

Answers to Community Questions from MKI during
the March 10, 2020 Meeting on COVID-19
Version B (2020 March 11, 7:05PM)

1. Will there be a capability to observe remotely with Magellan?

Rob has been in touch with the Magellan Council Chair and Observatory Director, and they are readying the mountain to support remote observing. Carnegie has been supporting remote observing for other telescopes on the mountain, and the interface should be the same.

The primary concern is possible network outages, which would lead to lost observing time. Magellan is working to recruit backup support for observers, who can be at the telescope and communicating over video link, but who can take over in the event of network loss. Once this process converges we will have an announcement for MIT observers.

2. If remote Magellan observing requires Chilean personnel as backup for internet outages, what are the costs and who pays them?

We do not yet know the answer to this question, but will include an answer when we announce implementation plans for item (1) above.

3. I had planned a trip that would be funded by a federal grant, but had to cancel. Is this still reimbursable from my grant?

Please check your airline policies for flexibility, waivers and refunds

<https://www.airfarewatchdog.com/blog/50104455/covid-19-flight-waivers-and-refund-policies-by-airline/>

Expenses that do not benefit a grant are not allowable on that grant. However, if you are able to change a ticket for use towards future travel with or without a fee or get a credit voucher and you used an MIT Travel Card to purchase your ticket, the transaction can be moved into an expense report with the date the voucher expires. The future trip can be expensed on the appropriate grant.

If airfare is non-refundable MKI or MIT will cover the cost - we are waiting for additional guidance in this area both from federal sponsors and from MIT.

4. Can canceled travel be treated as a sunk cost and transferred to discretionary funds, or what other remedies are available?

You may treat cancelled travel as a sunk cost. Or, you can check airline policies for flexibility, waivers and refunds (see above).

5. What is the mechanism for registering personal travel with the Institute?

[MIT travel registry](#) - for all “non-commuting travel” is **mandatory** for all work related travel and **strongly encouraged for all personal travel**.

[Traveler Information](#) - if you do travel to a country on the [CDC travel advisory page](#), you must submit this form 2-3 days before returning to campus. Note that if you do travel to countries for which there is a [level 3 travel advisory](#) (as of 11 March these are China, Iran, Italy and South Korea, but please check for updates), [MIT Medical will ask](#) you to self-quarantine for 14 days upon return.

If you are seeking an exemption to travel on MIT business during the ban, please email covidtravel@mit.edu.

6. Will there be any new or different cleaning procedures for Buildings 37, NE-83, or NW17?

We are gathering information about this from Facilities, and will update this document when specific information is available. To the best of our knowledge, the protocol is to increase their cleaning of common areas: hand rails, elevator buttons, restrooms, door knobs. Basically, the everyday things we touch a lot are being cleaned more often.

We emphasize that the effectiveness of these measures improves if everyone observes their responsibility to wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, use hand sanitizer on the way into the building and often throughout the day.

7. What is the plan for classroom instruction and/or planned midterm exams?

Per an email Peter Fisher sent to the physics community (6:15 pm on March 10):

- In the week March 9 - 13, classroom instruction continues as normal. However, midterms are cancelled and instructors are asked to consider extending deadlines on problem sets. We will need to develop plans for assessment in this current arrangement; while the students are dealing with the significant stress associated with needing to leave MIT, this is not the time for them to be required to take exams.
- Classes are cancelled in the week March 16 - 20. During this week and Spring Break (March 23 - 27), we will implement online instruction for all physics classes.

- Classes resume in an online only format beginning March 30.

Pablo Jarrillo-Herrero (pjarillo@mit.edu) has been designated the czar for all instructional changes within physics that must be implemented following MIT's COVID-19 response. Please contact him with questions and requests for assistance as you navigate the various options that may be available for your classroom. You can also find helpful resources listed and discussed on the Instructional Continuity website, <http://teachremote.mit.edu/>

8. Are there any changes in the plans for cleaning the public spaces?

Brian Surette is trying to get additional hand sanitizer dispensers, but there are none currently available. Facilities is trying to enhance the cleaning of the public spaces.

9. Is there a source of general cleaning supplies at MKI for cleaning things like keyboards?

MKI does not have any such community supplies. In the past individuals have sourced their own cleaning supplies for keyboards, desks, etc. Brian suggests that we should be careful about what chemicals are in various cleaning products and the potential for damaging the cleaned items (e.g. LCD screens).

Also, see the following guidance from Apple about cleaning their products:

<https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT204172>