus is expected to increase. In the absence of sufficient backup staff to support the operation, a leave request under these circumstances may not be approved.

Quick References

**What is STD Insurance?** After one consecutive year of employment working a minimum of 20 hours per week, employees are eligible for paid time off due to the employee’s own disability. Short term disability pay begins after a two-week waiting period for up to six months.

**What is LTD Insurance?** After a six-month absence, and approval by the insurance company, the employees may receive 60% of the annual salary in effect at the commencement of a disability.

**What is the FMLA?** The Family Medical Leave Act provides eligible employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a 12-month period for specific family and medical reasons.

**What is Extended Family Leave?** After one consecutive year of employment, employees can receive four weeks of leave at 100% pay after a two-week waiting period. One Extended Family Leave may be taken within a rolling calendar year. Extended Family Leave may be used when the employee is needed to provide care as the primary caregiver for more than 10 consecutive workdays. It may be used for the care of a newborn child, adoption, or serious illness of a family member.

**Summary of Options for Employees Unable to Work:** A chart summarizing the leaves and options available to staff unable to work.

COVID-19 Resources

Website: [https://www.amherst.edu/news/covid-19](https://www.amherst.edu/news/covid-19)
Email for questions not answered on the Covid-19 website: [covid19-info@amherst.edu](mailto:covid19-info@amherst.edu)
Faculty updates: [https://www.amherst.edu/news/covid-19/message-for-faculty](https://www.amherst.edu/news/covid-19/message-for-faculty)
Staff and Faculty updates: [https://www.amherst.edu/news/covid-19/messages-for-the-college-community](https://www.amherst.edu/news/covid-19/messages-for-the-college-community)
Student and family updates: [https://www.amherst.edu/news/covid-19/messages-for-students](https://www.amherst.edu/news/covid-19/messages-for-students)
Massachusetts Information: [https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-massachusetts](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/reopening-massachusetts)