

COVID-19 Protocols

COVID-19 Study Space Policy

Responsible Unit: Safety and Security
Approving Sector Heads: Vice-President Finance & Administration and CFO, and
Provost and Vice-President Academic



August 25, 2021

COVID-19 Study Space Policy

Purpose and Definition

Study spaces have historically been commonly used on university grounds. This year presents a unique challenge related to studying habits on campus. We are all struggling to adapt to our surroundings, with increased awareness being prominent and preventing the spread of coronavirus. This is causing anxiety for students, staff, and faculty alike. Among other techniques, face masks have been a prominent strategy to contain the virus and thus preventing acquiring and spreading the virus to others. Due to the Interim Mask Policy, individuals are obligated to wear face masks in all common areas where there is university traffic flow. The problem that has presented itself now, is that students are choosing to isolate themselves in their rooms, so they do not have to wear masks while studying. While this is a strategy to avoid wearing a face mask, it presents other problems and increased risks. There is evidence linking perceived social isolation with adverse health effects such as depression, poor sleep habits, accelerated cognitive decline, poor cardiovascular health, poor sleep quality, and impaired immunity. Acadia acknowledges that consequences related to isolation are becoming a problem on our campus. The University is committed to ensuring the health and wellbeing of the students are addressed and recognize that some changes need to occur to accomplish this task.

Risk Assessment

There are numerous psychological and physical risks associated with social isolation and subsequent feelings of loneliness. In considering these risk factors, along with the number of current COVID-19 cases in the community, Acadia has implemented this policy to enhance your ability to socially interact within the campus property.

Prevention Plan

While considering the various implications of isolation and loneliness, a prevention plan has been developed. This plan is dependent upon the individual's cooperation and will be periodically reassessed. If the number of COVID-19 cases become a concern in the community or there is not an appropriate level of cooperation related to this policy, then these considerations will be revoked for your

safety and the safety of the community. By implementing this plan, we are providing students the opportunity to engage with others in a safe manner, while still being able to complete their studies. In saying that, by implementing this plan, we are providing you an opportunity to have a safe study space that allows you to socially interact (or perform group work), without constantly wearing your mask. By using the Nova Scotia guidelines for avoiding infection (<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/avoiding-infection/>), the following protocols will be implemented. Acadia has identified some large spaces (Fountain Commons, K.C Irving Centre- Garden Room, SUB-Michener Lounge, MacKeen Room, Main floor), with vaulted ceilings, and sufficient air flow to ensure that any exhale will be dissipated appropriately and in a timely fashion. There are large tables that may be moved to accommodate a group of students wishing to socialize, study and socially distance, simultaneously. The areas specified below may have available hours for group study spaces (no more than 5 students at one time), or individual spaces that allow for no masks to be worn. It is important to note that the Acadia campus is currently closed to the general public and these spaces are not accessible to community members at this time. Signage will indicate access procedures, compliance, and group size restrictions.

Protocols Implemented

Following Nova Scotia guidelines for coronavirus avoiding infection:

1. Social Distancing will still be implemented. The tables are sufficient in size to allow one person per table. The tables may be moved to ensure 2 metre (6 foot) distancing while still facing one another, with the width of 2 tables between individuals. Ensure you are not sitting directly in front of one another but have staggered yourself from the person in front of you. Please remain seated for the duration of your study session, with minimal to no visiting of other areas. If you need to communicate with others in another area, put your mask on for the duration of travel or while standing up and speaking. When you have finished your study time, please ensure your table is placed back to its original position to avoid interrupting the flow at the beginning of the following scheduled class.

2. Signage will be visible and provide reminders related to any exceptions to wearing masks, enforcement requirements and supervision, and any limits to group size.
3. Keep your hands clean. There is sufficient opportunity when entering and exiting buildings and areas, that increased hand hygiene should currently be considered normal at this stage. Please continue to follow this protocol, as it is important to have clean hands, especially if you have no mask on and may inadvertently touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
4. Cough and sneeze etiquette. Please ensure to cough into your bent elbow, or a tissue if one is available. This is especially important if others will not be wearing masks. Discard the tissue immediately and ensure to wash your hands before returning to your study area.
5. Cleaning and disinfecting. A disinfectant will be provided in the designated study areas indicated. Please ensure you use the disinfectant upon arrival and upon leaving the workstation that you are using. This is to ensure you do not touch a contaminated surface and accidentally touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
6. Food safety. Food will be allowed to be consumed during your study time. Please ensure that you have clean hands prior to eating anything, to ensure you are not accidentally ingesting any contaminants.
7. Wearing a face mask. You are still obligated to wear a mask as you enter and exit your study area, as well as while you are moving your table to create your group space. Once everyone is in their space and sitting, you may remove your mask to study. We are however still concerned for particles that are being exhaled while speaking, laughing, and communicating. That is why it is important to stagger seating to ensure you are not directly in front of another individual, maintaining social distancing, as well as keeping your voice at a normal tone, ensuring not to yell across the room.

Reporting

All faculty, staff, students, and visitors have a duty to report all violations, and should contact Safety and Security. Please ensure that you follow the protocols listed above to ensure your safety, your fellow student's safety, and the safety of the community as a whole. Safety and Security will routinely monitor the area to ensure that rules are being adhered to, as well as ensuring your safety while on campus.

Reviews and Follow-up

- A) Student Services will be responsible for reviewing this document.
- B) This document and its protocols may change suddenly, depending on the number of COVID-19 cases within the community and within the campus.
- C) If there are numerous infractions related to these study areas, they will individually be reassessed at that time.

COVID-19 Study Space Policy

Appendix 1

Vaughan Memorial Library - Mask Free Study Spaces

The Vaughan memorial Library at Acadia University is a large venue and currently underutilized due to the current mask policy. Library spaces are specifically mentioned in the public health directives as a public space where masks must be worn:

“common areas and public spaces on university and college campuses (like the library and student union building, but not classrooms, labs, offices or residences)”

This Appendix identifies private study spaces within the Vaughan Memorial Library that can be safely used as a Mask Free Study Space. The designated spaces would be located on the main floor (level 300), which is the floor where the Main Entrance into the library is located. Detailed specifics and a map of the area are attached.

Acadia University proposing a similar format to our existing mask free study spaces, where the individual is required to be seated to remove their mask and maintain physical distancing. Disinfectant will be provided and students will be expected to clean their workspace before and after use. This process will be continuing for the various library mask free study spaces. The individual study rooms (listed below) are smaller spaces but have high air flow rates. Once a student enters the space, they will be required to wear their mask for a minimum of 15 minutes prior to removing it. After 15 minutes, they will have the option of having a mask free study space, since many students spend 4 or more hours in these spaces for study purposes. All other spaces are marked for square footage, air exchange rates and maximum occupancy.

New signs indicating the maximum occupancies and the 15 min mask rule (along with the attached Wall sign) would be posted accordingly.

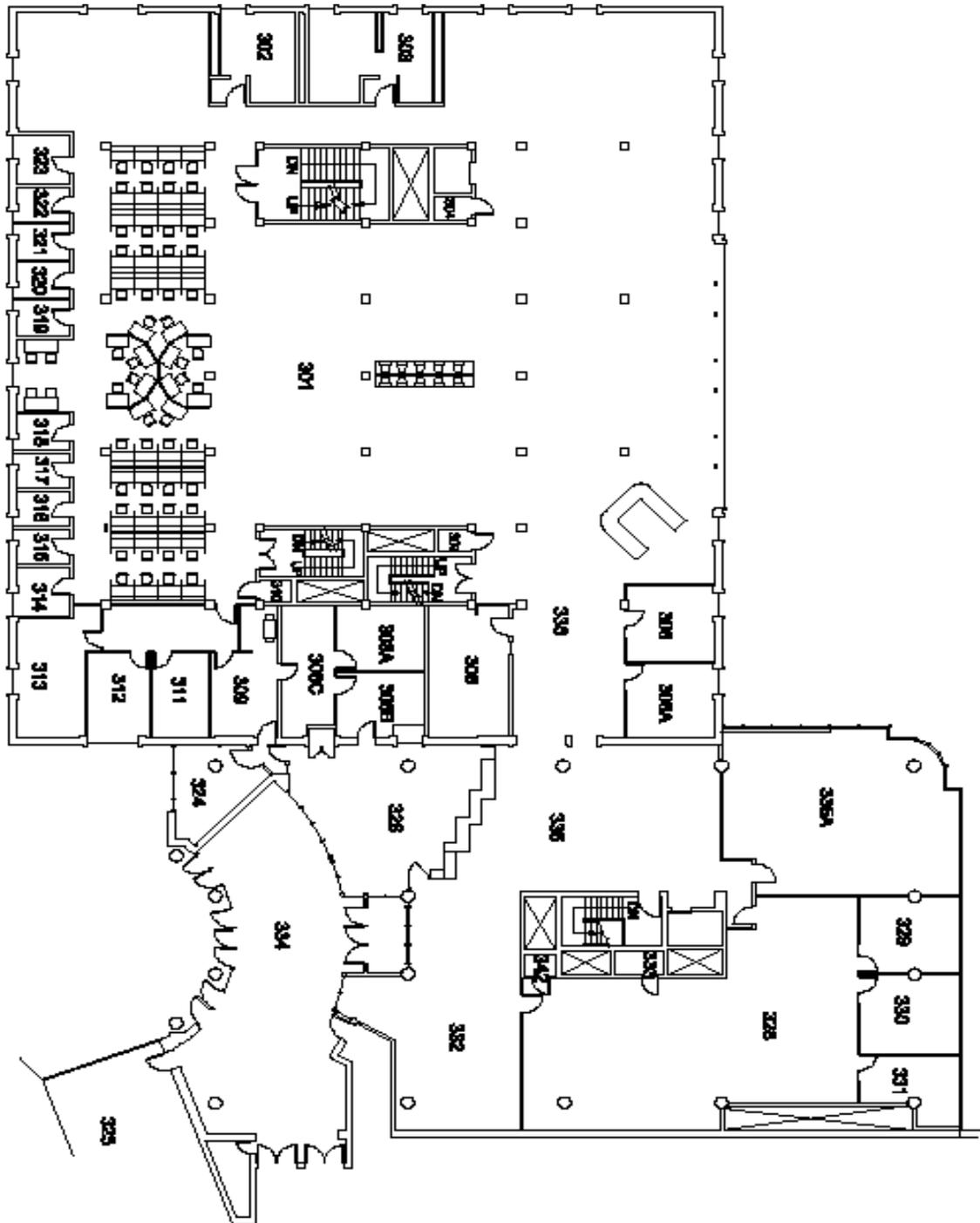
ROOM	DESCRIPTION	SQ. FOOTAGE	AIR EXCHANGE/ HOUR (ACH)	OCCUPANCY (Maximum)
314, 323	Individual study room	64	10 to 12	1 each
315-322	Individual study room	46.5	12 to 15	1 each
335A	Reading Room	894	8 to 9.5	15
328	Media Room	1,446	8 to 9	7
301	Main Open study area	8,490	6 to 7	71

**No opening windows in any location, with the exception of room 312

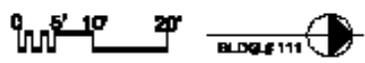
**Ceiling height is between 8 to 9.5 feet in all areas

**Propose that mask use required in individual study rooms for first 15 minutes of occupancy

**Keep in mind that this is an estimate based on Engineering Drawings (Circa: 76-82) and the only way to provide more accuracy would be to get an Air Balancing contractor to review and sample air flow data (regarding number 4 above). Room 301 (Main area) has been modified from the original drawings but has essentially the same configuration, the accuracy should remain (+/- 5%). Area 301 has a concentration of Return Air Grills in the center of the room, between the East/West stairs making that area more dynamic with regards to air movement. Therefore, the furthest corners of the room would become the areas of less air flow but the Supply Air Diffusers compensate slightly by distributing further into the room.



LEVEL 300
VAUGHAN MEMORIAL LIBRARY
ACADIA UNIVERSITY
WOLFFVILLE N.S.
 Revised: March 2004



PRIVATE INTERIM STUDY SPACE

(MASK EXEMPTION IN EFFECT)

- **Disinfect study space before and after use**
- **Disinfect hands before use**
- **Only remove your mask when seated**
- **Maximum of 5 people per study group**
- **Maintain a 2-metre (6-foot) physical distance at all times**

*The COVID-19 Interim Study Space Policy governs this space.
Violations will result in a Code of Conduct charge.*

Help protect our Acadia community from COVID-19

