



Return to Campus Public Health Guidance

September 1, 2021

Key Messages

- This document outlines the prevention measures recommended by public health for post-secondary institutions in B.C. to reduce the risk of communicable diseases, including COVID-19, on campus.
- Educational settings are low-risk settings for COVID-19 transmission, particularly in the context of a highly immunized population.
- Vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 on campus. Everyone eligible is strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated (i.e., receive two doses) against COVID-19.

Introduction

This document outlines the prevention measures recommended by public health for post-secondary institutions in B.C. to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It aligns with, and is complementary to, the [COVID-19 Return-to-Campus Guidelines](#).

Public health experts in B.C. support the full return to on-campus instruction on September 7th, 2021 for post-secondary institutions, with the effective evidence-informed prevention measures detailed within this guidance document in place.

In B.C., most transmission of COVID-19 occurs in households or at informal social gatherings. In educational and other comparable settings, including those with teaching, learning, research, and student development activities, COVID-19 transmission is uncommon. Young people have been [disproportionately affected by the pandemic](#). Enabling them to return to closer-to-normal learning, recreational, and social activities is needed for pandemic recovery. While COVID-19 will continue to circulate for many years, in an immunized population like B.C., COVID-19 prevention needs to be balanced with recovery efforts.

The prevention measures detailed in this document have been very effective at preventing COVID-19 in a wide variety of settings across B.C. and will support a successful and safe return to campus. Prior to implementing measures in addition to those outlined below, consult with your local Medical Health Officer to ensure benefit.

Post-secondary institutions are encouraged to transition to these recommended prevention measures over a period of time, recognizing this as an evolving situation with multiple steps necessary to support implementation. Public Health remains committed to supporting the post-secondary sector, including faculty, staff, and students to return to the educational and research activities that are critical to the community and to society.



Vaccination

Vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 on campus. Two doses provide [effective protection](#) against infection and serious illness from COVID-19, including [variants of concern](#). Vaccines are available to all faculty, students, and staff, including international students and their families.

Post-secondary institutions can work with public health to ensure vaccination opportunities are accessible in the first weeks of the return to campus, as well as promote information on [how to get vaccinated](#). The BC Centre for Disease Control has specific information on getting vaccinated for [students arriving in B.C.](#) from within and outside of Canada.

People vaccinated outside of B.C. can upload their COVID-19 vaccination records to www.immunizationrecord.gov.bc.ca. This requires a B.C. [Personal Health Number](#), which can be obtained by contacting Service BC at 1-833-838-2323. Service BC is available seven days a week, 7am to 7pm.

Some experiential learning placements (including practicum and co-op placements) may require students to be vaccinated in line with practices for other employees. This includes health sciences students working in certain health care settings by Order of the Provincial Health Officer.

Testing and Contact Tracing

COVID-19 Testing: Testing is available to any student, faculty or staff in BC. Share guidance on [when to get tested](#) with the campus community. Testing locations are available on Regional Health Authority websites. If you are considering using point-of-care tests for asymptomatic screening of unvaccinated students, faculty and staff, consult your local Medical Health Officer prior to implementation to ensure appropriate guidelines are followed.

Contact Tracing: Public health follows up on every person who tests positive for COVID-19. This process is called contact tracing. Contact tracing helps to identify and manage [close contacts](#), who may be at increased risk for COVID-19.

Public health will work with institutions to manage cases and clusters of COVID-19, as required. Work with public health to determine what protocols should be in place to manage COVID-19 cases on campus. This may include providing the name and contact information of identified students, faculty and staff upon request of public health.



Provincial Health Officer Orders

Post-secondary institutions must follow applicable Provincial Health Officer Orders. Full details on Orders are available from the [Provincial Health Officer](#). Current Orders applicable to post-secondary institutions include:

Proof of Vaccination Order (under development) – Discretionary Services, Businesses and Events & On-Campus Housing: Everyone on campus aged 12 and older (born in 2009 or earlier) will need to provide [proof of vaccination](#) via the BC Vaccine Card to access **non-essential or discretionary** services, businesses, and events on campus as of September 13, 2021. Examples of non-essential or discretionary services include, but are not limited to:

- Indoor ticketed concerts, theatre, dance, symphony and sporting events
- Indoor and outdoor dining at restaurants, pubs and bars (on-campus cafeterias are excluded)
- Gyms and recreation facilities (youth recreational sport is excluded)
- Indoor high intensity group exercise
- Indoor organized gatherings like conferences, meetings and workshops
- Indoor organized group recreational classes and activities like pottery and art

Those living in on-campus housing will be required to provide proof of vaccination. This requirement will be phased in over time, with students needing at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine (be partially vaccinated) by September 7, 2021, and two doses (be fully vaccinated) by October 24, 2021.

Both requirements will be in place until January 31, 2022, and are subject to extension. More details on implementation are forthcoming.

Face Coverings (COVID-19) Order – Indoor Public Spaces: [Masks must be worn in all indoor public spaces](#) in B.C., including post-secondary spaces by anyone aged 12 and older, including students, faculty, staff and visitors. This includes, but is not limited to:

- in all public indoor public spaces of post secondary institutions
 - This includes lecture theatres, classrooms, teaching laboratories, and other indoor instructional settings
 - Instructors and other presenters do not need to wear a mask when behind a barrier or two metres away from students while teaching in indoor public spaces
- in common areas of buildings open to the public, including in on-campus housing and office buildings (e.g., lobbies, hallways, bathrooms)
- in common areas of sport and fitness centres when not engaged in physical activity
- in coffee shops and restaurants, pubs and bars when not seated at a table

Masks are not required for workspaces such as office areas, research labs or shared offices that do not serve the public, or for meetings and seminars in small meeting rooms. Masks are also not required if a person is behind a barrier that separates them from other people, like a divider, cubicle, or in a room by themselves. Exemptions, including for those unable to wear a face covering, are detailed in the [Order](#).



Gathering & Events Order: The [Order of the Provincial Health Officer for Gatherings and Events](#) currently restricts certain types of gatherings and events in B.C., including those on post-secondary campuses. This includes non-educational (i.e., non-essential or discretionary) activities, including graduation ceremonies, parties, recitals, and concerts. Current size limits are 50 people or 50% of a venue's capacity indoors (whichever is greater) or 5,000 people or 50% of a venue's capacity outdoors (whichever is greater). For example, if an indoor venue has a normal seated capacity of 600 people, 300 people can attend. Additional details and safety requirements are included in the Order.

The Gatherings & Events Order does not apply to educational activities at post-secondary institutions. Activities delivered as part of a formal education program (including, but not limited to lectures, labs, seminars, workshops, demonstrations, presentations, formal study groups, tutorials and orientation events facilitated by the institution) do not need to meet the requirements of the Order.

Regional Recommendations & Orders: Medical Health Officers can place local public health Orders or recommendations for additional prevention measures beyond this guidance for post-secondary institutions within their regional health authority. These are placed at their own discretion, based on their authority under provincial legislation. These may be put in place during times of increased community transmission of COVID-19, and within communities with low vaccination uptake. They are based on local epidemiology and are proportional to risk.

Environmental Measures

Ventilation: Continue to ensure that all mechanical heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are designed, operated and maintained in accordance with WorkSafe BC requirements and ASHRAE Standards for indoor air quality, and that they are working properly. Open windows when the weather permits if it doesn't impact the functioning of the ventilation systems.

Cleaning & Disinfection: Clean and disinfect educational spaces, public spaces and high touch areas daily. Environmental cleaning is not required between classes.



Administrative Measures

- Physical distancing (consistently maintaining 2 metres between people) is no longer recommended in indoor public spaces by public health or required by WorkSafe BC. People on campus can be encouraged to spread out within available space and to consider and respect others' personal space (the distance from which a person feels comfortable being next to another person).
- Limiting the number of people within indoor public spaces is no longer recommended by public health or required by WorkSafe BC. People can be encouraged to spread out within the available space and normal room occupancy limits should not be exceeded (where applicable).
- Post-secondary institutions are not required to manage the flow of pedestrian traffic within buildings or confined areas, or post occupancy limits for spaces such as elevators or washrooms.

Personal Measures

Stay Home When Sick: Ensure students, faculty and staff are aware they should not participate in any activities (educational or otherwise) if they are sick.

Get Tested When Recommended: Encourage students faculty and staff to use the [BC Self-Assessment Tool](#) app, the BCCDC [When to Get Tested](#) Resource, or call 8-1-1 to determine if they should get tested for COVID-19 if they're sick.

Institutions should identify and make available safe and appropriate housing for students living on campus who are required to self-isolate or quarantine, if recommended by public health.

Hand Hygiene: Enable regular opportunities for hand hygiene, including placing hand sanitizer stations at the entrances/exits to public indoor spaces.

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