Post-Secondary Public Health Guidance

UPDATED: March 18, 2022

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 vaccinated against COVID-19.
- COVID-19 is now managed like other respiratory illnesses.
- Given the low-risk nature of in-class learning, a highly immunized population, and significant social benefits of in-person instruction, on-campus instruction is strongly recommended.

Introduction

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

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 engage in regular learning, recreational, and social activities is needed for pandemic recovery. While COVID-19 will continue to circulate for many years, in a highly 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 reducing the spread of COVID-19 in a wide variety of settings across B.C. and will support successful and low-risk on-campus activities. Prior to implementing measures in addition to those outlined below, consult with your local Medical Health Officer to maximize benefits and avoid harms.

Post-secondary institutions are encouraged to transition to these recommended prevention measures in a planned manner, 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 engage in educational and research activities that are critical to the community and to society.

**Personal Measures**

**COVID-19 is now managed more like other respiratory illnesses.** This means that if you develop symptoms, please stay home until you are well enough to participate in usual activities or call 8-1-1 to determine if you should seek additional medical attention or treatment when you are unwell.

**Stay Home When Sick:** Ensure students, faculty and staff are aware they should stay at home until well enough to resume regular activities. See details on [BCCDC website](https://bccdc.ca) for more information on how to manage your illness.

**Get Tested When Recommended:** Encourage students faculty and staff to use the [BC Self-Assessment Tool](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/vaccines-and-immunizations/self-assessment-tool) app and the BCCDC [When to Get Tested](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/vaccines-and-immunizations/when-to-get-tested) resource.

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

**Vaccination**

Vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of serious illness from COVID-19. A primary series of vaccination provides effective protection against serious illness from COVID-19, including variants of concern. A booster dose enhances protection. 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 remain accessible, as well as promote information on [how to get vaccinated](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/vaccines-and-immunizations/how-to-get-vaccinated). The BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) has specific information on getting vaccinated for [students arriving in B.C.](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/vaccines-and-immunizations/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](https://www.immunizationrecord.gov.bc.ca). This requires a B.C. [Personal Health Number](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/vaccines-and-immunizations/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, Isolation, and Treatment

Testing: Testing is available to eligible student, faculty or staff in BC based on the BCCDC testing guidance. Share guidance on when to get tested with the campus community. Testing locations are available on Regional Health Authority websites. Public health does not recommend routine asymptomatic testing.

Resources to help faculty, staff, and student understand test results and determine next steps are available on the BCCDC website. Those who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and are not tested are advised to stay home until they no longer have a fever and feel well enough to return to their usual activities. Rapid antigen tests are available for those who wish to use them, but are not required for in-person campus operations.

Treatment: Treatment options for those who are at high risk of severe disease are available, and more pharmaceutical interventions are expected to become available. For more information, see BCCDC website or consult your health care provider.

Contact Tracing: Contact tracing is no longer an effective public health intervention for control of COVID-19 in the community. Public health continues to follow COVID-19 cases in high-risk settings such as health care settings and long-term care facilities.

Administrator Role: Post-secondary institutions are not responsible for contact tracing, and should not provide notifications to faculty, staff or students about potential or confirmed communicable diseases cases (including COVID-19) unless requested to do so by the local Medical Health Officer.

Should faculty, staff or students disclose that they have tested positive for COVID-19 or bring forward concerns related to unconfirmed cases on campus, administrators may consider the following key messages if they determine the need to address their campus community:

- We continue to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of our students, faculty and staff. Effective prevention measures are in place across campus to prevent COVID-19 from spreading.
- Educational settings are low-risk settings for COVID-19, particularly in the context of a highly immunized population.
- In most cases, public health notifications to the campus community will not be required.
- Please do not notify faculty, staff or students about potential or confirmed communicable disease cases (including COVID-19) unless requested to do so by the local Medical Health Officer.
- In the interim, continue to do your daily health checks and follow all of the prevention measures in the communicable disease prevention plan for each institution.
- Getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
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:

Post-secondary Institution Housing COVID-19 Preventive Measures: Those living in on-campus housing must provide proof of vaccination, indicating they have received all recommended doses or combination of World Health Organization approved vaccines. Those who are unvaccinated are required to wear a face covering (mask) in any area of housing other than their room. This order is scheduled to expire April 8, 2022.

Gatherings & Events Order: Certain types of gatherings and events in B.C., including those on post-secondary campuses, must follow directions under the Gathering and Events Order (i.e. proof of vaccination checking)

Gathering & Events /Food and Liquor Serving Premises Orders - Proof of Vaccination: Everyone on campus aged 12 and older (born in 2010 or earlier) needs to provide proof of vaccination via the BC Vaccine Card to access some non-essential or discretionary services, businesses, and events on campus. 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)
- Indoor adult sports activities and group exercise
- Indoor organized gatherings like conferences, conventions and workshops
- Indoor organized group recreational classes and activities like pottery and art

These orders are scheduled to expire April 8, 2022.

Face Coverings (COVID-19) Order – Indoor Public Spaces: Public health orders do not require face coverings in public spaces. The use of face coverings is a personal choice. More detailed information about various types of masks and how to use them is available on the BCCDC website.

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 WorkSafeBC 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**

COVID-19 specific administrative measures are no longer required.

Post-Secondary Campus Guidance

March 18, 2022