

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](#). On November 10, Chancellor Barnhart, Vice Chancellor Ian Waitz, and Vice President and Dean for Student Life Suzy Nelson shared [additional perspectives about life on campus in Spring 2021](#).

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. The week-long spring break has been replaced by three- and four-day weekends distributed throughout the semester to avoid the usual travel away from MIT that often takes place during spring break.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, 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 six break days have been included during the semester (the same number of break days as in fall semesters).
- The calendar includes two four-day weekends and two three-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 on Friday, May 7.

- There will be a three-day “reading period” as in prior spring semesters.
- 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. Classes will begin on Tuesday, February 16.

The pre-registration window for IAP is December 1, 2020, to January 4, 2021. For Spring 2021, the pre-registration window is December 1, 2020, to January 29, 2021. The full schedule of subject offerings is available on the [MIT Subject Listing and Schedule website](#). The [Spring 2021 Class Schedule Finder](#) displays whether students are required to be on-campus and in-person for courses with assigned classroom space. Decisions about instructional 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 of final exams will be decided by the instructional staff of each subject that requires a final.

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.
- The faculty supervisor should contact student-car@mit.edu (see the [UROP website](#) for instructions) to receive confirmation of each UROP student's access eligibility.

To learn about options for in-person UROPs over IAP and during the spring semester, visit: <https://now.mit.edu/latest-updates/guidance-on-urop-participation/> and <https://urop.mit.edu/%3Cnolink%3E/alert-covid-19-urop-updates>.

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.

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 decided that, similar to the fall, the spring grading system will be a letter grading system with extra flexibility, with a few small differences. Key features include:

- For undergraduate and graduate subjects, grades will include A, B, C, D/NE, and F/NE, where NE indicates that no record will appear on the external transcript.
- First-year undergraduate students will be graded A, B, C, D/NR, and F/NR in the spring semester.
- All students may elect to have one subject graded PE/NE in the spring semester.
- In contrast to the fall semester, the typical junior-senior and graduate P/D/F options will be available to applicable students this spring.

If the conditions of the pandemic worsen prior to or during the semester, APART may implement a system of alternate grades for the semester ("universal" PE/NE), as was the case last spring.

For more information, read the full grading policy

<https://facultygovernance.mit.edu/sites/default/files/ExpandedGradingPolicySpring2021.pdf>

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.

In addition, a small number of seniors have remained in or returned to campus housing through the [Student Housing Assistance Review Process \(SHARP\)](#).

Chancellor Barnhart announced on December 14 that seniors who choose to live near MIT in the spring can have access to campus for research and academic activities such as thesis work, UROPs, and in-person instruction required for degree completion. [Read the full announcement here](#).

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 those 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 through MIT IS&T to all by phone or email, 24/7.

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 at 617-253-6771 (available 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday through Friday) or email 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., if a student arrives 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. Please note that 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.

While living in on-campus housing or accessing campus facilities during the spring semester, students will be required to comply with MIT’s Covid-19 testing expectations and 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. The agreement contains information about MIT's 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 closed on November 16, 2020 at 11:59 pm. According to the updated Spring 2021 housing process timeline, students who submitted a housing application had the opportunity to review and amend their housing preferences up until Monday, December 14 at 12:00 pm ET. Housing & Residential Services (HRS) used this information to assign students to a residence hall based on their top-ranked preferences. Building assignments were shared with students at the end of December 2020 and individual room assignments will be shared by the end of January 2021.

How will the room assignments process work?

Similar to the Fall 2020 process, HRS will share students' submitted living preferences with Room Assignment Chairs (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. The high volume of Spring 2021 housing applications (~2,800 students indicated they would like to live on campus in the spring) confirmed that up to 35 percent of returning undergraduates will be assigned to double room accommodations. 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) of physical distancing, or the use of face coverings. The [residential pod program](#) in undergraduate residences will continue through Spring 2021. Updated details and deadlines about the spring pod program will be posted on the [HRS website](#) 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 Presidents' Day weekend, including first-year students arriving on February 13, and returning students arriving February 14–15. Similar to Fall 2020 move-in, students will preference arrival windows to avoid crowding. Additional details regarding spring move-in will be provided in December to students who have been invited and elect to live on campus.

Was there a Student Housing Assistance Review Process (SHARP) process for Spring 2021?

Yes. The Student Housing Assistance Review Process (SHARP) launched on Monday, November 2. Additional information about SHARP, including resources and an FAQ, can be found on the [SHARP webpage](#).

What's the plan for FSILGs in spring 2021?

The vast majority of FSILGs will continue to be closed to undergraduate students this spring. Feedback from students and alumni was vital to making an informed decision about spring plans 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.

In December 2020, MIT announced a targeted pilot opportunity for 3-5 FSILGs to operate during the spring semester with about 15 residents each. More information about the pilot can be found at <https://ailg.mit.edu/ailg-covid-19-updates>.

If undergraduate students decide not to live on campus for Spring 2021, how can they retrieve belongings from storage?

MIT will provide up to a \$700 shipping subsidy for students who are unable to or decide not to live on campus. To qualify for the subsidy, students must [arrange shipping through Piece by Piece Movers](#) by **February 15, 2021**. The shipping subsidy does not apply to students who returned to live on campus during Fall 2020, as those students have had the opportunity to retrieve their belongings. In-person retrieval of stored belongings may also be arranged [directly with Piece by Piece Movers](#), or with residents' [House Operations Manager](#) prior to the start of the spring semester for items stored in-residence during Spring 2020. Students with stored

belongings who are invited to and elect to live on campus during Spring 2021 will have their items delivered to their on-campus housing assignment.

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 to 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 out of an abundance of caution and 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 spring term COVID subsidy of \$1,260 for the meal plan, bringing the total cost down from \$3,160 to \$1,900. To allow students to supplement the 14-meals-per-week plan, the dining allowance offered in the financial aid award calculation is \$2,500 per semester, giving students on financial aid additional financial flexibility and choice.

All 10 undergraduate houses will have in-residence meal service with the exception of East Campus, which will be served in [Morss Hall \(Building 50\)](#). Service includes breakfast, lunch, and dinner on weekdays and brunch and dinner on weekends. Lunch will also be available in the Student Center's [Lobdell Dining Hall](#) (W20) on weekdays with limited seating potentially available in the dining room.

MIT Dining service for undergraduates will be primarily take-out. Depending on public health guidance and seating availability, residential dining halls and common spaces and Lobdell Dining Hall may have limited sit-down eating areas. Students dining in these approved eating areas will be required to maintain proper physical distancing and wear face coverings at all times, except while eating at their tables.

TechMart, MIT's at-cost student grocery, will be located in the New Vassar residence (W46), accessible to on-campus residents. Currently, Dunkin' is the only retail eatery open in the Student Center (W20). The retail eatery Pacific Street Cafe (located at NW86) is also open and operating. Dining facilities and retail eateries across campus are available only to community members granted access to specific campus buildings. Additional retail eateries may reopen during the spring if public health guidance allows. Please check [the MIT Dining website](#) for up-to-date information.

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 renewal of its infrastructure and interior spaces to 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. The [Founders' Group](#), which comprises students, faculty, and staff, has been planning for the formation of the new community with a focus on wellness.

Graduate Tower at Site 4 opened to graduate residents in November 2020, marking 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 two-bedroom and one-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 complied 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 are 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, we expect to maintain the fall 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.

Can seniors who live off-campus but are approved to access campus this spring for academic and research purposes also use DAPER facilities?

Yes. If seniors who have been approved to access campus this spring for academic and research purposes would like to use DAPER facilities, they can. They must be up to date with

all Covid Pass requirements related to testing cadence, daily health attestations, and all other Institute policies to maintain their campus access privileges.

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. International students with questions should consult [ISO updates](#) for additional guidance or contact their [ISO advisor](#).

Does the Fall 2020 US Department of Homeland Security (USDHS) Guidance on International Students remain in effect for the spring?

The USDHS Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has unofficially confirmed that the Fall 2020 Guidance on international student enrollment has been extended to the Spring 2021 semester. USDHS has not, however, provided any update concerning the suspension of the [F-1 Five-Month Temporary Absence Rule](#) being extended for the Fall 2020 or the Spring 2021 semester. Please [review further guidance](#) on the F-1 Five-Month Temporary Absence Rule.

The [International Students Office](#) (ISO) will continue to provide any updates on its [website](#) and via email to all MIT international students.

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 during Spring 2021 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 in this FAQ are similar to what was in place for Fall 2020 and are intended to protect the health and safety of those who live in and around the MIT community.

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

well-being using [COVID Pass](#). Enrolled students who do not live on campus in the spring should [consult this guidance from MIT Medical](#) about how to seek patient care and receive a test if they believe they have been exposed to Covid-19.

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. The majority of FSILGs will be closed for undergraduates, with the possible exception of a few organizations that may participate in a spring housing pilot. [More information will be available soon on the Association of Independent Living Groups website](#). As the events and gatherings policy states ([undergraduates](#) | [graduate students](#)), the size of groups that can interact with each other in person is small. Please read the policy for more details.

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Access to campus and interacting with friends. Only faculty, students, and family members who live on campus or students, faculty, and staff 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. To ensure 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 well-being 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 for cooking. However, students may use the sinks, refrigerators, and microwaves, and dispose of food waste in trash barrels in designated kitchens. 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. Nine residence halls will have in-house breakfast, lunch, and dinner served each weekday, and brunch and dinner served on weekends. Due to space restrictions in East Campus, that community's meals will be served in Walker Memorial's Morss Hall. 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 most weekdays after moving to the New Vassar Residence.

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](#). Many working spaces have been reconfigured and schedules changed to allow for adequate physical distancing. Stepped-up cleaning protocols will remain in effect across campus.

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 will be reviewed based on Covid conditions and public health guidelines. DAPER will provide more information to anyone affected by these cancellations directly. Faculty, staff, students, and family members living on campus; and graduate students accessing campus using Covid Pass; and seniors approved to access campus for academic and research purposes 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 well-being of staff and those who use DAPER facilities. Please [visit the MIT Recreation website](#) for more information.