Spring 2021 FAQs

The Spring 2021 FAQ is designed to provide students with helpful information about what to expect in the coming semester. The FAQ will be updated as planning details are finalized. The Fall 2020 FAQ is also a helpful resource because the majority of policies and procedures currently in place now will remain in effect in spring 2021.

Chancellor Barnhart announced the Institute’s plans for the spring term on November 2, 2020. Read the letter to the MIT community here.

Academics

What is the spring calendar?
The dates for all activities and deadlines for the spring semester are available in the Academic Calendar published on the Registrar's Office website. Based on consultation with public health experts, the beginning of the semester has been moved later by two weeks and in-person class meetings will not begin until March 1 for all undergraduate and graduate students. Spring break (with a week without classes) has been replaced by three- and four-day weekends distributed throughout the semester to avoid the usual travel away from MIT that often takes place during spring break.

The below highlights the dates in the spring calendar:

- Registration Week will begin on Monday, February 8 and end on Friday, February 12.
- Classes will begin on Tuesday, February 16.
- During the first two weeks, those classes that are authorized to have in-person components will be remote.
- There are 62 teaching days in the spring calendar (the “normal” spring calendar has 65).
- There will be no spring break, but 6 break days have been included during the semester (the same number of break days as in fall semesters).
- The calendar includes two 4-day weekends and two 3-day weekends (the same as in fall semesters).
- The distribution of teaching days is 11 Mondays, 11 Tuesdays, 14 Wednesdays, 14 Thursdays, and 12 Fridays (a “normal” spring has 12 Mondays, 12 Tuesdays, 14 Wednesdays, 14 Thursdays, 13 Fridays).
- H3 will end Friday, April 2, and H4 will begin Monday, April 5.
- Theses for doctoral degrees will be due Friday, May 7.
- There will be a 3-day “reading period” as in spring semesters prior to this past year.
- Final exams are scheduled on Monday, May 24 to Thursday, May 27.
- Commencement will take place on Friday, June 4.
What is the plan for IAP 2021?
IAP 2021 will be fully remote. The dates for all activities and deadlines in IAP are available in the Academic Calendar published on the Registrar's Office website. Non-credit activities can be found on the IAP website.

When will spring registration open and close? When will we know which classes will be offered online in spring 2021, which ones will have in-person elements? Registration Week will begin on February 8 and end on February 12, and classes will begin on Tuesday February 16.

Just as in the fall, many of our subjects will be taught exclusively online with some opportunities for undergraduates living on campus and some graduate students to have in-person instruction. A preliminary list of subjects, including those with in-person components, is available on the Registrar’s website. Departments will continue to make arrangements to ensure all students are able to stay on track with their degree progress.

The full schedule of courses will be available on the MIT Subject Listing & Schedule website during the last week of November in preparation for a tentative December 1 pre-registration opening. Decisions about instruction format will be made at the discretion of the instructors and relevant department through the start of the spring term.

Will final exams be virtual?
The format for final exams has not been determined yet.

Will undergraduate students be able to participate in research and other hands-on opportunities?
In July 2020, MIT announced that all undergraduates, remote or on campus, would have the opportunity for a paid experiential learning opportunity (ELO) including research, teaching and learning, entrepreneurship, or public service experiences. For more information, visit the Experiential Learning Opportunities (ELO) website.

- These ELOs will be available to every undergraduate student through programs such as UROP, MISTI, PKG, Open Learning, or Sandbox, and will offer funding up to $1,900.
- This opportunity is guaranteed for one semester, but that does not prevent students from earning more in that semester or engaging in more than one ELO.
- The guaranteed ELOs can take place any time during the 2020-21 academic year: in the fall semester, during IAP, or in the spring semester.

Undergraduates may be authorized for lab access for in-person UROPs if:

- The student has been invited back to campus for spring 2021 and is living in MIT housing.*
The research project meets all safety and public health requirements and can be conducted within the confines of MIT’s limited campus constraints.

The student meets all requirements for in-person UROPs including securing approval from the faculty sponsor/PI and the Student Covid Access Request Team.

Remote UROPs will also be an option for students living on and off campus.

MIT has also developed guidance on remote making to help students make things safely while away from MIT’s campus.

*MIT will make a determination about whether seniors who live nearby off campus can have access to campus facilities in spring 2021 for opportunities such as UROPs by the end of the semester.

Is cross-registration permitted in the spring?

For MIT students

MIT undergraduates will be allowed to cross-register for remote classes at Harvard and Wellesley during the spring term. Students should review the instructions and deadlines specific to each institution.

For non-MIT students

Cross-registration opportunities will be available during the spring semester for remote classes only. Instructors will also have the discretion to refuse cross-registration requests if they cause an undue burden on class availability and capacity.

For more information, visit the Registrar’s Office website.

How will grading work in spring 2021?

The Academic Policy and Regulations Team (APART) has not yet determined the grading system for the spring. Before doing so, it is important to evaluate the impact of the fall 2020 flexible grading system to determine possible areas for improvement.

Will all undergraduates have access to in-person classes and other on-campus activities?

All current first-years, sophomores, and juniors who would like to live and learn on campus in the spring semester will be able to do so. In order to access campus facilities for in-person classes and other on-campus activities, they will need to reside on campus.

A small number of seniors facing circumstances related to their safety, living conditions, visa status, or other hardship will be able to apply to remain in or return to campus housing through the Student Housing Assistance Review Process (SHARP).
We will make a decision by the end of the fall semester about whether seniors who choose to live nearby can have access to campus facilities in the same way that graduate students who live off campus do now. We will be able to make a more informed determination after we learn more about our ability to manage the health of our community during cold weather, with Covid-19 prevalence on the rise and flu season beginning, and after we see how many first-years, sophomores, and juniors will access campus in the spring. Graduate student education, which will follow the modified spring semester calendar described above, and research operations will continue as they are now.

**How will MIT help students who are learning off-campus who need enhanced Wi-Fi access or equipment?**

If you requested Wi-Fi or computer equipment assistance during the fall semester, you will be able to access these resources during the spring term. If you have not yet made a request, please know that:

- MIT will **loan Wi-Fi hotspots and computing equipment**, including laptops, to those who need them. Additionally, to support collaboration and small group problem solving that can be critical to many aspects of student learning and community building, MIT will loan a cellular-enabled iPad and Apple Pencil to any undergraduate student or graduate TA who does not already have one.
- **Technical support** is available to all 24/7 by phone or email.

**Will there be orientation events for the Class of 2024?**

Yes. More information will be made available on firstyear.mit.edu as plans develop. In the meantime, if students have any questions, they should contact the Orientation Office, or call 617-253-6771 (available 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, or anytime via email at firstyear@mit.edu).

**What is the plan for Commencement?**

Commencement will occur on June 4, 2021, and the format is still being discussed. We discourage families and loved ones from making any travel or accommodation arrangements until MIT confirms whether the ceremony will be in-person or remote.

**Are all undergraduates, including first-years, who are invited to return to campus this spring required to come back?**

No. While we are striving to deliver a compelling and safe student life and learning experience, we urge students to weigh their options carefully – there is no universal “right” decision about whether to come back in person. It may be that what makes the most sense for you is living and learning from where you are now. Students should talk to their advisors, loved ones, peers, and student support professionals about what makes the most sense for them.
Financial Aid

How will financial aid and the Covid-era grant work in spring 2021? For information about how financial aid and the Covid-era grant will work next semester, please see this FAQ from Student Financial Services.

Housing & Dining

What will the health testing and processes be for students returning to campus in the spring?

Students are required to complete a SARS-CoV-2 test administered by MIT Medical when coming to campus or moving into a residence hall. Undergraduate residents who do not complete this test immediately after arriving on campus for move-in will be denied access to campus buildings, including their residence hall, unless provisional access is granted by Housing & Residential Services (i.e. a student arriving after MIT Medical is closed for the day). Graduate residents are required to receive a Covid-19 test within 24 hours of arriving on campus (provisional access to apartments/rooms will be provided, however, keys will not be issued until residents receive their first Covid-19 test from MIT Medical). All residents will need to self-quarantine until their second Covid test, taken seven days later, comes back negative.

Students will also be required to comply with MIT’s Covid-19 testing expectations while living in on-campus housing or accessing campus facilities during the spring semester, as well as undergo additional viral testing as directed by MIT. On-campus residents shall complete a Covid-19 test administered by MIT Medical twice-per-week and must test on consistent days each week (Monday/Thursday or Tuesday/Friday). The twice-per-week testing regimen will begin after residents receive their second negative Covid-19 test following move-in. Additional information regarding testing is available on this FAQ page.

Will there be Quarantine Week in the spring?

Yes, all residents arriving on campus for the spring semester will be required to quarantine upon arrival. Similar to the fall semester, all undergraduates living on campus will be required to participate in Quarantine Week (or Q-Week). During quarantine, all residents cannot have direct contact with anyone but their roommate or spouses, partners, or children in the case of graduate students (if applicable). They must stay in their room except to use their assigned bathroom or to get packages and meals while wearing a face covering, or to exercise outside for a limited time. While outside your room, you must keep six feet apart from other people and wear a face covering at all times, including around people you know.

Will students have to abide by the same community expectations/agreements that were in place during the fall semester?

Yes. Students will need to read, sign, and follow an agreement to comply with public health expectations and MIT Covid-19 policies. It will contain information about MIT’s current
Covid-19 policies and protocols as well as how the Institute will address non-compliance. Students’ emergency contacts will also need to read and electronically sign an acknowledgement of this agreement. See more about the agreement for undergraduate and graduate students.

In addition to the agreement, MIT has campus-wide Covid-19 policies and protocols. Students living in undergraduate and graduate residence halls can view undergraduate policies and graduate policies for more information. These policies also apply to spouses, partners, and families who live on campus.

**When can undergraduate students submit their housing preferences?** The spring housing application will open on November 3, 2020 and close on November 16, 2020 at 11:59 pm. Students invited to live on campus during spring 2021 will complete the Housing Application within the MyHousing portal to share their building and living preferences. In turn, Housing & Residential Services (HRS) will use this information to assign students to a residence hall based on their top-ranked preferences. Building assignments will be shared with students in late November.

**How will the room assignments process work?**
Similar to the fall 2020 process, Housing & Residential Services (HRS) will work collaboratively with Room Assignment Chairs (RACs) and House Teams in each house to develop a process for spring room assignments. After receiving living preference information from students, HRS will share details with RACs to facilitate individual room assignments for each residence hall in coordination with the House Team. Confirmed room assignments are scheduled to be shared with spring residents by the end of January 2021.

**Will undergraduate students who live on campus in the spring be housed one-to-a-room? If they are, what will they be charged for housing?**
While most students will live one-to-a-room, two students may be housed together in double rooms where possible. Students in a single accommodation will be charged the 2020-2021 double rate for the building where they live. Students living in double accommodation will be charged the applicable triple rate.

**Will there be undergraduate pods in spring 2021?**
Yes. A pod is a committed group of undergraduate residents who are able to socialize in certain settings that do not require six feet (two meters) physical distancing, or the use of face coverings. The residential pod program in undergraduate residences will continue through the spring 2021 semester. Updated dates and details about the spring pod program will be posted in the near future.

**When is spring 2021 move-in?**
Move-in will follow the Institute’s updated spring calendar with undergraduate students expected to arrive during the month of February. Similar to fall 2020 move-in, students will preference
arrival windows to avoid crowding. Additional details regarding spring move-in, including specific move-in dates, will be provided to students who have been invited and elect to live on campus.

**Will there be a Student Housing Assistance Review Process (SHARP) process for spring 2021?**
Yes. The Student Housing Assistance Review Process (SHARP) will launch on Monday, November 2. Additional information about the SHARP process, including a link to the application, resources, and FAQ, can be found on the [SHARP webpage](#).

**What's the plan for FSILGs in spring 2021?**
The FSILGs will continue to be closed to undergraduate students this spring. Feedback from students and alumni was vital to making an informed decision about our spring plan for these communities. We will maintain our financial support for house operations and work with alumni and student leaders to develop a plan to safely reopen all houses in fall 2021.

**Will all students who live on campus this spring be required to be on a meal plan? If so, how much will it cost? How will dining services work?**
Similar to the fall 2020 semester, all undergraduates who are invited and elect to live on campus during spring 2021 will be required to purchase a 14-meal-per-week meal plan. This decision was made following safe food-handling and enhanced cleaning guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

To defray the cost to students and families, all undergraduates living on campus will receive a Covid subsidy of $1,260 for the spring term meal plan, bringing the total cost of $3,160 down to $1,900. So students can supplement the 14-meals-per-week plan, the dining allowance offered in the financial aid award calculation is $2,500 per semester, giving students additional financial flexibility and choice.

TechMart, MIT’s at-cost student grocery, is located in the Student Center ([W20](#)) and will be accessible to on-campus residents. Currently, Dunkin’ is the only retail eatery open in the Student Center. The retail eatery Pacific Street Cafe (located at [NW86](#)) is also open and operating. Dining facilities and retail eateries across campus are only available to community members granted access to specific campus buildings. Additional retail dining options will be announced as they become available.

Dining service for undergraduates will be primarily take-out, with limited sit-down options depending on availability of seating in the residential dining halls and common spaces, as well as the Student Center’s Lobdell Dining Hall. Students who eat their meals in approved residential dining areas will be required to maintain proper physical distancing and wear face coverings at all times except while eating at their tables.

All ten undergraduate houses will have in-residence meal service consisting of breakfast, lunch,
and dinner from Monday through Friday. On weekends, brunch and dinner will be served. Breakfast and lunch will also be available in Student Center’s Lobdell Dining Hall from Monday through Friday with limited seating available in the dining room.

Graduate students who enroll in a meal plan will have access to breakfast and lunch meal service Monday through Friday in W20-Lobdell. A pick-up location for dinner and weekend brunch will be determined by the start of the spring semester. Please visit the MIT Dining website for regular updates.

**Will cook-for-yourself undergraduate communities have access to everyday kitchen use?**
Undergraduate residence kitchens remain closed for the spring, with the exception that brief access may be allowed to identified kitchens for the use of sinks, refrigerators, trash barrels for food waste, and microwaves. Capacity limits and cleaning protocols must be observed. Stoves and ovens will not be available for routine cooking.

**Are there any updates regarding new or ongoing residence hall construction and renewal projects?**
**Burton Conner** will be taken offline in January 2021 to begin a renewal project to improve the building’s infrastructure and interior spaces and enhance the overall student experience. The project timeline is on track and the building is targeted to reopen for the fall 2022 semester.

**New Vassar** is scheduled to open in January 2021 as MIT’s newest undergraduate residence. The building is a 450-bed, living-learning community, and the Founders Group comprised of students, faculty, and staff has been planning for the formation of the new community with a focus on wellness.

**Graduate Tower at Site 4** will open to graduate residents in November 2020. The opening of Site 4 marks another step forward toward achieving recommendations made by the Graduate Student Housing Working Group. The building is located in the heart of Kendall Square and provides 454 apartments including 2-bedroom and 1-bedroom units that are prioritized for families with children, and efficiencies for single students.

**Athletics**

**What is the plan for winter and spring athletics?**
MIT and DAPER will comply with the New England Women’s and Men’s Athletic Conference’s (NEWMAC) unanimous vote on November 2 to cancel all winter athletics. Though this news is disappointing, we understand and affirm their decision because we know that close-contact athletic activities create unacceptably high risk for Covid transmission. We will be working closely with the conference as they assess conditions and options for spring athletics.

**What is the plan for intramural and club sports in the winter and the spring?** Like varsity athletics, intramural and club sports activities will be paused for the winter. We will assess the
public health situation and pandemic trajectory during the winter and make a determination about spring intramurals and club sports in the new year.

**Will DAPER recreational facilities be open in the spring?**
Yes. At this time, we expect to maintain the same parameters for indoor and outdoor facility capacity, distancing, and safety protocols. We will assess conditions over the winter, however, to determine if changes are needed to accommodate students on campus this spring.

**International Students**

**What is MIT doing to support international students who cannot return due to visa restrictions?**
The International Students Office (ISO) and the International Scholars Office have up-to-date information concerning travel restrictions and visas. The ISO will work with each student eligible to enter the U.S. to coordinate the necessary visa documentation for arrival to campus, regardless of delayed arrival for the start of the semester or if arrival to campus is in the spring 2021 semester. International students with questions should consult ISO updates for additional guidance or contact their ISO advisor.

**Does the fall 2020 USDHS Guidance on International Students remain for the spring?**
USDHS has not provided any Guidance for spring 2021, and we are likely not to receive any updates until after the November 3, 2020 election. In the meantime, please visit the International Students Office (ISO) for the latest updates.

**What will life on campus be like?**
One of the great joys of being an MIT community member is the vibrancy of campus life. Given the current pandemic, however, students should know that life at MIT will be very different than it was at the start of the 2020 spring semester. Though this is disappointing for all of us, the measures described below are similar to what was in place for fall 2020 and are intended to protect the health and safety of the MIT community and our neighbors.

**Quarantine, testing, and attesting.** MIT’s plans for fall were founded on regular testing, and that will continue this spring. Upon arriving, on-campus students will be tested for Covid-19 by MIT Medical, followed by a seven-day self-quarantine until they receive a second negative test result. Undergraduates will quarantine at the same time (Q-Week), and graduate students and family members will quarantine for seven days after they arrive on campus. As an extra precaution, the first two weeks of classes will be conducted entirely online to accommodate the self-quarantine period. As a term of their access permissions, all on-campus residents this spring will be tested twice a week for Covid-19, and they will have to attest to their daily wellbeing using COVID Pass.

**Socializing and support.** It’s no secret that Covid has caused many of us, on campus and off, to feel isolated. As the on-campus community settled into a routine this fall, MIT carefully introduced ways for residents to interact that also kept the potential risk of transmitting the virus
low. Institute leaders and staff are eager to work with students and House Teams to review policies and seek new ways to alleviate loneliness and isolation on campus. The key to enabling those conversations is following the rules that protect MIT from Covid: wear a face covering, practice physical distancing, test twice weekly, attest daily, and comply with all other MIT Covid policies.

If you need to talk with someone, the customary undergraduate and graduate student support resources will be available online and by phone as they were to all students this fall. Any student who is invited back to campus and has concerns about returning should reach out to one of MIT’s many student support resources. Check out https://ask.mit.edu to find the appropriate support for your needs.

**Rooms, FSILGs, and events.** To better enable physical distancing, many on-campus undergraduate students will have a residence hall room to themselves. All FSILGs will be closed for undergraduates. While the policies about events and gatherings have eased a little since fall ([undergraduates](https://ask.mit.edu) | [graduate students](https://ask.mit.edu)), the size of groups that can interact with each other remains small. Please read the policy for more details.

**Access to campus and interacting with friends.** Only faculty, students, and family members who live on campus or students granted campus access through **Covid Pass** may be on MIT grounds or utilize MIT facilities (with certain restrictions). Everyone living on campus or accessing campus facilities must wear a face covering and keep six feet apart from each other at all times. The only exemptions are when undergraduate students are in their rooms or interacting with podmates in their designated pod lounges, or when graduate students are interacting with family members, suitemates, or a limited number of visitors as described in policy on guests in approved Institute housing.

**What you need to know before arriving on campus.** So everyone understands their role in protecting themselves and each other, students returning to campus will be required to complete public health education and sign an agreement to live in MIT Housing. Once they are on campus, residents must keep up with their twice-weekly testing and attest to their wellbeing each day using **Covid Pass** before entering any MIT facility. Under certain circumstances, students will be asked to share information about contacts with other people on and off campus should they test positive.

**Residence hall kitchens and the meal plan.** Shared kitchens are potential hotspots for spreading the virus. As a result, undergraduate residence hall floor and country kitchens will remain closed. Students may use the sinks, refrigerators, and microwaves, and dispose of food waste in trash barrels. Even with these restricted kitchen uses, occupancy limits apply.

All undergraduates on campus will be required to sign up for a meal plan. To lighten the financial impact of this necessary precaution, the meal plan cost will be reduced by more than 40% with a special Covid-19 subsidy. All 10 residence halls will have in-house breakfast, lunch,
and dinner served each weekday, and brunch and dinner served on weekends. Breakfast and lunch will also be served in the Student Center’s Lobdell Dining Hall each weekday. Dining service will be take-out primarily, with limited, physically distanced seating available in the houses and Lobdell. A few retail eateries will be open, and TechMart will be open in the Student Center most weekdays.

**Wear your MIT ID at all times on campus.** Because access to MIT facilities will be closely managed, everyone on campus must carry their MIT ID at all times. Most buildings will be accessible through one or two access points. Working spaces may be reconfigured and schedules changed to allow for adequate physical distancing. Cleaning protocols across campus will be stepped up.

**Varsity athletics, other sports, and on-campus recreation.** Unfortunately, MIT varsity sports teams will not compete this winter. Likewise, club sports and intramurals will be paused for the winter and their status for spring reviewed based on student demographics, Covid conditions, and health and safety guidelines. DAPER will provide more information to anyone affected by these cancellations directly. Faculty, staff, students, and family members living on campus and students accessing campus using Covid Pass will have access to DAPER outdoor and indoor fitness facilities this spring. The facilities have been reconfigured to limit the potential spread of Covid, occupancy has been reduced, and new policies have been introduced for the wellbeing of staff and those who use DAPER facilities. Please visit the MIT Recreation website for more information.