

COVID-19 Protocols

Comprehensive Covid-19 Prevention and Safety Policy



August 30, 2021

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Preamble

Throughout the pandemic, Acadia has taken a strong leadership role in implementing comprehensive COVID-19 safety protocols that have successfully allowed us to operate in-person classes and residences throughout the 2020-21 academic year. We continue to take this approach as we prepare for the upcoming academic year during what we hope will be the final stage of the pandemic and eventually moving into a post-pandemic environment. The plan is both comprehensive and precautionary, relying on a number of important measures to provide the safest possible community for working and learning.

Our comprehensive plan includes having a very high rate of vaccination in our campus community, through educating and communicating the benefits of this strategy, and providing the convenience of on-campus vaccination clinics, along with the opportunities to access our local vaccination clinics within the community. Recent COVID-19 surveys of our campus community have indicated that over 95% of Acadia campus will be fully vaccinated by September 1st, with numerous individuals having identified having appointments booked later in September for their second dose. Along with promoting vaccinations, Acadia will also be encouraging and implementing twice weekly voluntary Rapid Test Clinics on campus to identify positive cases immediately, with a solid procedure in place if any cases are identified. We will also be enforcing and monitoring provincial self-isolation and quarantine guidelines as appropriate, continuing mask use and physical distancing, encouraging daily self-assessments, continuing increased cleaning in high touch spaces, encouraging routine hand washing, proper sneeze and cough etiquette, and continuing to ensure increased outside airflow into each building on campus.

Currently, Nova Scotia is in Phase 4 of the provincial re-opening plan and a post-secondary education sectoral framework has been approved by LAE and NS Public Health (NSPH) for campus operations during the fall term. It is expected that NS will move into Phase 5 at some time either before or after the start of the fall term, but the details of what that will entail have not yet been finalised

by the provincial government. Universities are permitted to operate under the sectoral framework even if the province remains in Phase 4 during part or all of the fall term. Acadia is taking a precautionary approach in order to ensure that we safely manage the start of term and the transition to the final phase of reopening as the pandemic nears its end in our region.

On August 23, NS announced that the target date for moving to Phase 5 is now September 15. Even in Phase 5, institutions will be permitted to maintain public health measures that are more restrictive than those in place provincially. It was also announced that border restrictions would be reintroduced at the NS-NB border effective at 8 a.m. on August 25.

Key Elements of Acadia's Comprehensive COVID-19 Prevention and Safety Plan

High Rate of Community Vaccination

Acadia announced its vaccination policy in July (see <https://www2.acadiau.ca/covid-19/vaccination.html>) which strives to achieve the highest levels of vaccination amongst the campus community through a variety of methods. Acadia expects everyone who is able to get fully vaccinated, to do so, and is adopting a comprehensive package of measures to encourage vaccination and ensure that the campus community exceeds public health vaccination targets for achieving population immunity and protection from catching and spreading the COVID-19 virus.

The situation across Canada and within our region is changing rapidly, especially as many institutions are adopting some kind of mandatory approach to vaccination. As part of our policy, Acadia reserves the right to introduce a mandatory vaccination approach if we determine that it is necessary to more effectively protect the health and safety of our campus community. We continue to monitor the situation both nationally and regionally, seeking the advice of the NS Public Health authority and the Chief Medical Officer of Health. As an indication of the fluidity of the current situation, Nova Scotia has reintroduced restrictions at the New Brunswick border which mean that effective on August 25, our students coming from that province will be required to self-isolate if they are not fully vaccinated.

Our provincial situation remains good both in terms of the numbers of COVID-19 cases and the rates of vaccination. As of August 23, the vaccination rates in NS are encouragingly high - 70% fully vaccinated and 80% partially vaccinated (which accounts for 90% of those eligible) and moving steadily towards the desired target of 75% fully vaccinated in order to reach population immunity.

Results of Vaccination Surveys

Our surveys of students and employees indicate that we are on our way to achieving very high rates of vaccination in our community, and that we will be well beyond the 75% full-vaccination level that the NSPH has set as the target for population immunity and the move to Phase 5 of the re-opening plan.

Formal Survey of Residence Students:

1290 out of a total of 1395 (92.5%) residence students responded to the survey as of Aug 20:

- Fully vaccinated 89%
- Partially vaccinated 6%
- Unvaccinated or Declined to answer 5%

Of residence students responding to the survey, the regional breakdown of those who state they will be fully or partially vaccinated before arriving are:

- Atlantic Canada 95% (n=927)
- Rest of Canada 100% (n=186)
- International 81% (n=177)

Those not fully vaccinated will be provided access to vaccinations upon arrival, with both on and off campus vaccination clinics being made available to all students free of charge and regardless of health insurance status.

Informal Survey of Employees and Students (as of Aug 20):

Employees: 359 (faculty and staff) responded:

- Fully vaccinated 98%
- Partially vaccinated 1%
- Unvaccinated or Declined to answer 1%

Students: 820 responded:

- Fully vaccinated 93%
- Partially vaccinated 2%
- Unvaccinated or Declined to answer 5%

As these results indicate, we expect to have a very high rate of vaccination in the campus community. Responses are still coming in, but while the overall percentages have not changed much in recent weeks, the percentage of fully vaccinated responses has continued to edge upwards since the start of the surveys. Residence staff are following up with all incoming residence students who are not fully vaccinated or who have not responded to the survey to ensure that they have immediate access to vaccinations and that they comply with quarantine requirements and other public health measures to keep themselves and others safe. To date about 47 students have been identified for quarantine, most being international students.

On-Campus Vaccination Clinic

Acadia will support students who want to get vaccinated after arrival, and we will be hosting an on-campus vaccination clinic as well as providing information on local sites where students can access vaccinations, including pharmacies in Wolfville and New Minas. Currently the on-campus clinic will operate on September 14 and 16 from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. Other dates will be determined depending upon the demand.

Regular Self-Assessment and Testing

Daily self-assessment for symptoms and regular testing are important measures to reduce the potential of the spread of COVID-19. This is true for vaccinated as well as unvaccinated individuals but is especially important for those who are unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated.

Acadia will continue to encourage and support continuous self-assessment for any sign of COVID-19 related symptoms, as well as regular asymptomatic testing for COVID-19 and full symptomatic testing for anyone with symptoms. The on-campus Nova Scotia Health Authority COVID-19 testing centre will continue to operate until at least the end of October, when the lease agreement will be reviewed.

All members of the Acadia community will be encouraged to undertake regular rapid testing, and those who are unvaccinated will be asked to do so twice a week. Acadia will provide access to rapid testing twice a week at two locations on campus.

Members of the campus community that test positive at our rapid test clinics are required to quarantine and obtain a PCR test. They will immediately be contacted by our Occupational Health Nurse to ensure they have all the necessary information and resources to safely quarantine. Their PCR test sample will be expedited to ensure a timely accurate diagnosis. If their PCR test results come back positive, they will be contacted by Public Health for follow-up.

Quarantine and Self-Isolation

Acadia will provide, at a reasonable cost, facilities for residence students who are required to quarantine or self-isolate on campus prior to the start of term and will continue to provide facilities for residence students who need to be quarantined or isolated during the term. One residence building has been set aside as a quarantine and self-isolation facility.

Mask Wearing

Acadia's Mask Policy will continue to require all employees, students, and visitors to wear masks in all indoor common spaces with appropriate exceptions for employees in their office spaces and during lectures, and students in their private residence. Students will be required to wear masks in classrooms and labs, including when they are seated.

Please review our updated Interim Mask Policy to ensure requirements are followed. <https://www2.acadiau.ca/files/files/COVID-19/2021/2021-08-26%20Interim%20Mask%20Policy.pdf>

All members of the campus community will be encouraged to wear masks outdoors as appropriate, especially in crowded areas where physical distancing is not possible.

Those who are not fully vaccinated or are more vulnerable to severe COVID-19 are strongly encouraged to continue to wear masks. This is an additional measure to protect not only yourself from being exposed to the virus, but others around you as well.

This policy will be reviewed at the end of September in the context of whether or not we have moved to Phase 5 of

the provincial re-opening plan. Currently the province is targeting September 15 as the date to move to Phase 5, but institutions will be permitted to maintain restriction above those required provincially.

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing of 1 metre, as per the sectoral framework, will be required on campus whenever possible, including both indoors and outdoors. Masks must be worn whenever a distance of 1m cannot be maintained. All members of the community will be required to respect physical distancing at all times.

Contact Tracing

Acadia will follow provincial guidelines on contact tracing but will no longer be requiring community members to tap their ID cards upon entering buildings. This will be revisited if increasing cases of the virus necessitate the return of electronic contact tracing.

Professors have been mandated by the Government of Nova Scotia to take attendance in classes and will continue to do so in order to assist contact tracing should it be necessary.

Enhanced Cleaning and Personal Hygiene

Acadia will continue to provide increased cleaning of facilities although the level and frequency of disinfecting will not be as high as during the earlier periods of the pandemic.

Acadia will continue to provide access to hand sanitizer through dispensers and will continue to encourage routine hand washing, proper sneeze and cough etiquette, and regular cleaning of high touch surfaces.

Ventilation

Appropriate measures have been taken to ensure maximum fresh air exchange is maintained in all campus buildings and teaching spaces.

Student Pledge

All members of the Acadia student community will be required to abide by a pledge to follow the public health rules, procedures and directives at all times, including following community public health policies when they are

off campus. Acadia's revised student code of conduct provides for potential disciplinary action for inappropriate off-campus behaviour.

General Public

Currently, access to campus for the general public is restricted to a small number of areas (such as the athletics complex, the Harriet Irving Botanical Gardens, the woodland trails, and controlled events in the chapel). Public access will continue to be limited until we enter into Phase 5 of the provincial re-opening plan, when we will review the issue.

Managing COVID-19 Cases on Campus

As with last year, individual cases of COVID-19 on campus will be dealt with by NSPH in accordance with the established procedures of isolation, treatment and contact tracing. While the likelihood of a significant outbreak is low due to high levels of vaccination amongst the campus community, if a situation develops where there is community spread on campus, the University will work with NSPH to implement measures to contain the spread, including the possible lockdown of certain parts of campus and, if necessary, a possible lockdown of the entire campus and moving all classes to online delivery for a period of time.

Policy Review

As stated above, we continue to review and monitor the evolving situation on a daily basis, and any changes to the current approach (especially regarding vaccinations) will be immediately communicated to the campus community.

This policy will also be reviewed in mid to late September once the first few weeks of term have been completed and we have seen how the pandemic re-opening plan has progressed provincially. If the province moves to Phase 5 on September 15, then this will be a very important step as we work our way out of this pandemic. Again, any updates or changes to the policy will be clearly communicated to the campus community.

The precautionary approach being taken will be continued as long as it is deemed necessary to protect the health of our campus community. Acadia reserves the right to maintain increased restrictions on-campus that may exceed general community and provincial restrictions.