

COVID-19 Protocols

Vaccination Policy and Approach



July 22, 2021

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Our Goal: A Highly Vaccinated Campus Community

Acadia University is starting to implement its plans to return faculty, staff, and students to campus in September 2021. Nova Scotia Public Health is projecting that the province will reach significant vaccination coverage by mid-August, with a high percentage of the population being fully vaccinated. Once we move further into the provincial re-opening phases, public health restrictions will ease, with the goal of lifting the Provincial State of Emergency. Moving forward the community will need to adapt to living with COVID-19 as part of our normal lives.

In this new era, Acadia's plan is that our campus community remains a safe place to work and study. Our campus community needs to pull together to ensure everyone's safety on campus and within the community by following the public health guidance. This includes the following: wearing a mask, physical distancing, handwashing, limiting gathering limits, and getting vaccinated when possible. We are striving to exceed the provincial levels of vaccination participation in hopes of being able to further reduce restrictions on campus. We anticipate that the COVID-19 vaccine will offer us a sense of normalcy, as we move forward in combating this virus.

We look forward to entering this "post-pandemic" environment, so that we can return to the kind of learning and working environment for which Acadia is renowned. All of this promise is based on having high levels of fully vaccinated members of our community.

Community Health and Wellness: a Key Component of Acadia 2025 and a Post-Pandemic World

Community health and wellness is one of the key components of Acadia's strategic plan, and so practicing safe and healthy behaviour is something that we want to promote throughout the campus community. We want to ensure that we continue to practice some of the public health measures that have been so successful during the pandemic, not only in keeping COVID-19 out of our community but also reducing the spread of everyday

diseases, like the common cold and flu, and avoiding the spread of other rarer contagious diseases. We need to learn from the experiences of the pandemic and optimise our personal health with community strategies to prevent the spread of infections. This is something that is embedded within our strategic plan.

Achieving Campus Community Immunity through Vaccination and Public Health Practices

To ensure that Acadia is meeting the requirements for a safe, post-pandemic campus, we are setting high expectations for vaccination by faculty, staff, and students. Acadia strongly encourages all members of the campus community (including members of the general public who access the campus and its facilities) to be fully vaccinated. If necessary, we will assist individuals in the process of booking vaccination appointments to obtain their vaccinations within the community.

We want to be a "two-dose community in a two-dose world", understanding that those who have a single dose of Janssen (Johnson and Johnson) vaccine, meet the requirements of being fully vaccinated and are, therefore, the same as those with two-doses of the vaccines currently being provided in Nova Scotia.

Regardless of your vaccination status, you can still acquire COVID-19 and show no signs or symptoms while going about your normal routine. Unfortunately, this is how COVID-19 spreads in the community, with no symptoms, being infectious, and socializing in close proximity to others. Not only are you protecting yourself from severe COVID-19, but one of the other benefits of being fully vaccinated is that you can protect others that may be more vulnerable to acquiring severe COVID-19. Being fully vaccinated decreases your viral load, resulting in less infectious aerosols circulating in the atmosphere, thus resulting in less community spread. It is important to note that no vaccine provides 100% protection, and anyone can be asymptomatic and still be infectious, resulting in infecting those around them with the COVID-19 virus.

Research has demonstrated that the COVID-19 vaccine is effective in preventing severe COVID-19, hospitalization, and subsequent death. Acadia understands that not

everyone will choose to be vaccinated, or for whatever reason may not be able to be vaccinated; however, it is our expectation that if you are able to have the vaccine, you will choose to have it, to ensure your safety and the safety of others who are unable to get the vaccine for health reasons.

We will continue to encourage responsible public health behaviour in order for individuals to protect themselves and support the health and safety of the campus community. Once the public health guidelines are eased, no stigma will be associated with individuals that continue to follow the existing guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to, wearing masks, physical distancing and keeping your gathering sizes small. Following any of these guidelines will not be associated with vaccination status but will become a personal choice that needs to be respected. Whether vaccinated or not, we all continue to have a responsibility to protect ourselves and other members of the community from contracting the virus. We also need to remember that everyone will be moving forward in their own way and some individuals will not be comfortable with the loosening of restrictions for quite some time.

Acadia continues to work with Public Health to provide appropriate access to free COVID-19 testing, as well as easy access to the available COVID-19 vaccines. These two strategies are critical to avoid potential infection and subsequent spread of COVID-19.

The bottom line is that getting fully vaccinated and getting routine testing are the best strategies to provide maximum protection from the COVID-19 virus, including its many variants of concern.

Travel from Other Provinces and Countries

On July 5, 2021, the Government of Canada released new guidelines for students entering Nova Scotia related to quarantine timeframe. These guidelines do not align with the Nova Scotia government, but both are based on vaccination status. If certain criteria (including full vaccination) are met, then no quarantine period is required. This strategy is expected to continue into September.

Phase 4 of the Nova Scotia re-opening plan states that quarantine requirements may be determined

by vaccination status, border testing strategy, and epidemiology of other provinces. So, students coming from outside Atlantic Canada, who want to avoid the likelihood of having to self-isolate should make sure they are fully vaccinated prior to arrival. Non-vaccinated or partially vaccinated individuals arriving in Nova Scotia in August/September are likely to be required to self-isolate/quarantine for up to 14 days depending upon their vaccination status.

Nova Scotia Public Health has made COVID-19 vaccinations free to anyone within the community, regardless of citizenship or permanent status. This being said, Acadia is committed to providing clear direction to assist students in obtaining their vaccination. Communication will routinely be forwarded to the campus community encouraging their progress in containing COVID-19 and directions on how to book their vaccination appointment.

Acadia has aligned its vaccine recommendations with the provincial and federal government to ensure consistent communication of information. Acadia will continue to follow and exceed the provincial recommendations related to COVID-19, which have kept us safe since the beginning of the pandemic.

At this time, we are not making any decision on the provision of proof of vaccination status. Canada's federal and provincial governments are in discussion about developing a proof of vaccination, and we will wait to see what emerges from those discussions.

International Students

On July 5, 2021, the Government of Canada released new guidelines for students entering Canada related to quarantine time. These guidelines are based on vaccination status. If certain criteria (including full vaccination) are met, then no quarantine period is required. You are still required to plan for a full 14-day quarantine upon arrival (in the event that you are symptomatic or do not meet the requirements upon arrival). Quarantine will be waived, depending on your vaccination status, and meeting the required documentation upon arrival at the border. We will facilitate access to free vaccinations for those international students who are unvaccinated or only partially vaccinated upon arrival in Nova Scotia.

Ensuring a Safe and Healthy Residence Life

Due to the particularly close quarters that residence students share in communal living, including bedrooms, bathroom facilities, meal hall, and public spaces, we are taking additional measures to ensure the health and safety of our residence communities. Furthermore, Acadia needs to plan for the numbers of incoming residence students that will require self-isolation for various lengths of time, and these will be linked to vaccination status.

Acadia expects that all residence students will be fully vaccinated unless they have a valid reason for not being vaccinated. Acadia understands that there are valid medical, religious, or other personal reasons why someone would not want to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Unvaccinated individuals are at a higher risk of acquiring severe COVID-19, with subsequent hospitalization and possible long-term complications.

Regardless of your vaccination status, Acadia strongly encourages individuals to follow all public health measures such as wearing a mask, maintaining appropriate physical distancing, regular testing, and getting your vaccine. These strategies will protect you and others from potentially catching COVID-19. We are working with Public Health to ensure that we are providing the correct advice to all faculty, staff, and students, related to COVID-19, but especially those individuals that are unvaccinated. Access to free COVID-19 testing and vaccination are currently available on campus.

At this time, Acadia is not making vaccinations mandatory for students; however, the University reserves the right to adopt a mandatory policy if we deem it necessary to protect the health and safety of our community. Acadia continues to work with Nova Scotia Public Health to determine the best and safest approach to managing public health within our student residences, and more generally on campus.

Specific to residence accommodations, Acadia needs to plan for the number of residence students who will need to quarantine or self-isolate when coming to campus. At this time, students arriving from outside of Atlantic Canada who are not fully vaccinated have to quarantine/self-isolate for a period of time up to 14 days depending

upon their vaccination status and their testing results. Some version of quarantine requirements will continue to be in effect this coming August and September; therefore, Acadia needs to be prepared for a variety of quarantine options moving forward.

We want our residence life to be as enjoyable and as sociable as possible, and that means doing everything we can to ensure that the residence communities remain healthy and safe. A COVID outbreak would return us to imposing stringent community health measures, and that is something that we want to avoid.

With this end in mind, Acadia will be asking all residence students to complete a questionnaire to inform us about their vaccination status prior to their return to, or arrival on campus. This information will be kept strictly confidential and will be used solely to plan for the number of students who will require self-isolation/quarantine on campus and the number of residence students who will seek vaccinations after arrival on campus. Acadia respects personal privacy and choice, and we will seek to both accommodate individual needs and protect the health and safety of our community.

Over the summer we will also be conducting a more informal vaccination survey of all employees (faculty and staff) and students.

Student Health and Safety Pledge

As with last year, Acadia will ask all students to sign a behavioural health and safety pledge that now includes references to the provincial recommendations for prevention of COVID-19, along with the inclusion of vaccinations. This pledge will help raise awareness amongst our students of the importance of getting vaccinated against COVID-19 and the continuing need to follow all public health directives, guidelines, and protocols both on and off campus. It will also inform students about the behavioural expectations that are in place as we emerge from the pandemic and seek to return to a more normal campus life while living with the presence of COVID-19 in our midst.

Acadia is enormously proud of how students responded during the course of the 2020-21 academic year, which

helped us get through with only one positive COVID case on campus, no COVID-related campus spread, and no community spread. While we want students to get back to having the kind of campus experience for which Acadia is renowned, we need this outstanding behaviour to continue so that we can demonstrate that we can live with COVID and stay healthy and safe. We have every confidence that students will once again rise to the task.

Summary of Vaccination Policy

- The health and safety of faculty, staff, students, and members of the wider community remains Acadia's number one priority.
- Acadia's policy and approach will be guided by the directives, guidelines, and the advice from Public Health.
- Acadia will meet or exceed provincial and federal health directive guidelines on the campus grounds, to keep the campus community safe and healthy.
- Acadia strongly encourages all members of the campus community (faculty, staff, students, and members of the general public who access the campus and its facilities) to be fully vaccinated and will assist individuals in accessing the vaccinations as needed.
- Access to testing and vaccination will continue to be provided in conjunction with Public Health directives and guidance with the potential for the use of rapid testing is being explored.
- All residence students will be asked to provide the University with their vaccine status before arrival on campus in order to plan for self-isolation/quarantine requirements and access to vaccinations after arrival.
- All students will again be required to sign a behavioural pledge, which will include commitments to follow public health directives and guidelines, with specific reference to vaccinations.
- The University reserves the right to introduce a requirement for proof of vaccine status should that be deemed necessary.
- Continued use of recommended public health measures will be encouraged, such as wearing a mask, frequent use of hand washing and sanitizing, limiting gathering limits, and physical distancing, as appropriate, according to the Public Health directives and guidelines.
- No stigma will be associated with anyone continuing to follow existing public health guidelines once the easing of restrictions occur. This includes, but is not limited to wearing a mask, physical distancing, or any other form of appropriate public health measure; following these guidelines does not indicate anyone's vaccination status.
- The University continues to reserve the right to restrict access to the campus for anyone who refuses to follow public health and safety measures, and/or who in the view of the University endangers or poses a threat to the health and safety of the campus community or the community at large.