

Questions and answers on Masks, Vaccination, and Return to Campus developments

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Mask Mandate

Do instructors (and others presenting) have to be masked while teaching? What if they can maintain 2 metres distance or have a shield such as Plexiglass as a divider? If masks are to be worn by speakers/instructors, what resources can we offer to ensure quality of instruction (they are audible and understood). Mini-microphones?

Answer – We expect additional guidance coming in the revised Post-Secondary Return-to-Campus Planning Guide, which will be available at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/institution-resources-administration/studying-during-covid-19>.

How will we distribute masks to faculty, staff and student employees? Will UBC mask mandate signage be provided? Do we have sufficient supply?

Answer – Signage is being posted. The campus does have a supply of masks on hand, and has ordered extra masks. We are currently working on a process to distribute these masks.

What language should heads/directors/managers use with non-compliant faculty and staff?

For faculty and staff:

This is dependent on the reasons for the employee's non-compliance with the Provincial Health Order on masks. We anticipate these situations will be rare and it is necessary to consult with your HR Advisor/Manager or your Faculty Relations Senior Manager to determine the appropriate course of action.

Our starting approach to obtain compliance will be education. Failing that, we would regrettably have to consider removing the individual from the workplace while we investigate/understand the reasons for non-compliance. Those who remain non-compliant for no legitimate reason will be subject to our normal discipline processes.

Key considerations:

- As a part of the University community, we must all play our part in maintaining a [respectful environment](#). If engaging in a conversation about COVID-19 requirements on campus, all faculty, staff and students are expected to address visitors, patrons and peers in a positive and supportive manner.

- Many factors can affect an individual’s understanding of current policies, and messages may be misinterpreted. When people on campus are unsure, we must be consistent and remind them that the [UBC COVID-19 webpage](#) has the most reliable and up-to-date information. As an employer we will treat these situations with sensitivity. It will be important for leaders (heads, directors or managers) to approach an employee’s non-compliance from a place of engagement. Some speaking points that may help start the conversation:
- I noticed that you have not provided either vaccine or testing information.
 - o Is there a reason you have not done so?
 - o What are the barriers to your completing these requirements?
 - o How can I support you?
- I noticed you’re not wearing a mask or wearing one improperly
 - o Is there a reason you’re not wearing a mask?
 - o Provide understanding that this is a PHO order
 - o Share the impact this would have on colleagues, students, and the public
 - o Show proper way to wear a mask
- If an employee is simply unwilling and education as an approach has failed, it will be a situation where they need to be sent home and next steps and any potential discipline will be discussed after that. Managers should consult with their HR Advisor/Manager or Faculty Relations contact before taking such action. It is imperative that advice is sought before any action is taken.

Do we have to wear masks in open office areas, research labs, or shared offices that do not serve the public? Are masks required to hold in-person meetings in larger rooms? Can masks be removed for small hybrid meetings if the room allows for adequate spacing?

Answer – According to the press release about the [Provincial Health Order of Aug. 25, 2021](#), masks are required in “areas of office buildings where services to the public are provided.” More detail will be provided in the [Return to Campus Guide](#) that is being finalized.

Are there any exemptions (e.g., for people with respiratory disorders or phobias/anxiety disorders)? If there are, how can we ensure that these people are treated respectfully?

Answer – According to the press release about the [Provincial Health Order of Aug. 25, 2021](#), “People who cannot wear a mask or who cannot put on or remove a mask without the assistance of others are exempt. A person may not be able to wear a mask for a psychological, behavioural or health condition, or due to a physical, cognitive or mental impairment.”

For a university food outlet (the Malcolm Knapp Research Forest dining hall) that also caters for significant numbers of K-12 students, which rules apply K-12 or post-secondary?

Answer – We are in the process of searching for an answer to this question and will report back shortly.

The provision that masks can be moved indoors to consume food in a place designated for that purpose – can we designate a classroom as a space for eating if it is used for no other purpose at that time? Can we have a guest speaker in the room and still allow people to eat?

Answer – We are in the process of searching for an answer to this question and will report back shortly.

What should we do if we see people in the building not wearing masks or otherwise flouting public health rules?

Answer – Because the mask requirement is based on a PHO order which has not yet been released at the time of this writing, it is best to remind such individuals that there is a mask requirement by Provincial Health order, but be mindful that there are exemptions to be announced in detail.

Vaccines and Testing

Do we use the BC vaccine card to confirm fully vaccinated status? Will the government permit such use given the Order?

Answer – The BC Vaccine Card is only to be used in the provision of some services (discretionary), starting September 13. A list is available here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/vaccine/proof>.

Note that students living in in on-campus housing must be partially vaccinated by Sept. 7, 2021.

Who checks the BC vaccine card for each individual? Is their status recorded? If so, how is their privacy protected? Does it need to be? Are there resources available for the additional staff required to ascertain status? Could this be handled on a “spot-check” basis? Basically, the question is 'how do we ascertain the vaccination status of our faculty and staff. Can this be managed through Workday?

Answer – To be determined. We are not to ask faculty, staff or students to show us their BC Vaccine Cards except in certain circumstances (student housing, ticketed events, entrance to pubs, restaurants, bars) as outlined in the [BC Vaccine Card information](#). We are developing a process for those UBC events that fall within the requirements to show a proof of vaccination.

More information on the BC Vaccine Card usage will be introduced later this month, and we will share that information as we receive it.

What are the specifics for the testing alternative for those who do not confirm they are fully vaccinated? (Place, process, frequency) Can we get the tests? How many do we need? Do we have enough staff to manage the testing and who will train them? What are the costs? What space is available to house the testing facility? Do people need to be tested serially and if so, how regularly? Who is informed of the test results?

Answer – The approach and policies for the self-declaration of vaccine status and the alternative, rapid antigen screening, are being developed.

Do we track testing per individual, or just ask them to attest to their submitting to regular testing if they have not confirmed fully vaccinated status? If we do, how is this done? Who is entitled to the information about compliance or results?

Answer – We expect that individuals would be able to indicate they are fully vaccinated, or that they are not fully vaccinated, or that they decline to disclose. In the latter two cases, they will be given instructions for testing. The method for confidentially sharing this information (be it through an app, a website, or other method) is under development. There will be personnel assigned to monitor the participation of faculty, staff and students.

Do people who require testing have time from work to be tested? How will we protect their privacy as they go for supplies/testing?

Answer – The nature of the tests is yet to be determined, but it may involve tests that can be self-administered, at home.

What sanction or discipline is to be applied to individuals who neither disclose they are fully vaccinated, nor submit to regular testing as required?

Answer – We are in the process of searching for an answer to this question and will report back shortly.

Is this merely an ‘honour’ system that cannot be validated, monitored, audited or confirmed?

Answer – We are in the process of confirming the answer to this question and will report back shortly.

How can we confirm vaccine status for those who received their vaccines out of province/out of country?

Answer – There will be a way for persons vaccinated outside of BC to provide their proof of vaccination, to allow for confirmation of their status. Immunize BC has provided information (<https://immunizebc.ca/node/56410/>) about how all out of province persons can obtain a Personal Health Number and then subsequently upload their vaccination information. Additional information can be obtained at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/vaccine/proof>.

What is the protocol for guest speakers; meetings involving people outside of their office or lab teams? Does this mean that most meetings by default are virtual?

Answer – We are awaiting the revised Return to Campus Guidelines to have more detailed information about masks in the university setting, and will be able to report back once the Guide has been updated.

Should tests be available for fully vaccinated people?

Answer – Anyone who experiences [symptoms associated with Covid-19](#), vaccinated or unvaccinated, should obtain PCR testing. See the following information for information about symptoms that should prompt PCR testing and the location of testing sites: [When to get a COVID-19 test \(bccdc.ca\)](#). Vaccinated people who do not have these symptoms and who are worried about an exposure or symptoms not listed on the BC CDC website may receive [rapid antigen screening at the clinic](#) established in the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre.

Other

If we have students indicating they are immunocompromised and asking for accommodation to attend online classes, what documentation would be required? Who would they speak to, and what are our obligations as an institution?

Answer – There are two options for students seeking the ability to attend online classes on this basis, or otherwise be accommodated because they cannot attend in-person classes. If they have not required disability-related accommodations before and/or are unlikely to require disability-related accommodations after the current situation resolves, they can approach their academic advising office to explore what other course options may be available. If they meet the eligibility criteria outlined in [Policy LR7 – Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#), they can seek access to accommodations through the Centre for Accessibility. In this case, they will require medical documentation that provides detailed information regarding the functional impacts of their disability/ongoing medical condition. More information about the process and the policy is available [here](#).

There is a greater obligation to respond if the request is based on a disability (as defined by Policy LR7) as this is one of the protected grounds named in the BC Human Rights Code. UBC has an obligation to provide a reasonable accommodation, which could be an alternative to the accommodation the student is seeking (and considers to be the best or perfect solution). For example, we might offer the student the ability to take an equivalent course through a Letter of Permission at another institution, or allow a student to defer a course without penalty (e.g., maintain a scholarship or fulltime student status without part time course load). Priority access to online courses may be warranted. It will depend on the unique circumstances of each situation and the Centre for Accessibility will work with programs and faculties to determine our obligations under the Policy and facilitate access to appropriate accommodations.

Can the Centre for Accessibility send the accommodations directly to the instructors, bypassing having students send them along?

Answer – The usual process for notification of instructors, outlined in Policy LR7 will be used. *At the beginning of each term or otherwise at the earliest available opportunity, students must provide the letter of Accommodation received from the Centre to the Instructors or unit from whom they are seeking Accommodation.* Many students are eligible for a range of accommodations designed to address the breadth of courses required for their degree and may not need all accommodations for each course. The process in place allows students to tailor each letter to the requirements of the course and this agency and (ability to maintain as much confidentiality as possible) is important for many students.

How do we deal with a person who is clearly sick but insists on coming into work/classes and refuses to leave if asked? Does anyone have the authority to ask that a sick person leave the building?

Answer – It is highly unusual for an employer unilaterally to send an employee home who may be ill. However, it may become necessary to maintain a safe work environment for their colleagues. If you are in a situation where you feel an employee is exhibiting flu-like symptoms, you should confirm that the employee has completed the symptom self-assessment for the day, and, if they are clearly exhibiting symptoms as indicated in the self-assessment, you should ask the employee to return home and use sick leave to cover the day. We are evaluating options for those [who may not have access to sick leave](#).

If the employee refuses, you must contact your HR Advisor/Manager or Faculty Relations Senior Manager before taking any further action, and your union steward or representative may also support you in this process. To ensure the safety of everyone, you should consider moving the employee to a space that is separate from other employees, students, or the public.

Further information is under development, and will be shared when we have more.