

TOP QUESTIONS

1. Now that you have switched to remote learning for the entire semester, will you be offering tuition refunds?

We understand the concern over tuition and the financial strain that this pandemic is putting on so many. Even during this unprecedented national and global challenge, our outstanding faculty are meeting the course and program learning objectives for our students by continuing to deliver a world-class Penn State education. University staff and educators are working around the clock. The full effort of the University is focused on getting all students into the remote environment to preserve their credits and enable them to finish the semester, and to graduate on time, which is important financially to students and families.

Unfortunately, we believe the cost of fulfilling our educational commitment in a remote setting is likely higher, and there are no plans to issue tuition refunds. Lab experiments are being video streamed, technical, research and operational infrastructures needs are being met, training and technology solutions are being delivered on an unprecedented scale, and more. The University is delivering on our educational promise to our students and will continue to do so.

2. What is the direction for students returning to on-campus housing?

Students should not return to campus before receiving specific, individual instructions. The University will announce soon a schedule for students to return to campus to move out of their on-campus residence halls. It is essential that students know they will not be able to swipe into their on-campus residences until they receive specific information and detailed instructions regarding the schedule. This is critical to the University's efforts to create as much social distancing as possible and maintain a low level of exposure risk to our students as well as all our local communities.

3. What is the direction for students returning to off-campus housing?

Students with leases in off-campus residences, including fraternities, also must understand the critical importance of social distancing and the risk they may pose to both peers and others in our communities with whom they interact. The University is partnering with local authorities and landlords to develop coordinated guidance for those students who wish to return to their off-campus residences to secure belongings. More information about this process will be forthcoming soon. Meanwhile, any student who does not need to return to an off-campus residence should be discouraged from doing so in the interest of public health and their own.

4. What about seniors who need lab credits to graduate?

The full resources of the University are behind meeting student learning outcome and course objectives, and faculty are working to deliver the most critical information for student success. In laboratory courses, the University is working with faculty to prioritize that learning objectives are met with flexibility. Some examples of ways faculty are doing this include livestreaming demonstrations of experiments then providing data to students to analyze. Innovations are emerging daily.

5. What is the amount students will be refunded for housing and meal plans?

Students will be refunded for their prorated University room and board rates through the rest of the academic year. The full resources of the University are behind meeting student learning objectives and classes will continue remotely so students can complete their semesters successfully.

We know with this new announcement that many in our community have important questions about room and board refunds, on-campus jobs, internships, research projects and other topics. It's important to understand that this transition comes at considerable cost, organization, and support by the University, which is working nonstop to meet learning outcomes through the remote learning process.

6. Are you offering housing refunds to students who live off campus in apartments or fraternities?

The University will work with local authorities, landlords, and student leaders, where we can, to encourage strategies to minimize the impact on students. These are separate contracts and leases between landlords and students that the University cannot ultimately control.

7. What about students who need internships in order to graduate – like in K-12 schools, OT, nursing, etc.?

The University is working with accreditors and state and federal agencies to provide appropriate guidance on requirements related to internships as part of the educational curriculum. Additionally, academic leadership of all units at Penn State are carefully evaluating how internships or other practicum, or requirements can be achieved for students in a timely manner. Cases may vary, depending on circumstances, like different accreditation requirements, and we will continue to work with students individually to address needs. The administration, faculty and staff are doing everything we can to limit disruptions to learning as much as possible, given these extraordinary circumstances, and will work with students to keep them on track.

8. What about individuals who depend on student wages income?

We understand and share this concern. This is a complicated issue because of considerations like state and federal work-study regulations, which are being reviewed to address hourly employees that have federal or state work-study requirements. And some students who were employed at their campus location are now home. However, these students may be able work from home, and we are encouraging that to happen – and indeed it already is in some cases. Overall, our general intent is to treat student employees like we do other employees, and further guidance will be coming soon.

9. What do you say to graduating seniors who are missing commencement after four years of hard work?

Graduation is a significant milestone for our students and while it may not be the same as our traditional ceremony, we are committed to finding the best way possible to recognize the achievements of our graduates. The University is exploring options for an alternative celebration and will share more information as those details come together. As our graduates enter the new careers that they have worked so hard to achieve, we look forward to seeing their impact on and important contributions to society and hope to invite them back to campus as alumni.

10. Why doesn't the University just close?

Consistent with Governor Wolf's statewide mitigation efforts, the University must continue to provide services essential to our community. Our main focus right now is providing the best education possible under the current circumstances, so we have faculty teaching and staff working remotely. Further, vital research projects must continue, the maintenance of animal and research facilities must be upheld, and the University remains committed to assisting the few students who remain in on-campus housing who have no other housing option. The University must continue to

work with these individuals to address their needs. University Health Services (UHS) also remains open and is treating students by appointment only.

11. What does this mean for faculty and staff?

The University continues to operate. With the extension of remote course delivery, faculty will continue fulfilling their teaching obligations. Staff who are able to telecommute will continue to do so. Some staff are still needed on campus to fulfill critical roles. The University will work individually with staff whose particular job responsibilities make telecommuting difficult and are taking into very serious consideration the health and financial wellbeing of our employees.

12. Will there be layoffs or furloughs?

At this time, there are no plans to implement furloughs or layoffs. We are taking into very serious consideration the financial wellbeing of our employees.