

COVID-19 Guidance for Post-Secondary Institutions

The following are recommended guidelines, with examples, for post-secondary institutions to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Each institution should update their policies and procedures, and review government orders, directives, and by-laws, to assess their ability to deliver planned, in-person education and related services while ensuring that the appropriate infection prevention and control measures are implemented and maintained.

The aim and purpose of this document is to assist institutions, facilities, staff, and individuals with information related to the Ontario Government's reopening framework as well as Toronto Public Health requirements to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is important to know that breaches of some of these directions may constitute offences under provincial regulations or other public health legal requirements. While we aim to provide relevant and timely information, no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided. This guidance is not intended to nor does it provide legal advice and should not be relied upon or treated as legal advice. Users seeking legal advice should consult with a qualified legal professional.

As professionals, we know that in-person learning is an essential activity to support both mental health and educational progress. As a community, we must all continue to do our part to preserve in-person learning, and keep our learning spaces as safe as possible for students, staff, instructors, and faculty.

COVID-19 is circulating in the community in Toronto. Keep current and comply with [provincial orders](#), [City of Toronto orders, directives, and by-laws](#), and provincial stages of re-opening, including sector-specific guidance at [Reopening Ontario](#).

Information about COVID-19 can be found in Toronto Public Health's [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#).

Maintain a Healthy Environment

Support and encourage hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

- Educate faculty, staff, students and visitors on proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette and encourage them to:

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- [Wash their hands](#) with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70–90% alcohol concentration), provided hands are not visibly soiled. Remind faculty, staff, students, and others to avoid touching their face, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- [Cover their cough](#) or sneeze into a tissue.
- Monitor supplies to ensure adequate amounts of liquid soap, paper towel, (air dryer if paper towels are not available), hand sanitizer, tissues and waste receptacles with lined plastic bags.
- Post hand hygiene signs in clearly visible areas.
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) in dispensers near entrances, inside classrooms, at service counters, and near other high touch locations.

Practice physical distancing

- Post-secondary institutions are encouraged to review the applicable legislation to stay up to date with any changes and encouraged to obtain their own legal advice.
- TPH recommends layers of protection including physical distancing where it is reasonable, and especially where there is increased risk (i.e. where masks are removed or in close, closed spaces).
 - Physical distancing means keeping a distance of two metres from others.

Face masks and respirators

- Even in the absence of regulations requiring their use, [masking](#) continues to be an important part of our community's response to the pandemic. Wearing a well-fitted, high quality mask is an important measure we can still use to protect ourselves and one another.
- Post-secondary institutions may choose to develop their own policies on mask use on campus.
- For more information on how to wear a mask, see [masks continue to protect us](#).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Consult Occupational Health and Safety staff and develop policies and protocols for the use of PPE for faculty, staff and students (e.g. use of goggles/face shield/gloves), both on campus and off-campus placements.
- Train faculty, staff and students on the proper use of PPE. Refer to [Public Health Ontario](#) resources or [Public Services Health and Safety Association](#).
- When required as part of PPE, a face shield or goggles should be worn on top of a mask. A face shield alone does not provide equivalent protection to a mask. See [Ministry of Labour guidelines](#).
- Gloves are not required for COVID-19 prevention as proper hand washing is sufficient. However, gloves must be worn when it is anticipated that hands will come into contact with mucous

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membranes, broken skin, tissue, blood, bodily fluids, secretions, excretions, and contaminated equipment or environmental surfaces.

Provide education

- Provide education to faculty, staff and students about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, including to stay home if sick.
- Train faculty and staff to ensure they are aware of and can implement COVID-19 related policies and procedures.
- Post [signs](#) in visible locations to raise awareness about COVID-19 and to encourage healthy behaviours.
- Post this information in high traffic areas such as elevators, lobbies, [shared laundry areas](#), and other relevant common areas as appropriate.

Encourage vaccination

- Encourage faculty, staff, and students to get vaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine. Read and share information [about the vaccine and where to get vaccinated](#).
- Post signs and share [COVID-19 vaccine resources](#), available in multiple languages.
- [TPH strongly encourages](#) policy measures to optimize vaccination coverage rates of faculty, staff and students in post-secondary institution campuses and in congregate student-living settings.
- For additional resources to assist with improving vaccination rates and developing a COVID-19 vaccination policy, refer to our [Vaccine Information for Post-Secondary Institutions](#) webpage
- Consider providing vaccination opportunities on campus:
 - To arrange a mobile vaccine clinic opportunity, complete the [Mobile Clinic Request Intake Form](#).
 - To obtain vaccine for your own clinic, complete the [TPH COVID-19 Primary Care Vaccine Program Enrollment Request Form](#) and the onboarding process. ***Please only complete this form once for each primary care practice.*** Once complete, access to the ordering portal will be provided. If ordering both vaccines, two separate orders must be completed.

Develop/update infection prevention and control (IPAC) policies and procedures

- Develop and/or update administrative and IPAC policies and procedures to include mitigation measures to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Develop an attendance policy for faculty, staff and students, including criteria for return to campus/work, to ensure they do not attend campus/work sick. For more information, refer to TPH's [COVID-19 Guidance for Employers, Businesses and Organizations](#).

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- Develop policies and other initiatives [to increase COVID-19 vaccine confidence and uptake](#) and achieve the highest vaccination rates, particularly amongst those living in congregate settings (e.g. residences).

Ill and confirmed COVID-19 positive faculty, staff and students

- Send faculty, staff, students, and others (e.g. delivery or maintenance personnel) who become ill while on campus home/to dormitory immediately and direct them to [this webpage](#) to learn what to do next.
 - If they are very ill and require urgent care, call 911.
 - If the ill and/or symptomatic individual cannot go home, immediately separate them from others in a designated room and supervise them until they can go home/to their dormitories.
 - Ensure physical distancing can be maintained in rooms/area.
 - Ask sick individuals in these rooms to wear masks (if tolerated).
 - Ideally, the designated room should have a handwashing sink. If this is not possible, ensure that alcohol-based (70-90% alcohol concentration) hand sanitizer is readily available in these areas.
 - Provide tissues to the ill individual to help support respiratory etiquette.
 - Ensure these individuals have access to designated washrooms separate from other faculty/staff/students.
 - If possible, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
 - Clean and disinfect the area after the individual with symptoms has been sent home.
 - Faculty or staff attending to/supervising the ill individual should maintain physical distancing as best as possible and wear appropriate PPE including a medical grade mask and eye protection (goggles or face shield).

Self-isolation time periods

- For faculty/staff/students/visitors with one or more [symptoms of COVID-19](#), they must [self-isolate](#).
 - If [fully vaccinated](#), they should self-isolate for 5 days from the date their symptoms first appeared and until symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms).
 - If not fully vaccinated or if immunocompromised, they must self-isolate for 10 days from symptom onset.
- [Household members of the COVID-19 positive case/individual with COVID-19 symptoms](#), including roommates living in residence/dormitory, should generally self-isolate while the

individual with COVID-19 symptoms is isolating, unless the household member is asymptomatic AND one of the following apply:

- Previously tested positive for COVID-19 (including a Rapid Antigen Test) in the last 90 days;
 - 18 years or older and have received a booster dose (i.e. 3 doses of a COVID-19 vaccine; or 4 doses if you have a weak immune system); or
 - 17 years or younger and are [fully vaccinated](#).
- If there is an alternative diagnosis from a health care provider, faculty/staff/students/visitors can return to campus once their symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms).
 - If [tested](#) with a PCR test, and the test is negative, and if symptoms are improving, they can return to work/campus after 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms) as long as they are not required to self-isolate for other reasons (e.g. recent travel or being a close contact of someone who had COVID-19).
 - If [tested](#) with a rapid antigen test (RAT), and the test is negative and they do not have symptoms of COVID-19, they do not need to self-isolate. If they have symptoms of COVID-19, it is still possible they have COVID-19 and must continue to self-isolate. If another RAT is available, they can repeat the RAT in 24-48 hours. If the second RAT is also negative, then they can end self-isolation when symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms).
 - Individuals who have been in [close contact with a person with COVID-19 outside their household](#) must:
 - Self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days and self-isolate if they develop any symptom of COVID-19;
 - Continue to wear a well fitted mask in all public settings;
 - Not visit anyone who is immunocompromised or at higher risk of illness (i.e. seniors); and
 - Not visit or attend in any highest-risk settings (unless required for critical work or they have previously tested positive for COVID-19 on a RAT or molecular test in the past 90 days).
 - For more information, refer to:
 - [What To Do if You Have COVID-19 webpage](#), Toronto Public Health
 - [What To Do if You Are a Close Contact webpage](#), Toronto Public Health
 - [Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#), Ministry of Health

Case, contact and outbreak management

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- There are currently no reporting requirements for all post-secondary COVID-19 cases on campus or living in residence.
- Toronto Public Health may contact individuals who test positive for COVID-19 and may follow up with their contacts as well depending on the setting.
- The period of infectiousness starts 48 hours prior to date their symptoms started (or the date they were tested, if they don't have symptoms) up until their last day on campus.
- Unless informed otherwise by TPH, maintain confidentiality of faculty, staff, and student personal health information if you are aware that someone has COVID-19 or is a close contact of a person with COVID-19.
- If an individual's symptoms are worsening and they are concerned, they can contact Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 or call their health care provider.
- There are no tests or clearance letter provided or required for return to campus/activities.
- To report all non-COVID-19 communicable diseases: Call the Communicable Disease Notification Unit at 416-392-7411 (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday) or complete the [Reportable Disease Notification Form](#) and fax it to 416-392-0047. After hours, call 311.

Rapid antigen testing

Note: For those living and/or working in non-High-Risk Settings – a positive RAT does not require follow-up PCR testing and does not need to be reported to Toronto Public Health. Refer to our [COVID-19 Testing webpage](#) for further information.

- Rapid testing does not replace other public health measures such as vaccination and masking, even if a person tests negative.
- Rapid antigen tests can be used by individuals to confirm an infection (one positive test) or confirm that they are not infected (2 tests 24 to 48 hours apart and symptoms are improving).
- Some businesses/organizations/facilities are eligible to receive free rapid antigen test kits. Visit the [Toronto Region Board of Trade](#) and [Province of Ontario](#) websites for more information.

Maintain heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems

- HVAC systems and their filters reduce the amount of virus particles in the air. HVAC filtration can reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission indoors when used with other public health measures.
- Ensure HVAC systems are in good working condition and regularly inspected.
- For improved ventilation:
 - Increase air-exchange settings on the HVAC system, if possible.

- Use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system(s).
- Keep areas near HVAC inlets and outlets clear.
- Arrange furniture away from air vents and high airflow areas.
- Avoid re-circulating air.
- Facilities without HVAC systems should increase ventilation by opening windows and doors. However, do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk to staff and students.
- For more information, review the [COVID-19: Transmission, Aerosols and Ventilation fact sheet](#).

Implement enhanced environmental cleaning and disinfection practices

- Assign dedicated facility staff to complete environmental cleaning and disinfection duties.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces and shared objects (e.g. doorknobs, water fountain knobs, light switches, toilet and faucet handles, electronic devices, tabletops) on a regularly scheduled basis and when visibly dirty.
 - Review [Public Health Ontario's Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#) fact sheet.
 - Refer to Health Canada's [list of hard surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers for use against coronavirus](#) (COVID-19) for approved products.
- Consider disinfecting shared equipment between use if possible or necessary. Faculty, staff and students should practice hand hygiene before and after equipment uses. The risk associated with transmission with shared objects is low therefore the focus should be on regular hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette to reduce the risk of infection related to shared equipment especially when the cleaning of shared objects is not feasible.
- Educate facility staff on how to use cleaning agents and disinfectants, and ensure:
 - Required disinfectant contact times are followed (i.e. amount of time that the product will need to remain wet on a surface to achieve disinfection).
 - Use of safety precautions and required PPE.
 - Directions for where and how to securely store cleaning and disinfectant supplies.
- Clean and disinfect washrooms and other areas as necessary throughout the day to maintain sanitation.
- Provide waste receptacles lined with a plastic bag, and empty as often as necessary.
- Monitor and clean the parking lot and institution outdoor grounds daily and as necessary (e.g. for discarded gloves, masks, litter).

Providing Services to Faculty, Staff and Students

Classrooms/labs

- Implement IPAC measures as outlined above.
- If possible, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
- If feasible, assign equipment/supplies to each student to reduce the sharing of equipment/supplies, and ensure shared equipment and supplies are cleaned and disinfected between each use.

Health and physical education/organized sports

- Keep current and comply with [provincial orders](#) and City of Toronto [directives and by-laws](#) related to indoor and outdoor organized sports.
- Follow public health advice, including those above, as well as individual sport associations' recommendations, as appropriate.
- Offer classes outdoors, where possible.
- Consider disinfecting shared equipment between use if possible or necessary. Faculty, staff and students should practice hand hygiene before and after participating in physical activity and equipment uses. The risk associated with transmission with shared objects is low therefore the focus should be on regular hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette to reduce the risk of infection related to shared equipment especially when the cleaning of shared objects is not feasible.

Music education

- Prioritize the use of large, well-ventilated spaces.
- Ensure instruments are not being shared between individuals.
- Refer to the [Ontario Music Educators Association](#) resource.

Access to other campus amenities (e.g. gyms, lounges, seating areas)

- Keep current and comply with [provincial](#) and [City of Toronto](#) COVID-19 emergency orders, directives and by-laws related to specific amenities.
- Ensure that the IPAC measures outlined above (e.g. environmental cleaning and disinfection) are followed.

Libraries, study spaces, and other communal spaces

- Refer to the [provincial regulations](#) for the most up-to-date information on current stage regulations.
- Encourage faculty, staff and students to practice hand hygiene before and after touching library items.
- Ensure adherence to public health measures (e.g. disinfecting high-touch areas like computers, study spaces).

Water fountains and bottle filling stations

- Water fountains and bottle filling stations can be used provided they are cleaned and disinfected on a regularly scheduled basis, or more often, if needed.
- Fill water bottles rather than drinking directly from the mouthpiece of water fountains.
- Post [signs](#) near water fountains emphasizing public health measures.

On campus dining/restaurants

- Keep current and comply with [provincial orders](#) and [City of Toronto](#) directives and by-laws related to dining/food establishments related to COVID-19.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces between uses or serve residents individual meals in their rooms.
- For more information, refer to:
 - [Restaurant and food services health and safety during COVID-19](#), Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
 - [COVID-19 Tips: Restaurants and Food Services](#), Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

Dormitories/residences

- Set aside designated dormitories/private rooms and secure hotel rooms to isolate and quarantine COVID-19 positive students or students with COVID-19 symptoms.
- Support students who are quarantined or self-isolating:
 - Ensure policies, procedures, and programming are in place to allow for continued delivery of services and supports (e.g. mental health supports) and/or learning.
 - Ensure self-isolating students can receive deliveries of essential goods, like medications and groceries/meals, at their unit door so they can avoid non-essential trips outside.
 - Ensure students are treated with respect, fairness and compassion with a focus on dignity and privacy protection.
- For more information on isolating students in residence who become ill with symptoms of COVID-19, and other strategies to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission refer to:
 - [Toronto Public Health Pandemic Plan - A Planning Guide for Colleges and Universities](#)
 - Ministry of Health, [COVID-19 Guidance: Congregate Living for Vulnerable Populations](#)
 - Public Health Ontario, [COVID-19 Resources for Congregate Living Settings](#)

Faculty/staff/student gatherings

- Keep current and comply with [provincial](#) and [City of Toronto](#) emergency orders, directives and by-laws related to specific amenities.

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- Have policies in place to ensure that gatherings are managed in a way that aligns with public health rules and guidance.

International students and staff

- Consult relevant provincial and/or federal authorities to discuss and plan for safely bringing international students, faculty and staff on campus.
- Keep current and comply with any additional requirements from the Public Health Agency of Canada for students (e.g. testing).
- Notify (ahead of time) all travellers returning from outside Canada about the [mandatory quarantine or isolation](#) order, and encourage students to review the [COVID-19: Travel Advice](#) web page.

Note: Fully vaccinated travellers may be eligible for exemptions if they meet specific conditions. Please visit [COVID-19 vaccinated travellers entering Canada](#) for more information.

- Ensure students have a suitable quarantine plan aligned with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities guidance.
- Provide information to students who were vaccinated outside of Canada regarding how to connect with TPH to [document](#) their out of province or non-Ontario stock vaccine dose(s). The survey will prompt individuals to attach an image of their out of province vaccine receipt.
- Ensure students have the appropriate information and supports (e.g. mental health supports, health care resources, virtual student engagement opportunities).
- Ensure policies and protocols to address possible discrimination and stigma associated with COVID19.

Communities with special needs

- Consider and plan for faculty, staff and students with special needs (e.g. accessible COVID-19 information and resources for members of the deaf and hard of hearing community, or the low vision, visually impaired and blind community).

Mental health and well-being

- Implement a tiered approach for mental health supports that will capture all faculty, staff and students and target intensive help to those who have been most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Promote [resources](#) to support the needs of faculty, staff, students and their families.

Workplace health and safety

- Employers must have written measures and procedures for faculty and staff safety, including IPAC.
- Review Ontario's [COVID-19 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) for information on where employers can learn about their responsibilities and how to protect workers at work.
- Refer workers to [health and safety protections](#) for information on workplace health and safety.
- For additional information, refer to the [Ministry of Labour, Training, Health and Safety](#).

More Information

- For more information, visit our website at www.toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.
- To get the latest updates on the status of COVID-19 in our city from a trusted source, we encourage post-secondary schools that have Facebook, Instagram or Twitter to follow Toronto Public Health (TPH) and to like, share, or retweet TPH messages on your school pages.

Other Resources

- [COVID-19 Resources for Post-Secondary Schools](#)
- [COVID-19 Guidance for Employers, Businesses and Organizations](#)
- [What to Do if Someone in Your Workplace Has COVID-19](#)
- [Management of Cases and Contacts of COVID-19 in Ontario](#) (Ministry of Health)
- [COVID-19 Guidance for Child Care Centres](#)
- [COVID-19: Mental Health – General Coping & Specific Stressors](#)
- [Planning for the 2021-2022 school year in the context of COVID-19 vaccination](#) (Government of Canada)
- [Postsecondary Education Health Measures Framework for Fall 2021](#) (Ministry of Colleges and Universities)