Coronavirus (COVID-19) and SFU’s response

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

Questions general to SFU

General

Q: How will courses be delivered in the Summer 2021 Term?

We continue to put the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff first, while ensuring we are providing a high-quality education. This approach is working. Given that it is not possible for anyone to predict the exact course the pandemic will take, we will continue to deliver mostly remote courses in the Summer 2021 Term, and consider in-person teaching under certain conditions.

- Most undergraduate courses will be delivered remotely.
- We will consider in-person instruction for experiential courses or components of courses such as studios, labs, and seminars, where learning outcomes are substantially compromised by remote delivery.
- We will look especially at core courses and those required for graduation.
- At the graduate level, we will consider in-person delivery of portions of seminar and lab courses that enhance community and learning outcomes.
- However, all courses must be able to shift back to remote delivery if needed.
- Students in these programs will hear directly from their faculties with lots of time to make arrangements.

We will follow up with academic leaders shortly to share more details about the process we will follow for centrally approving in-person courses, or portions of courses. We will finalize decisions on in-person instruction in early March and make that information available on www.sfu.ca. We are also looking at what instruction will be like in the Fall 2021 term and beyond. As always, we will share information as soon as we have it.

Q: What is SFU doing to ensure safety of the SFU community?

Following information and advice about COVID-19 from regional and provincial health officers, SFU will deliver most classes through remote methods in the fall term. We are taking appropriate steps to ensure continuity for students in a manner consistent with the advice of the Provincial Health Officer to maximize physical distancing. All SFU campuses will remain open.

The university is following infectious disease protocols and regularly communicating with key stakeholders to ensure our three campuses are prepared and able to respond as needed.

SFU is also taking precautions to prevent the spread of communicable illnesses on our campuses including:

- Notifying our community of the recommendation against travel outside of Canada at this time, and self-isolate for 14 days from your return;
- Promoting good hygiene practices among members of the university community (e.g., handwashing) and providing appropriate hand-cleaning facilities and/or alternatives like alcohol hand rubs;
- Ensuring SFU premises and high touch points are appropriately cleaned and maintained to prevent the spread of communicable illnesses, and informing members of the university community in the use of appropriate disinfecting materials;
- Asking that non-medical masks be worn in all indoor campus public areas. This includes building entryways and atriums, hallways, stairwells, washrooms and study areas. A reusable cloth mask is provided to students, staff and faculty who are learning/working in-person at any of our campuses.

Q: How will COVID-19 safety protocols be enforced?

During this pandemic it is important that we all continue to do our part to be thoughtful and take care of each other during this time.

The University, like all organizations, is required under Public Health Orders to ensure...
compliance with COVID-19 safety measures. All members of the SFU community are expected to comply with COVID-19 safety protocols set out in the SFU COVID-19 Go Forward Plan. Any questions about safety protocols or compliance should be submitted using the COVID-19 Safety Reporting Form.

The university views safety as a shared responsibility

We are encouraged to see the majority of our community members comply with the safety protocols in place. Campus Public Safety and the COVID-19 Ambassador Team are present on campuses to educate community members about physical distancing, handwashing and wearing of masks. Signage is also posted throughout building entries, common areas and workspaces.

If you notice safety protocols are not being followed

We encourage members of the community who notice someone isn’t following safety protocols to kindly and respectfully remind them of the protocols that keep us all healthy and safe. If you need further support:

- In common areas – Contact Campus Public Safety or if non-urgent submit your concern using the COVID-19 Safety Reporting Form
- In classrooms – contact the instructor or supervisor responsible for the departmental COVID-19 Safety plan
- In work areas – contact the supervisor responsible for the site-specific COVID-19 Safety plan
- If you notice safety measure signs or hand sanitizing stations are missing, submit a Facilities Service Request or submit a request anonymously using the COVID-19 Safety Reporting Form

Additional action may be taken for non-compliance

If individuals choose not to comply with safety protocols, they may be refused access to areas of our campus and/or additional disciplinary action may be taken for:

- Faculty or staff - through their supervisors and provisions outlined in SFU policies and collective agreements
- Students – through the SFU Student Conduct Policy
- Contractors – through termination of contract, and/or loss of access privileges up to and including being restricted from visiting SFU facilities
- Volunteers, visitors or other third parties on SFU campuses may lose access privileges up to and including being restricted from visiting SFU campuses

Q: Do I have to wear a mask while on campus?

Masks are now required to be worn in all indoor common areas on SFU campuses. Common areas include building entryways and atriums, hallways, stairwells, washrooms, study areas, coffee shops, dining halls, fitness facilities, libraries, health centres, student services areas, and student residences.

Masks are also required to be worn when there is more than one person present in shared study, work and research spaces including classrooms, teaching/research labs and cubicle areas. If departments implement administrative controls such as scheduling to ensure only one person is in a shared space at any time, masks are not required. Requirements for mask use should be clearly articulated in departmental Safety Plans.

What if I can’t wear a mask?

People who are not able to wear a mask for medical or other reasons are exempt and asked to be especially careful to maintain a safe distance from others.

Q: Are SFU masks available for students, staff and faculty?

Yes, you can pick up a mask at any one of the five locations below:

- Burnaby - Bennett Library
- Burnaby - the student information desk at Maggie Benston Centre
- Vancouver - Harbour Centre security desk
- Vancouver - Goldcorp Centre for the Arts security desk
- Surrey - security desk

Q: How do I protect myself and others from COVID-19

There are measures that all students, faculty, and staff can take to help reduce the risk of respiratory illnesses such as coronavirus, colds, and influenza:

- Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds using soap and water.
- If a sink is not available, 60-90% alcohol-based hand rubs (hand sanitizer) can be used to clean hands if they are not visibly soiled. If they are visibly soiled, you can use an alcohol-based disposable hand wipe to remove the dirt and then use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Do not touch your face/eyes/mouth with unwashed hands.
- When you sneeze or cough, cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or the crease of your elbow, and then wash your hands.
- Stay home when you are ill.
- Practice safe physical distancing when in public by keeping at least two meters distance away from others at all times.
- Wear a non-medical masks in indoor common areas including building entryways and atriaums, hallways, stairwells, washrooms, study areas, coffee shops, dining hall, fitness facilities, library and other high-traffic common areas.
- Avoid all travel outside of Canada, including to the USA, and avoid non-essential travel within Canada, as recommended by the Provincial Health Officer.

In combination with physical distancing, non-medical masks are effective at preventing the spread of the virus.

Q: Will SFU students, faculty and staff members be prioritized for early access to COVID-19 vaccinations?

Students, faculty and staff at SFU will not have priority access to COVID-19 vaccinations unless they are part of one of the high-risk populations identified in the BC Government’s COVID-19 Immunization Plan. This plan outlines a phased approach to vaccination. Phases one and two are reserved for high-risk populations including people who live or work in long-term care facilities, provide care to COVID-19 patients in a hospital setting, live or work in a remote or isolated Indigenous communities, and more... Everyone else will receive their vaccinations in phases three and four. Phase three starts in April with people aged 79 and those aged 66 and up who are clinically, extremely vulnerable.

Learn more about when you are eligible to receive the vaccine by reading the BC Government's COVID-19 Immunization Plan.

Q: What does physical distancing mean?

Physical distancing is a way that we can slow the spread of COVID-19 by limiting close contact with others. Even though we are not sick, we should still keep about two meters (six feet) or the length of a queen-sized bed from one another when we can when outside our homes.

If you live in residence, avoid using common areas, such as communal kitchens and bathrooms, if there are already people in these spaces.

Q: What should students, faculty and staff do in terms of cleaning their areas?

Individuals should maintain and clean their own surfaces and equipment, including keyboards and items on desks and shelves, in labs and offices. Departments are encouraged to purchase disinfecting wipes for this purpose. Clorox and Lysol wipes are safe for use on most keyboards (for Mac users check operating manual) and computer mice.

Q: Are any SFU students, faculty or staff known to have COVID-19?

Notification of cases of COVID-19 within our community is managed by public health authorities not by SFU, and in some cases individuals may be exposed to the illness. If SFU is asked by public health authorities to notify us of a confirmed case, we will do so.

The majority of our SFU community has not been on campus since mid-March. This means that if a student or employee of SFU is now tested as positive, it is unlikely that they will have been in physical contact with other members of our community while infected. Therefore, public health authorities are unlikely to ask us to notify potential contacts.

Testing is recommended for anyone with cold, influenza or COVID-19-like symptoms, even mild ones. However, it is still possible that some cases may go unreported, which is why we continue to urge our community to be vigilant about hand hygiene, to stay home where possible and to contact health authorities and self-isolate if you develop any symptoms.

Q: Can I still access campus buildings?

Access to campus buildings is only available to current students, faculty, and staff who present SFU identification, which can include your SFU ID, business card or other similar documentation. Alumni, family and friends of community members should not be on campus at this time. For more information about current restrictions and how to access specific campus buildings, visit changes to SFU building access during the pandemic.

Q: Can I book travel for university activities?

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.

SFU's faculty, staff and students are advised not to book tickets for travel outside of Canada until the advisory is lifted. Cross border and international airline tickets purchased before the advisory is lifted, and subsequently cancelled, will not be reimbursed by the University.
Q: Is SFU providing supplies or equipment to support COVID-19 efforts?

Universities across Canada are being called upon to provide support to our health care system and frontline workers. Requests include access to facilities, housing, infrastructure, PPE and related supplies, and manufacturing and research capacities. SFU is responding to several requests from federal, provincial, and municipal governments as well as a local health authority. Individual university departments are also in the process of collecting and directly donating PPE and related safety-equipment to local health authorities and hospitals.

All additional requests for support should be sent to the designated contact person.

What to do if you are sick

Q: What do I do if I have symptoms of COVID-19?

Students, staff and faculty with flu-like symptoms should stay home. If you are concerned that you may have COVID-19, try the BC government COVID-19 self-assessment tool to help guide you on what to do. The province of BC has also set up a dedicated COVID-19 hotline for non-medical questions at 1-888-COVID19 or text 604.630.0300.

If you have COVID-19 compatible symptoms avoid contact with others and self-isolate at home for at least 10 days. Visit the BC CDC website for more details on how to stop the spread of germs, what to do if your symptoms get worse and how to end self-isolation.

Q: Should students, staff or faculty with flu-like symptoms be excluded from class/work?

No one should be excluded or banned from attending classes or work. Students, staff and faculty with flu-like symptoms should stay home. We will not be requiring medical notes for illnesses related to COVID-19 or flu at this time in order to prevent overcrowding the medical system.

Students: Students should continue to report illness as they usually do. Contact your instructor to ask for a modification or accommodation if needed. Should you have concerns about the response, contact the Chair of the department (or for Continuing Studies, write learn@sfu.ca). Finally, if needed, contact the Dean’s office.

Faculty and staff: should continue to report illness as they usually do. Please report absences to your supervisor in accordance with your normal sick leave protocol to ensure sick leave benefits as applicable. Working from home may be an option but can be challenging in some instances depending on the nature of work, options should be discussed with your supervisor.

Q: If I need to self-isolate, who should I inform at SFU?

Students: If you live in residence, email Residence and Housing at housing@sfu.ca. Residence and Housing will provide further information and support. For any other support during self-isolation whether you live on or off campus please contact student_support@sfu.ca.

Contact your instructors to let them know and ask for a modification or accommodation if needed. Should you have concerns about the response, contact the Chair of the department (or for Continuing Studies, write learn@sfu.ca). Finally, if needed, contact the Dean’s office.

Staff and faculty: Please contact your supervisor/dean. Working from home may be an option but can be challenging in some instances depending on the nature of work, options should be discussed with your supervisor.

Additional support and information

Q: What should I do if I have experienced discrimination or harassment in relation to the Coronavirus/COVID-19?

The Provincial Health Officer and BCCDC recommend not making assumptions about the risk of students, faculty or staff based on their ethnicity or travel history.

Every member of our university community has the right to be treated with respect and dignity and to be welcomed and supported on our campus. No person should be targeted in any way or subjected to discrimination resulting from a misplaced perception that they may be a carrier of a communicable disease based on their perceived disability, race, ancestry, place of origin or otherwise. This kind of targeting is discriminatory and a breach of university policy (GP18).

If you feel you have been targeted based on any of the above factors, you should discuss the matter with the Human Rights office by emailing hreadmin@sfu.ca or 778-782-4446. This office will invite you in for a confidential conversation about the policies and response options available.
If you need immediate assistance because you fear for your personal safety, contact 911 or for an on-campus safety concern contact Campus Public Safety at 778-792-4900 (24 hrs a day/7 days a week).

Q: I am feeling stressed and worried about COVID-19. Where can I go for support?

As a result of the Coronavirus outbreak, you may be worried about the health and safety of yourself or your family and friends. This is a challenging and uncertain time. It is not uncommon to experience higher levels of stress and feelings of being overwhelmed. If this is your experience, please seek help and support.

Counselling and other supports are available to members of our campus community. We encourage students who need support at this time to contact one of the following services:

- Students: Health and Counselling Services 778-792-4615 or MySSP 1.844.451.9700 (see additional self-help resources)
- Faculty and staff: Employee and Family Assistance Program: Homewood Health 1-800-663-1142
- Multifaith Centre, 778-792-3180

All students currently registered in a B.C. post-secondary institution also have access to Here2Talk – a provincial program that offers free, confidential counseling and community referral services, conveniently available 24/7 via app, phone and web.

Q: Where can I get more information?

For more information please visit:

- SFU Health & Counselling
- Guidance for front-line employees (PDF)
- International Services for Students Information about health care in Canada
- Health Link BC
- BC Centre for Disease Control: Information on novel coronavirus
- Government of Canada update on Novel Coronavirus
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- World Health Organization (WHO) information about Novel Coronavirus

Q: Where do I go if I have a question not covered in the FAQ?

If you have a question that is not covered here, please email it to covid19@sfu.ca and we'll work to get you an answer as soon as we can.