

COVID-Risk Mitigation Strategies and your AEGS Rights

Q: Do Graduate Teaching Assistants have the right to ask their students to put on a mask?

A: Currently, there are no masking mandates at the University of Alberta, within the City of Edmonton, or provincially. Therefore you cannot force anyone to wear a mask. You can suggest that masks continue to be worn while in class and wear a mask yourself (setting a good example). Additionally, you can ask those around you to distance themselves which can add another layer of protection along with masking.

Q: Do AEGSs have the right to continue to work from home if they wish? Does this right change if it's based on a safety concern?

A: As has been communicated, as of February 28th classes have resumed in-person. Thus all forward facing duties - such as attending lectures, conducting lectures, teaching laboratories - take place in-person unless an accommodation has been approved. Duties that can take place from home (as determined by your assistantship supervisor), such as marking, can be done off campus. In addition, office hours may be hosted virtually, but be sure to have a conversation with your employment supervisor before changing from in-person office hours to virtual ones as they are the ultimate authority on this matter

If there is an immediate safety concern that is emergent, call 911. If there is a non-emergent safety concern, call UofA Protective Services at 780-492-5050. If you have additional concerns you can raise them with your employment supervisor or with the GSA (gsa.vplabour@ualberta.ca).

Q: Are there health and safety provisions for those at particularly heightened risk (i.e. immunocompromised)?

A: If you believe you need an accommodation based on a health condition, which is a protected ground, or any other protected grounds, please reach out to the GSA VP Labour at gsa.vplabour@ualberta.ca to discuss your options.

Q: What are the grounds and circumstances for exercising our right to refuse unsafe work?

A: [Article 22](#) of your collective agreement outlines refusal of unsafe work (22.02.06). The Occupational Health and Safety Act of Alberta defines an 'undue hazard' as a hazard that poses a serious and immediate threat to the health and safety of a person. In summary, if you feel your

workplace is unsafe you would need to report the situation to your Graduate Assistantship Supervisor (or Department Chair). You can refuse to perform work according to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which would result in an immediate stoppage of work and facilitate the resolution of the refusal upon an inspection of the workplace. At this point, you may be asked to return to work if deemed safe. Please reach out to us at gsa.vplabour@ualberta.ca if you believe this applies to you.

In addition, the GSA has disposable masks available for graduate students. If you would like to pick up a mask or two, please feel free to stop by the GSA office in Triffo Hall.