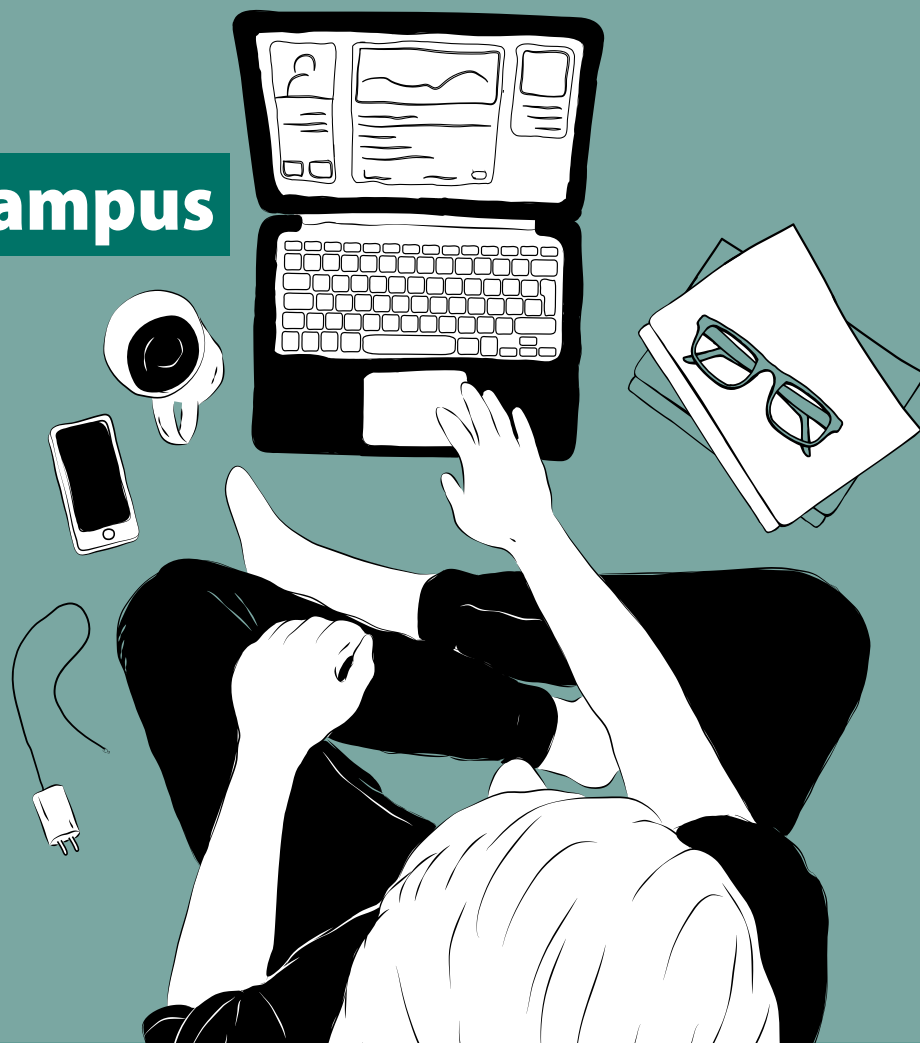


COVID-19

Return-to-Campus

Guidelines



July 5, 2021

Guidelines produced by
B.C. Post-Secondary Institutions
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Purpose of the Guidelines

The COVID-19 Return-to-Campus Guidelines (“the Guidelines”) provide updated public health guidance to support the full return to in-person education, research and on-campus services for B.C.’s post-secondary institutions. The Guidelines were developed by a team of experts from B.C.’s post-secondary sector, the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, regional health authorities and the BC Centre for Disease Control.

B.C.’s Restart: A Plan to Bring Us Back Together

The Return-to-Campus Guidelines align with [B.C.’s Restart Plan](#) launched on May 25, 2021 to bring British Columbians back together, and gradually return to the activities that sustain us as individuals, communities and organizations. The four-step plan is designed based on data and guidance from the BC Centre for Disease Control and B.C.’s Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry. [Getting vaccinated](#) is the most important tool supporting the Restart Plan. Post-secondary institutions should not introduce COVID-19 prevention measures that are different from those supported by public health professionals.

While there are approximate dates identified with each of the four steps in the [Restart Plan](#), progress through the steps will be guided by data in four key areas:

- Declining COVID-19 case counts
- Increasing vaccination rate in people 18+
- Declining COVID-19 hospitalizations, including critical care
- Declining COVID-19 mortality rate

Moving Beyond COVID-19: Getting Back to Normal

The goal for the fall is to transition from highly prescriptive COVID-19 specific orders and protocols back to normal institutional policies and guidance on occupational health and safety. The Return-to-Campus Guidelines are intended to help institutions transition back to a more normal life as outlined in the Restart Plan. This includes continuing to work with First Nations and Indigenous community partners to meet the unique needs of Indigenous learners and communities.

As conditions improve through the summer, it is expected that most of the more restrictive public health measures affecting our personal and professional lives will be relaxed and replaced with more general health-related behaviours for reducing the spread of viruses. This includes rescinding the Provincial State of Emergency and most public health orders as early as July 1, 2021.

The transition period between July 1, 2021 (Step 3) and September 7, 2021 (Step 4) is an important time for post-secondary institutions as they ramp up operations and welcome back to campus faculty, staff and students. Knowing that many post-secondary institutions are aiming to be at or near pre-pandemic operating levels before September 7th, post-secondary institutions should begin easing restrictions in workspaces and common areas, including the need for barriers or occupancy limits, during this transition period in order to be ready to enter Step 4 of the BC Restart Plan on September 7, 2021.

The following graphic has been adapted for post-secondary institutions from B.C.’s 4-Step Restart Plan to illustrate the progression over time to less prescriptive COVID-19 measures.

Post-Secondary Examples of B.C.'s 4-Step Restart Plan

NOTE: The table below provides post-secondary examples for the implementation of B.C.'s Restart Plan. The list is not exhaustive and provides examples only. The period between July 1 (Step 3) and September 7 (Step 4) is a transition period during which PSIs should begin easing COVID-19 restrictions in workspaces and common areas, based on public health guidance.

Step	1 MAY 25	2 JUNE 15 (earliest date)	3 JULY 1 (earliest date) Transition Period	4 SEPT 7 (earliest date)
Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks mandatory indoors Physical distancing If sick, stay home & get tested Daily health check Enhanced cleaning COVID-specific Safety Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks mandatory indoors Physical distancing If sick, stay home & get tested Daily health check Enhanced cleaning COVID-specific Safety Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks recommended Careful social contact If sick, stay home & get tested Daily health check Enhanced cleaning New communicable disease plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks personal choice Normal social contact If sick, stay home & get tested Daily health check Modified seasonal cleaning Communicable disease plans
Educational Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily virtual Gradual increase face-to-face on-campus Building/room occupancy limits apply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily virtual Continued increase face-to-face on-campus Increasing building/room occupancy limits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued increase face-to-face on-campus Gradual reduction of COVID-specific restrictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily on-campus w/ student learning accommodations and support Maximum capacity for buildings/rooms
Offices / Workplaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily remote, limited return to campus Building/room occupancy limits apply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily remote, increased return to campus Increasing building/room occupancy limits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased return to campus Gradual reduction of COVID-specific restrictions New communicable disease plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully re-opened offices and workspaces w/ staff accommodations and support Communicable disease plans
Common Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sector-specific restrictions remain in effect Crowding discouraged w/ controls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sector-specific restrictions lessened Crowding discouraged but w/ lessened controls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gradual elimination of COVID-specific restrictions Reduced crowd management measures New communicable disease plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All spaces fully reopened Communicable disease plans
Work / Organized Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily virtual Indoor: 10 or less Outdoor: 50 or less Building/room occupancy limits apply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily virtual Indoor (seated) and Outdoor: 50 or less Sector consultation begin for large gatherings Increasing building/room occupancy limits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased indoor and outdoor gatherings capacity, with safety plans Gradual reduction of COVID-specific restrictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full capacity allowed w/ increased or hybrid virtual options to continue (expected)
Social / Personal Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor: 5 or less Outdoor: 10 or less Work with faith-leaders to bring back in-person worship services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum 50 outdoor (e.g., sports spectators) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return to usual on indoor and outdoor personal gathering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal social contact No indoor/outdoor spectator limits
Student Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small gatherings with friends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor: 5 or less Outdoor: 10 or less Organized student group meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor: 10 or less 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student group/club meetings, with safety plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor: 50 or less Outdoor club/team sports (soccer, softball, volleyball, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yoga/dance/rehearsals etc., with safety plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased indoor capacity Increased spectator and events/orientations Bars/nightclubs with small group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal social contact Sports events/concerts Pubs/bars and nightclubs Student group activities Events and parties

Transition Period 

Learning to Live with COVID-19

Sector-Specific Guidance for Post-secondary Institutions

Protecting the health and well-being of students, faculty, staff and campus visitors remains the top priority, while being mindful of the importance of adaptability as conditions change. Post-secondary institutions have already demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability by quickly shifting to remote and hybrid learning in order to remain open and available for learners. While there are many lessons learned from this experience that can enhance opportunities for flexible teaching and learning moving forward, the focus of the Return-to-Campus Guidelines is on public health guidance for the fall.

Post-secondary institutions received sector-specific direction on March 8, 2021 from B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer, advising institutions to begin planning for a full return to on-campus teaching, learning and research in September 2021 (see [Attachment 1](#)). Dr. Henry stressed the importance of getting back on campus for everyone's mental health and well-being. Additional guidance to help institutions prepare for a fall return to campus was provided in the *COVID-19 Return-to-Campus Primer* released on April 30, 2021. Following the release of the Primer, Dr. Henry participated in two town halls with [post-secondary administrators and labour organizations](#), and [student leaders](#) to discuss the preliminary public health guidance for September 2021. The public health guidance for B.C.'s post-secondary institutions is consistent with the guidance provided for all British Columbians in the Restart Plan.

While elimination of the COVID-19 virus will not occur in the near future, we can certainly adapt to living with COVID-19 as we do with other manageable seasonal ailments such as influenza. Immunization, infection prevention, and exposure control measures are the tools we have to make everyone less vulnerable to getting COVID-19 or experiencing serious outcomes.

By September 2021, it is anticipated that:

- COVID-19 transmission will be low, and more importantly serious infections will be uncommon. COVID-19 is a virus that is unlikely to be eliminated from the population. However, COVID-19 can be managed in the same manner as other common respiratory infections.
- All British Columbians ages 12+ will have had an opportunity to receive at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine before July 1, 2021, and two doses by the end of August 2021.

Based on guidance from the Provincial Health Officer and experience to date within B.C., environments such as post-secondary educational settings are low-risk sites for COVID-19 transmission.

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 relies on everyone doing their part, including:

- immunization,
- daily self-administered health checks,
- staying home when sick,
- wearing masks when recommended by public health, and
- practicing hand hygiene.

Strong public health management of cases, clusters and outbreaks will also have an important role to play.

Authorized vaccines have proven to be highly effective at reducing serious outcomes from the COVID-19 virus. As immunization programs roll out across B.C., their positive effects are already evident at the population level, reducing transmission in communities, decreasing serious

outcomes of COVID-19, and thereby even protecting unvaccinated individuals.

While no single layer of protection against COVID-19 is perfect, when multiple layers of protection are combined, the risk of transmission is significantly reduced. Due to the demonstrated effect of B.C.'s immunization program, the layering of core public health measures, and the tailoring of prevention and control measures, physical distancing including the use of protective barriers, partitions, and directional signage will not be required in most settings, especially in educational environments such as post-secondary classrooms and instructional settings.

Core Public Health Measures

Core measures that are expected to remain in place in September 2021, until otherwise determined by the Provincial Health Officer, include:

- Completing a daily self-administered health check and not attending campus when ill (NOTE: It is a personal responsibility for everyone accessing a post-secondary campus to complete a daily health self-assessment);
- Following handwashing and hygiene protocols;
- Transitioning COVID-19 specific safety plans into communicable disease plans inclusive of strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19. WorkSafeBC guidance is currently under development;
- Following regular pre-COVID cleaning protocols in all indoor settings and on high touch surfaces; and,
- Wearing masks based on personal choice or if recommended by public health (NOTE: Masks will no longer be a legislated requirement in indoor common areas).

Working with Local Medical Health Officers

Institutions should continue to work with their local B.C. medical health officer to develop effective infection prevention and exposure control measures, as well as COVID-19 case management and response processes.

Medical health officers in B.C. are responsible for monitoring and assessing the health status of the community, including making recommendations for strategies to address health issues and implementing immediate actions when necessary to protect the health of the public.

Public Health Management of COVID-19

Case and contact management were central to COVID-19 control in the absence of a vaccine. However, the public health approach to COVID-19 is evolving. While it is possible that COVID-19 contact tracing and notification protocols may still be required in the fall as part of the transition back to a more normal life, local medical health officers will guide public health approaches to COVID-19 as the population becomes immunized. See Attachment 2 for current information on COVID-19 contact tracing and notification protocols.

Safety is Everyone's Responsibility

We can all contribute personally and professionally by getting vaccinated (as we are able), following campus safety plans, performing our daily health check, staying home when sick, wearing masks as required, following handwashing and hygiene etiquette, and following public health guidance both on and off campus.

It is up to each one of us to do our part, but it is our collective efforts that will make the difference. This is the time to be kind, to be calm, and to be safe.

General Campus Planning

In addition to a comprehensive immunization program, a number of core public health measures and tailored infection prevention and control measures are expected to continue to support the safe resumption of on-campus activities. The measures outlined below are guided by evidence and the expert advice of public health professionals.

Campus Logistics

- Daily self-administered health checks will be a personal responsibility. Students, faculty, staff and campus visitors are not required to confirm that they have completed the health self-assessment prior to accessing campus. Individuals experiencing symptoms should stay home, consult the B.C. COVID-19 self-assessment tool to determine if COVID-19 testing is needed, and contact 811 or their healthcare provider for medical advice as necessary.
- Non-medical masks may be recommended by public health in some circumstances, depending on local COVID-19 transmission rates. Institutions should continue to follow the advice of the Provincial Health Officer to ensure the campus community is aware of current mask requirements and have a plan for communicating changes in recommendations.
- WorkSafeBC continues to advise that building ventilation systems, in good operating condition, do not contribute to the spread of COVID-19. Institutions should ensure that building ventilation (HVAC) systems are operating and maintained in accordance

with WorkSafeBC requirements and relevant ASHRAE¹ Standards for indoor air quality.

- Institutions will not be required to manage the flow of pedestrian traffic within buildings or confined areas, or post occupancy limits for spaces such as elevators or washrooms.

Cleaning and Hygiene

- Hand hygiene should be actively promoted. Hand sanitization stations are recommended for placement at regular intervals throughout common spaces and at the entrances/exits to all public spaces.
- Educational and public spaces should be cleaned routinely. Increased disinfection and cleaning protocols for high touch areas such as door handles and elevator buttons are not required since surface transmission of COVID-19 is not a significant risk. Cleaning between classes is not required.

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1 ASHRAE – the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers

Transitioning to Communicable Disease Plans

- A COVID-19 Safety Plan will no longer be a requirement for September 2021. Instead, institutions will be required to transition COVID-19 specific safety plans into communicable disease plans to reduce the risk of all respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19.
- Communicable disease plans should reference the core public health measures noted earlier including staying home when sick, hand hygiene, as well as any additional health and safety protocols prescribed by local and provincial medical health professionals.
- NOTE: WorkSafeBC and public health experts are currently developing a guide that will assist employers in developing their communicable disease plans. Protocols in the Return-to-Campus Guidelines will be updated periodically, as necessary, to align with evolving guidance.

Student Housing and Dining Facilities

- On-campus student housing providers can plan for full or close-to-full occupancy for the fall. Institutions are strongly encouraged to hold back 1-2% of total student housing beds for the isolation or quarantine of students in the event of infection.
- It is anticipated that dining facilities for student housing and cafeterias serving students, faculty and staff at educational institutions will continue to be exempt from any provincial closures for restaurants and bars. On-campus cafeterias, restaurants and pubs should follow the provincial requirements for food and liquor serving premises.

Faculty and Staff Considerations

- Some faculty and staff will feel anxious or hesitant about a return to campus. Employees should be clearly informed of new or updated workplace safety procedures, and how they are designed to protect faculty and staff from COVID-19 before returning to the workplace.
- All faculty and staff should follow institutional health and safety prevention measures which continue to be

guided by public health, and not introduce other or different measures in their work or learning areas.

- Institutions are strongly encouraged to administer formal requests for accommodation, including medical accommodation, based on the individual circumstances and in accordance with collective agreements, legal obligations and established accommodation review timelines.
- Faculty and staff are eligible to take up to three (3) hours without loss of pay to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* provide this support for both doses of the vaccine.
- Faculty and staff absences may be higher than during pre-pandemic periods due to seasonal respiratory illnesses (flu-like symptoms), ongoing self-assessment and self-isolation requirements. While community transmission is expected to be very low, employees may need to take time off or work from home if diagnosed with COVID-19, or advised to self-isolate or quarantine as part of the contact tracing process. Workers may be eligible for up to 3 days of paid leave under the *Employment Standards Act* if they need to **stay home** because of COVID-19. The *BC Employment Standards Act* paid COVID-19 leave program is in place until December 31, 2021.

International Students

- The Canadian border is open to international students; however, some federal travel restrictions may remain in place in the fall. It is anticipated that students entering Canada to study will continue to be permitted entry if they are attending an institution that is on the federal list of approved Designated Learning Institutions managed by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. These students will be required to continue following federal requirements in place at the time of entry into Canada.

Related Public Health Guidelines

- For guidelines that relate to other aspects of campus operations beyond the delivery of post-secondary education and training, the post-secondary sector will continue to rely on public health guidelines developed and updated for other sectors (e.g., competitive sports, use of athletic and recreational facilities, public transit, travel, retail services, etc.).
- Institutions should continue to work with their local medical health officers for campus-specific questions, local / regional public health guidance, and COVID-19 case and contact management.
- COVID-19 vaccines are available at no charge to everyone ages 12+ living, working or studying in B.C. during the pandemic. You do not need a Personal Health Number (PHN), B.C. Services card, or to be enrolled in B.C.'s Medical Services Plan to get the vaccine. However, all students are encouraged to obtain a PHN in order to use the provincial on-line vaccination booking system. Students can call 1-833-838-2323 to obtain a PHN number and [register](#) to book into a local ImmunizeBC vaccination clinic.
- All students will be eligible to receive the vaccine, including international students and their families. The COVID-19 vaccine will not be mandatory. However, [ImmunizeBC](#) highly recommends getting the vaccine.
- Rapid point-of-care screening for COVID-19 is being used by B.C. Health Authorities for COVID-19 testing in settings with increased risk of transmission and/or outbreaks. Point-of-care testing for COVID-19 is available to post-secondary institutions that meet the indications outlined in B.C.'s [Rapid Point of Care Testing Strategy](#). Institutions interested in rapid COVID-19 point-of-care tests can contact their local medical health officer and email RapidPOCTeam@phsa.ca for an intake assessment.

Indigenous Students (First Nations, Métis and Inuit)

Engaging with First Nations and Indigenous Communities

Indigenous people have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and may face elevated health risks linked to social determinants (e.g. income, culture, access to health services, etc.). As such, they may maintain increased safety measures, and experience heightened anxiety related to COVID-19.

- Indigenous students may be experiencing increased racism related to the pandemic, including regarding the prioritization of Indigenous people for vaccination. Institutions should continue to work with students, faculty and staff to create culturally safe and inclusive campus communities free of racism.
- Institutions should continue to work collaboratively with local First Nations and Indigenous community partners to ensure that the health and safety of Indigenous learners and communities are taken into account.

First Nations Students Living on Reserve

- While much of the province will be significantly easing restrictions, due to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on Indigenous people, First Nations may be maintaining increased safety measures, including states of emergency that keep communities closed. First Nations have the authority to make these decisions. This means that some students may not be able to attend in-person classes.
- In the spirit of Reconciliation and consistent with the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#), institutions should work with local First Nations and any students that are impacted by the closure of their communities to ensure access to academic programming and services.

Community-based Programs

- Many institutions partner with other organizations to deliver post-secondary programs in community settings, including Indigenous communities and institutes. Institutions are encouraged to work with community-based partners to:
 - » Jointly develop plans for safely resuming or continuing program delivery.
 - » Determine whether additional supports are required for learners who face barriers to remote learning, such as lack of technology or online literacy.
- Institutions, faculty and staff should work with Indigenous community partners to understand and respect the health and safety precautions of the community.

Indigenous Gathering Places

- Indigenous Gathering Places provide important supports for Indigenous students. Institutions should work with local First Nations, Indigenous community partners, and Indigenous students to develop plans to safely operate Gathering Places and provide cultural supports for Indigenous students.
- Given that Indigenous communities may be taking increased precautions, including the closure of some First Nations, involvement of communities and elders may be impacted. Institutions should work with Indigenous partners and elders to develop plans for services and activities to be carried out safely, such as using technology.
- Institutions may also consider consulting the First Nations Health Authority for the latest guidance on providing services and supports for Indigenous people.

Educational Activities

- Experience over the last year has shown that educational activities supporting teaching, learning, research, and student development are low-risk sites for COVID-19 transmission including activities in classrooms, lecture theatres, libraries, studios, workshops, labs, field schools, practicums, research settings, etc.
- Educational activities associated with orientation events are encouraged, but they might look different for September 2021 based on public health advice in the fall on gatherings. Non-educational or social activities throughout the year should be planned according to the prevailing Provincial Health Officer guidance.

Classroom Logistics

- The Provincial Health Officer has indicated that there are no limits on the number of participants for in-class educational activities. Fall classes can be scheduled without physical distancing requirements (e.g. a classroom with 30 seats can be scheduled with 30 students; a lecture theatre with 150 seats can be scheduled with 150 students).

Student Supports / Accommodation

- Institutions are strongly encouraged to follow established accommodation or academic concession mechanisms to ensure that students who cannot physically be on campus (e.g., they are ill, adhering to quarantine rules, self-isolating, attending a vaccine appointment, etc.) are not disadvantaged in their educational pursuits.
- Institutions are strongly encouraged to ensure that students with disabilities are supported and can continue their educational pursuits with appropriate academic accommodation.
- Institutions are encouraged to work collaboratively with student societies, clubs and governments to positively reinforce COVID-safe behaviours both on and off campus.

Mental Health Supports

- Students, faculty and staff may be anxious or experiencing increased stress about returning to campus. Mental health supports will be critical for everyone's health and wellbeing as part of the return to in-person activities on campus. Communication plans should be in place to raise awareness of these supports including:
 - » [Here2Talk](#), a free and confidential 24/7 mental-health counselling and referral service, and the new [Capacity to Connect program](#) which provides faculty and staff at post-secondary institutions with easy access to the tools and skills they need to provide intervention and help for students who are struggling with their mental health and wellness.
 - » [KUU-US crisis response service](#), a culturally-aware crisis support is available 24/7 to Indigenous people in B.C.
 - » Faculty and staff can access counselling and wellness services through employee and family assistance programs.
 - » [Virtual mental health programs and services](#) are offered through the Province to support mental health and wellness.
- Campus resources may include spirituality and wellness centres including:
 - » Counselling departments with trained counsellors who are available to students for career, educational, personal and crisis counselling.
 - » Wellness centres offering one-to-one health and wellness planning.
 - » Multifaith centres, chaplaincy and/or on-campus pastoral care providing one-on-one pastoral/spiritual counselling, and communal gatherings to support health and well-being.

Program-Specific Considerations

- Students and instructors will be expected to follow guidelines for specific settings where work integrated learning placements occur, including clinical, teaching, internships, co-op placements, and other community engaged work placements. Institutions should be knowledgeable of program-specific COVID-19 guidance and ensure that student and instructor risk is minimized in these placements.
- Institutions, students, faculty and staff should adhere to the federal government's [Travel Advice and Advisories](#) when considering studying or working abroad.

On-Campus Health Services / Working with Local Public Health

- Institutions can play a key role by liaising with local public health officials to ensure students, including out-of-province students as well as international students and their families, have the most current information about the availability of vaccines.
- Institutions should work with their local medical health officer within their Regional Health Authority regarding on-campus COVID-19 vaccination clinics.
- Institutions should identify and communicate steps that students, faculty and staff should take if they develop symptoms, including where to access testing.
- Public health authorities are responsible for determining notification processes and requirements for confirmed cases of COVID-19. Institutions may be asked to assist public health authorities in notifying close contacts, assisting in the identification of people who may have been exposed, distribution of materials prepared by the public health authorities, or supporting public notification efforts.

Acknowledgements

The Return-to-Campus Guidelines were developed by experts from the BC post-secondary sector, in partnership with public health experts. Special thanks to members of the Go-forward Guidelines Steering Committee, Panel of Experts, public health partners and reference groups.

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Attachment 1

March 2021 Guidance from BC's Provincial Health Officer



1190387

March 8, 2021

Dear Post-Secondary Institution Presidents:

I am writing to you to acknowledge the important leadership the post-secondary sector has shown in BC's response to the COVID-19 pandemic over the past 12 months, and to support you with the critical goal of resuming safe on-campus teaching, learning and research in September 2021.

Your institutions worked in partnership with the BC Centre for Disease Control, WorkSafeBC, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training, and staff in my office to produce and update the "COVID-19 Go-Forward Guidelines for B.C.'s Post-Secondary Sector." Those Guidelines and your institutional health and safety plans helped the sector to be very successful in mitigating the spread of COVID-19. The quick adaptation to remote learning, while staying open and available for learners, played a major role in the success of B.C.'s pandemic response.

My office and our medical health officers share your concerns about the wellbeing of young adults who are disproportionately affected by the pandemic, including worsening mental health, increased financial instability and diminished future prospects. We also acknowledge this has been a difficult and stressful time for faculty and staff. It is imperative to get back on campus for everyone's health and well-being.

There are very good reasons to be confident that a return to on-campus instruction in the fall can be undertaken safely and successfully. Current projections of the COVID-19 vaccine supply in BC suggest that all vulnerable and high-risk groups should be immunized this spring, and the majority of the adult population by the summer. Young adults aged 18-24 should receive the vaccine no later than the end of July, but more likely sooner. The timing of immunization should not be a determinant of planning for a return to on-campus activities.

Given the expected timelines for immunization it is essential that we plan for a full return to in-person activities on campus in September 2021, including in-person instruction, with faculty and staff returning to campus sooner. Immunization will support what seems likely to become stable coexistence with COVID-19 as another manageable, seasonal ailment.

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New variants of the SARS CoV-2 virus will likely continue to emerge. We will respond to them through monitoring, re-formulation of tests and vaccines, and through other measures as needed depending on the characteristics of the variants. Targeted testing and contact tracing by health authorities will remain key supplements to immunization in rapidly controlling transmission. These activities will be part of normal, ongoing life with COVID-19.

We have also learned over the past year that when we implement effective safety plans, large sectors can operate safely. Reducing the opportunity for infectious contacts will continue to be an important strategy. As such, safety plans will remain important, with updates as required. My team looks forward to working with you to fine-tune plans for the prevention activities we have all become so familiar with: self-administered health checks; facilitating hand cleaning through access to soap and water or encouraging people to use hand sanitizers; use of masks; early detection and rapid testing of potential cases; isolation; and case and contact management.

The experience of the past year can help with a safe return to post-secondary campuses. Above and beyond immunization, infectious contacts in group settings at post-secondary institutions can be reduced through a variety of prevention and exposure control measures. Two-meter physical distancing has been my guidance for uncontrolled group settings. Such distancing is neither practical, nor necessary, in the controlled context of post-secondary instructional settings. I am very confident that the combination of immunization and continued application of the “COVID-19 Go-Forward Guidelines for B.C.’s Post-Secondary Sector” will support the safe and complete resumption of campus teaching, learning, and research.

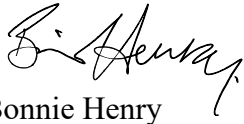
We also believe student housing, dining and other on-campus student services will be able to return to normal or close-to-normal capacities by following revised protocols in the “COVID-19 Go-Forward Guidelines for B.C.’s Post-Secondary Sector.”

Based on what we have learned in the past year, and the important protection that immunization will provide, I, as well as the medical health officers in British Columbia, strongly support the resumption of on-campus activities in September 2021. Public health will also continue to work with post-secondary institutions to determine if measures are needed to keep activities inside and outside the classroom safe in the fall, such as public transportation, socializing outside of class, athletics, and arrival and quarantine of international students.

Thank you, again, for the important role you play in supporting the provincial COVID-19 response, and in helping British Columbians to realize the full experience and benefits of post-secondary education. I look forward to working with you to strengthen the collaboration between public health and post-secondary institutions for a full and safe return to on-campus instruction in September 2021. We all look forward to the rich campus interactions that will make learning and personal development so much more effective and supportive for students, faculty, and staff.

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Sincerely,



Bonnie Henry
MD, MPH, FRCPC
Provincial Health Officer

Cc Honourable Anne Kang, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training
Shannon Baskerville, Deputy Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training
Max Blouw, President Research Universities' Council of BC
Ruth Wittenberg President, BC Association of Institutes and Universities
Colin Ewart, President BC Colleges
Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health
Stephen Brown, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health
Chief Medical Health Officers, Regional Health Authorities
Chief Medical Officer, First Nations Health Authority
Deputy Provincial Health Officers

Attachment 2

Contact Tracing and Notification Protocols

<p>What is the notification process for confirmed cases of COVID-19?</p>	<p>Notification of COVID-19 cases and exposures at post-secondary institutions (PSIs) is managed by public health authorities. PSIs may be asked to assist public health authorities in notifying close contacts such as students, faculty or staff of a confirmed case by assisting in the identification of people who may have been exposed, distribution of materials prepared by the public health authorities, or supporting public notification efforts.</p> <p>If students, faculty or staff receive a confirmed positive COVID-19 test result, health authorities follow a rigorous protocol:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Contact tracing is initiated to determine how the individual was infected and who they were in close contact with. ➤ Close contacts that are at an increased risk are identified and notified and advised to self-isolate and monitor for symptoms for 14 days. ➤ <i>Only health authorities can determine who is a close contact.</i> ➤ Health authorities will work closely with PSIs throughout the case and contact management process to enable appropriate communication with the campus community.
<p>Should an institution notify the campus community of a confirmed case of COVID-19?</p>	<p>Institutions should not send out notifications of COVID-19 cases unless directed to do so by their local Medical Health Officer. Public health authorities are responsible for determining notification processes and requirements.</p>
<p>What is contact tracing?</p>	<p>Contact tracing is the process used by public health authorities to identify individuals who have come into close contact with a person infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. The public health authority contacts these individuals and provides health direction.</p>
<p>What is the process for contact tracing?</p>	<p>Contact tracing is carried out by public health authorities. PSIs do not carry out contact tracing. If the public health authority determines that there may have been an exposure of concern for individuals who cannot be reached by direct contact notification, more widespread notification to identified groups may be carried out such as distribution of a bulletin to people at risk, publishing exposures on the health authority exposure notification web page, or announcement through public media. To maintain personal information privacy rights, the public health authority will only disclose limited information about a confirmed case in the campus community when sharing the information is required to support effective contact tracing.</p>
<p>What are the steps involved in contact tracing?</p>	<p>When carrying out contact tracing, public health authorities follow these steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A person tests positive for COVID-19 and they become a “case.” ➤ The lab completing the testing informs the public health authority and a public health nurse is assigned to interview the case to identify people they’ve spent time with. People with prolonged close contact with the case during their infectious period are “contacts.” ➤ The public health authority gets in touch with the contacts and asks them about symptoms of COVID-19. ➤ <i>Not every contact needs to be identified: only those who could have been exposed to the case’s respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing or speaking — this takes close and prolonged contact.</i> ➤ The public health authority maintains the case’s privacy. A case can choose to tell others about their diagnosis but should not do their own contact tracing and nor should others (e.g. employers). ➤ Contacts with symptoms are sent for testing. If they test positive, they become a ‘case’ and the process repeats; ➤ Contacts with no symptoms are asked to self-isolate and monitor for symptoms for 14 days after their last contact with the case (while they may be in the incubation period of the infection).
<p>How does a health authority notify the public of a possible COVID-19 exposure?</p>	<p>Health authorities may provide online notification of possible exposures to COVID-19 within post-secondary institutions. This information is provided so students, faculty and staff can be assured that public health is following up in their community, and exposure risks are being mitigated to the best of their ability. Anyone who has been identified as a COVID-19 positive case or close contact will be contacted directly by the local health authority to provide further instruction.</p>
<p>When would a public health authority recommend the closure of a facility?</p>	<p>For a public health authority to recommend or order closure of a site or facility to prevent infection transmission is a rare step, reserved for circumstances in which direct management of cases and contacts is not sufficient to limit transmission. The public health authority would communicate closely with PSI administrators on any recommended closures related to COVID-19.</p>



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