Coronavirus (COVID-19) and SFU's response

Guiding Principles for Fall 2021 Academic Planning

SFU is making careful plans to return to campus in September. Work is focused on getting our in-person classes and research back to full capacity, while ensuring the safety of students, faculty and staff. All decisions will be made in concert with guidance from the Provincial Health Officer.

- The university will prioritize opportunities for in-person learning for all students.
- The university will consider the student experience and student success in all decisions.
- Academic planning will protect the health and well-being, both physical and emotional, of students, faculty, and staff.
- The university will consider issues of accessibility, equity, diversity and inclusion, and prioritize decisions that enhance inclusion.
- The university will maximize flexibility in academic planning where feasible and in alignment with these guiding principles.
- The university will provide clear, consistent, and timely communication to the community.
- The university will work to retain best practices and incorporate lessons learned from this period of remote learning.

Decision making framework

SFU has established a decision-making framework that clarifies which decisions are made by which groups to ensure broad input from across the university.

- **Executive Team** finalizes recovery planning decisions which have significant long-term, strategic and/or budgetary planning impact on the university’s teaching and research and the supporting university-wide operations, and policy. For example:
  - Final sign off on any change to the recovery scale, and to movements between levels of the scale
  - Final sign off on Plan A or Plan B for course delivery
  - Finalize expectations for faculty return to on-campus instructional duties
  - Finalize expectations for staff return to on-campus work
  - Responsible at a high level for ensuring that SFU complies with PHO guidelines

- **Deans** make decisions about how to operationalize the university’s direction. Decanal decisions fall within the parameters of the usual authority that deans have regarding research and instructional programming in their faculties. Given the wide variety of programming across the university, faculty-by-faculty some variations will arise. Here are some examples of deanal decisions:
  - Which courses to schedule in a given term
  - Whether and how to continue with some small amount of remote-delivery even when the university is fully return to a face-to-face delivery mode
  - Which faculty members are assigned to teach which courses (assisted by Chairs and Heads as appropriate)
  - Whether to hire any additional instructors or TAs on a short-term basis
  - Which adjustments to make to program offerings in order to allow students to most effectively ‘catch up’ following disrupted program over the past three terms
  - Which staff members will have the option of any future flexible-working conditions (should the Executive allow flexible-working beyond current agreements)
  - How to support research operations and safety needs in faculty-controlled research spaces
  - How to provide library services commensurate with the academic and research needs of the SFU community

**VPRI** makes decisions for the safe resumption of research consistent with university-wide safety guidelines and recommendations.

**VPPA** makes decisions about significant HR changes, when to accept/engage commercial activities on campus (i.e. filming, in-person events, etc.), and has final approval authority over events open to the public that are not integral to the mandate of another portfolio.

**VPER and VPAA** make decisions about when to resume and how to modify events, performances, and community engagement activities in their portfolios.

**VPA** with input from the academic planning committee approves safety plan templates for use in the faculties; approves guidelines for continuing remote learning in specific
Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

For information specific to students, staff/faculty and campus services, click on the buttons below.

**General to SFU**  **Students**  **Staff and faculty**  **Campus services**

**FAQs for staff and faculty**

**Remote teaching & working from home**

- **Q:** Where do I find support for remote teaching?

  The Centre for Educational Excellence has many resources to support you.

- **Q:** Is working from home or other alternative work arrangements an option?

  In an effort to support all employees in caring for their health and reducing their risk of exposure to COVID-19, supervisors and their teams are asked to think of creative solutions to how work can be done differently including consideration of strategies for physical distancing if it is necessary to come to campuses and the opportunity for employees to work from home. Because of the variety and nature of work at SFU, one solution will not work for all jobs.

  These decisions need to be taken at the supervisor’s discretion, and fairness for teams should be considered while maximizing measures for health and safety.

  For those employees who are not able to work from home, please consult with your supervisor to find ways to minimize person-to-person contact, including alternate work locations, staggering shifts, physical distancing protocols and increasing the use of technology.

  Supervisors should consider alternative arrangements for employees of any employment group. Such arrangements will be temporary in nature and are specific to the COVID-19 situation only.

- **Q:** My child’s school or daycare is closed, can I work from home?

  Where schools and daycares are closed, employees unable to come to work in order to care for children may request work from home arrangements if operationally feasible or use vacation time or taking an unpaid leave of absence. Please see the FAQ regarding working from home.

- **Q:** How will APSA or APEX professional development funds support remote learning and development?

  Professional development funds can be used for equipment that will enhance an employee’s online learning experience. Employees are encouraged to explore the many virtual learning opportunities available at this time.

  Current professional development policies and collective agreement language remain in effect. However, temporary changes have been made to the Human Resources guidelines regarding reimbursement of professional development funds for APSA/APEX employees.

  For the period of March 16, 2020 – December 31, 2020, the purchase of peripheral equipment to support at home learning will be permitted including: microphones, headsets, noise cancelling headphones, webcams (for video for online sessions), keyboards/mice, and additional monitors up to 27”. In addition, the three-year restriction on purchase of a computer/laptop/ipad/tablet has been temporarily removed, allowing for purchase of items in this category within three years.

  Completed forms and receipts can now also be submitted by email.

  More information is available on the:
  - APSA Reimbursement of Professional Development Expenses Policy 10.11
  - Visit the IT Services eStore website for vendor discounts available to SFU faculty, staff and students.

- **Q:** As an SFU employee, can I claim my home office expenses in my 2020 income tax filing?

  SFU employees who worked from home during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic are eligible to claim Home Office Expenses on their 2020 income tax filing. Under the CRA’s new administrative policy for 2020, the employee may claim home office expenses using

  - APSA Reimbursement of Professional Development Expenses Policy 10.11
  - Visit the IT Services eStore website for vendor discounts available to SFU faculty, staff and students.
Q: How will SFUFA professional development funds support remote learning and development?

Professional development funds can be used for equipment that will enhance an employee’s online learning experience. Faculty are encouraged to explore the many virtual learning opportunities available at this time.

Current professional development policies and collective agreement language remain in effect. However, temporary changes have been made to the Faculty Relations guidelines regarding reimbursement of professional development funds for SFUFA members.

For the period of March 16, 2020 – December 31, 2020, purchase of peripheral equipment to support the professional development of SFUFA members and the development of remote education delivery will be permitted including microphones, headsets, noise-cancelling headphones, computer video cameras (for video for online sessions), keyboards, mice, and additional monitors up to 27”. Further, the three-year restriction on purchase of a computer/laptop/ipad/tablet has been temporarily removed, allowing for purchase of items in this category within three years.

Visit the IT Services eStore website for vendor discounts available to SFU faculty, staff and students.

Q: Can I claim expenses relating to my home work space such as purchase of equipment, desk, chair or home internet?

Purchase of furniture (desk, chair, etc.) is not permitted under the Business & Travel Expenses policy and such expenses cannot be claimed through professional development funding. If you haven’t done so already, it may be appropriate to bring your office chair, monitor, keyboard, mouse etc., home for use in your home work space.

Current restrictions regarding home internet expenses remain in effect. We are awaiting guidance from the Canada Revenue Agency regarding employment expenses incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic period. A portion of these expenses may be deductible when filling your 2020 income tax return.

Q: Some people are finding that they are more productive working from home. Will it be possible for some staff and faculty to work from home once the pandemic is behind us?

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity to re-think the future of work, including the advantages and disadvantages of both remote and onsite work. We will be gathering feedback from employees and unions/associations over the coming months as we explore possibilities for what the future of work could look like at SFU.

Q: If I feel more safe working from home or have personal circumstances that make it easier to work from home, can I continue to do so even if my department resumes activity on campus?

Faculty and staff are encouraged to discuss individual circumstances with their supervisor who can work with them to plan a suitable work arrangement while balancing the needs of the department. Health and safety of staff and faculty is the priority. If your role is needed on campus, your manager will work with you directly to plan a safe return. Supervisors are encouraged to be creative and flexible, factoring personal circumstances of team members into planning for a safe return to campus.

Working on campus

Q: Some people are finding it difficult to find a quiet and uninterrupted work space. Can staff and faculty choose to work on campus a few times a week?

For the most part, employees continue to work remotely at this time. The primary exception to this is activities that SFU has decided to resume as part of a gradual and careful recovery plan. See SFU’s COVID-19 impact scale and related resources on the SRS website. Faculty and staff are encouraged to discuss individual circumstances with their supervisor who can work with them to plan a suitable work arrangement while balancing the needs of the department.

Q: What specific criteria will trigger a return to work on campus for SFU staff members?

Decisions regarding delivery of in-person teaching are made well in advance of the semester to enable students and faculty to confirm their plans. Staffing needs are being factored into this planning as well.
To support planning for loosening and restricting on-campus activity surrounding COVID-19, SFU has developed a COVID-19 Impact Scale. The COVID-19 Impact Scale outlines at a high level what university activities will be allowed/can be expected as SFU moves through different recovery phases (extreme, high, moderate and low risk). As the risk level drops, additional activities may be permitted on campus.

The majority of faculty and staff continue to work remotely. Researchers who require on-campus resources are resuming some on-campus research, based on an established approval process, with safety plans in place and factoring in staffing considerations.

**Q: Can I hold an in-person meeting or event?**

The ability to hold in-person meetings/events with six or more people is determined by the SFU COVID-19 Impact Scale. When the Impact Scale is Extreme, in-person meetings/events are not allowed. When the COVID-19 Impact Scale is High or Moderate, approvals may be required. Read the Guidance and Application for In-Person Meetings and Events at SFU to learn more.

**Managing staff**

**Q: What is active health screening?**

Active health screening is asking employees and contractors a series of questions about their health status and COVID-19. It can be completed through the BC government COVID-19 self-assessment tool.

Supervisors must confirm that employees have completed the self-assessment each day prior to beginning work on campus. This can be done in-person while maintaining two meters physical distancing, through a phone call or zoom meeting with the on-campus employee, or over text.

However, please note that supervisors should not ask screening questions of employees or faculty members, because a person’s medical information is private.

**Q: What do I do if an employee has not passed, or refuses to complete their active health screening?**

If an employee refuses to answer or answers "yes" to any question during the screening, including having just one symptom, they have not passed the screening.

If that is the case, please advise the employee to follow the BC government COVID-19 self-assessment tool recommendations. If in-person, they must return home and call 8-1-1 to help guide what to do. The province of BC has also set up a dedicated COVID-19 hotline at 1-888-COVID19 or text 604-650-7900.

**Q: Do I need to keep records about active health screening?**

SFU is not required to keep a record of daily screenings, therefore, supervisors should not keep a list of employee responses or a log of who passed the screening.

**Q: As a supervisor, can I require that an employee go home if they are visibly ill?**

Yes.

As a supervisor, you are required to provide for and maintain a safe workplace for all of your employees. It is your responsibility to request that an employee to go home if they are exhibiting clear signs of illness (e.g., coughing, obvious signs of a fever). Not coming to work when sick is a strong recommendation related to COVID-19 prevention.

**Q: With physical distancing, some of my staff may be working alone on a campus, what do I need to know?**

Faculty and staff are reminded of SFU's Working Alone Policy, which requires the assessment of risk and the development of safe work procedures to protect the health and safety of, and minimize the risk to, any worker who works alone or in isolation.

The safe work procedures should address the identified risk(s), specify the types of activities that may be conducted, and any limitations on and/or prohibitions of specific activities, and procedures for securing assistance.

Please contact Environmental Health and Safety at ehs_sfu@sfu.ca for additional guidance.

**Q: How do I code Payroll timesheets for staff with COVID-19 related absences, including:**

- Staff who are sick
- Staff who need to provide caregiving and are not sick themselves
- Staff who need to self-isolate and are unable to work from home

For the above absences, select the appropriate Payroll Code:

- Temporary (hourly) employees: Code 286
Being sick

Q: I have symptoms of COVID-19 – will I continue to be paid if I am off sick?

Yes.

It's critically important if you are sick that you do not come to work – for any reason. This will help ensure that you are taking the time to recover but also to help ensure that the rest of the community is not put at risk.

Employees experiencing symptoms related to COVID-19 will be treated in the same manner as other sick employees, and regular sick leave policies will apply.

Employees who do not have sick leave entitlements (e.g., temporary CUPE employees, contract employees) will be paid if they are ill and unable to work. More information on how this time should be coded can be found here.

Q: What if I have been instructed to self-isolate due to possible COVID-19 exposure, but feel well enough to work?

If you have been directed to self-isolate, you should not come to work. Your supervisor will consider if working from home is feasible. This will apply to all employee group members.

If feasible, your supervisor will work with you to facilitate an appropriate arrangement and you will receive your regular pay. See the FAQ relating to working from home.

If working from home is not an option, you must continue to remain at home until the self-isolation requirement is lifted. Your pay will be maintained.

If you have been instructed to self-isolate please complete the Absence Reporting Form and submit it to the Wellness & Recovery office.

Q: Who do I inform if I have been required to self-isolate or have tested positive for COVID-19?

Contact your Supervisor first, then the Wellness & Recovery Department by filling out the HR COVID-19 Absence reporting form. All active COVID-19 cases in BC are managed by Public health officials and they will connect with you to provide information on your self-isolation period, and to initiate contact tracing.

Q: Do I require a medical note if I have a COVID-19 or a flu type illness?

No, not at this time.

Although medical notes are part of normal procedures for sick time, we will not be requiring medical notes for illnesses related to COVID-19 or flu at this time in order to prevent overburdening the medical system.

We encourage supervisors to check in with employees who are away with any illness at least once per week.

At this time, if your illness is not related to a flu type illness and may be of a prolonged nature, please check with the Wellness and Recovery team for advice on when medical documentation is required. We want to ensure that we are able to properly support you to manage your health issues and put in place an appropriate return-to-work plan.

Q: What if I have to be absent from work in order to provide care to a family member who has a confirmed case of COVID-19?

Employees who notify their supervisor that they must absent themselves from work in order to care for a family member who has a confirmed case of COVID-19 will be placed on a leave of absence without loss of pay regardless of whether they have access to dependent care or emergency leave provisions.

As all active COVID-19 cases in BC are currently being managed by Public health officials, you will be asked to monitor yourself for symptoms and to comply with their instructions for self-isolation.

Please inform your supervisor first, then contact the Wellness & Recovery team in Human Resources by completing the confidential Absence Reporting Form within 24 hours. This will help us work with health authorities to put in place appropriate strategies to help trace and prevent the spread of the virus.

Q: What if I have concerns about someone else who is ill in my work area?

All faculty, and staff can take measures to help reduce the risk of respiratory illnesses, such as handwashing and regular cleaning of shared surfaces. Employees in the workplace who are ill with flu-like symptoms should advise their supervisor/manager, stay home and seek out medical advice accordingly. If you are concerned about someone in the workplace who is exhibiting flu-like symptoms, speak to your Supervisor/Manager. Supervisors/Managers can contact the HR Office for further information as needed.

Q: Will staff be alerted in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case on campus?
If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, they will be required to follow the directions of Public Health, who will contact any individuals at risk and provide advice. Public Health will contact SFU if they need our assistance.

Public Health is not expecting organizations such as SFU to do contact tracing, and supervisors should not disclose health information of employees. An employee with symptoms should inform their supervisor, contact Wellness & Recovery by completing the confidential Absence Reporting Form, get tested for COVID-19 and isolate for 10 days. A department can request additional cleaning of areas if there are concerns about a community member who has been on campus that may have been contagious, as per SFU COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfection Protocol.

Travel

Q: I have decided to proceed with my non-essential travel plans even after the government's announcement advising against all international travel, including to the United States. How will my time in self-isolation upon my return be treated?

The Canadian Government has announced an official global travel advisory to avoid non-essential travel outside of Canada until further notice. The university prioritizes the safety of its members. The university will not require or regard any university-related travel to any Level 3 (avoid non-essential travel) or Level 4 (avoid all travel) destination to be essential travel. The university will not approve university-related travel for students or staff members for Level 3 or Level 4 destinations as per the interim university-related international travel policy.

The Public Health Agency of Canada has ordered that any person returning from international travel (including the US) self-isolate for 14 days upon return to Canada. During the 14 day self-isolation period, where possible, supervisors will consider if it's operationally feasible for you to work from home (for any employee group). If feasible, your supervisor will facilitate such arrangements and you will continue to receive your regular pay. If it is not possible to work from home, you have the option of using vacation time or taking an unpaid leave of absence.

You are reminded that it is mandatory by law to remain at home until the self-isolation period is lifted. Such employees are required to complete the Absence Reporting Form and submit it to the Wellness & Recovery office.

For information on travel related to university activities, please see: Can I book travel for university activities?

Q: Can I conduct university-related domestic travel during pandemic?

Domestic travel for staff and faculty is at the discretion of the dean or department director who will determine whether it is necessary or appropriate at this time.

If travel is approved, an activity specific safety plan is required. Domestic travelers will also need to ensure their planned activities comply with the provincial/territorial orders and restrictions in place.

SFU has purchased emergency travel insurance for non-BC residents traveling out-of-province who rely on third-party insurance. This insurance is equivalent to BC Provincial coverage.

Contact SFU Risk Management risk_ars@sfu.ca for assistance prior to domestic travel during the pandemic.

Support

Q: Who do I contact if I receive a request for emergency equipment or supplies?

All levels of government are increasingly concerned about the availability of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and related supplies. Universities across Canada are being called upon to provide support to our health care system and frontline workers. Requests may include access to facilities, housing, infrastructure, PPE and related supplies, and manufacturing and research capacities.

In order to respond to each request in a coordinated manner, all new requests for SFU support should be directed to the designated point of contact below for appropriate vetting and triage:

- Provincial government requests should be sent to Martin Pochurko with specific requests directed to the following:
  - Facilities – Larry Waddell
  - Residences – Tracey Mason-Innes
  - Equipment & supplies – Melinda Skura

- Federal government requests should be sent to Degan O’Neil

- Municipal and local level requests should be sent to Joanne Curry
Q: I'm feeling a bit stressed at this moment with all of the issues around COVID-19 and wondering where I can get some extra support?

We understand that this situation may be very stressful for you and your family. If you would like extra support please feel free to connect with our Wellness & Recovery team or our Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) provider through Homewood Health at 1-800-663-1142. We have been advised they have additional staff on board to help meet the need for extra support.

Also, during the COVID-19 crisis we have extended access to our EFAP to all temporary and contract employees. To access you will need to have your employee ID number when calling in.

Q: How to support staff to practice their faith with the closure of SFU’s Multifaith Centre and while working from home?

The Multifaith Centre has closed faith & prayer spaces on all three campuses until further notice during this unprecedented time. As directors, managers and supervisors we still have a duty to allow staff, faculty and students to practice their faith through the day. This will probably be very important at this time and in some cases be a requirement of their faith. This might mean giving them time to practice their faith and coming up with innovative solutions. Have proactive conversations with any of your staff who might be affected. Victor Thomas, Director & Head Chaplain, Multifaith Centre is available for any questions (victor.thomas@sfu.ca).