



COVID-19 RETURN TO CAMPUS

2021



ABSTRACT

In planning and preparing for the controlled and gradual return to pre-pandemic operations, NSCAD's approach to our community's return to campus is informed by the principles outlined in this document.

[NSCAD University](#)

Revision 1, September 2021

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Return to Campus Principles

We acknowledge the resilience, flexibility and unity of our community during these past 18 months of COVID-19, as we faced some of the most difficult challenges we've ever confronted.

In planning and preparing for a controlled and safe return to in-person operations during the university's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic, NSCAD's approach will be informed by the following principles:

1. NSCAD's highest priority is to protect the health and safety of its community members on our three campus sites (Fountain, Academy and Port). This plan has been built around the university's commitment to the health and safety of our community members, including students, faculty, staff, volunteers, alumni, and contractors, and in pursuit of the highest academic quality in our teaching, research, and service.
2. The objective is to indicate the best practices the sector has implemented throughout the pandemic and demonstrate their value as we head into this post-pandemic phase and use these lessons to control all airborne communicable illnesses including influenza, colds, and SARS Cov2, etc.
3. NSCAD's COVID-19 Return to Campus Plan conforms to the Provincial Post-Secondary Education Post-Pandemic Guidance designed to allow for organized and structured return to campus.
4. All decision-making will be informed by public health directives and best evidence. The university will continue to work closely with the provincial government, crisis management COVID-19 committee and members of the university community.
5. The university's approach to returning to campus will be both coordinated and incremental, as it continues to depend on public health directives. The plan continues to allow for the university to move the plan forward, adjust it, or put on hold or implement any of our risk management scenarios, as circumstances change and according to current provincial directives.
6. On-campus activities and events will be permitted to resume so long as they follow the Return to Campus Plan and the guidelines in the provincial reopening framework.

7. The university will provide as much clarity and certainty as possible to students, staff and faculty by making and communicating decisions as early as possible.

Key Guidance:

As we enter the 'return to campus' phase of our response to COVID-19, we are guided by the most up-to-date public health recommendations and information.

NSCAD recognizes that each and every one of our community members is responsible for workplace health and safety. We encourage and communicate the shared internal responsibility system for effective risk mitigation to our community and refer back to our [Code of Conduct addendum](#). We encourage members of the university community to not only adhere to guidelines but to be positive promoters of them as well.

All individuals on campus are expected to adhere to all health and safety directives put in place by the university as described in this guideline, as well as all health and safety directives recommended by the provincial health authority and the provincial and federal governments including:

1. Do not come to campus if you have been or are feeling sick. Follow the public health guideline on 811 or online and get tested regularly.
2. Do not come to campus if you have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, have recently visited an exposure site, or are waiting a COVID-19 test result.
3. As we begin the gradual return to campus in August, those that do decide to meet in person should follow Nova Scotia's phase 4 guidelines for venues (50 per cent capacity) until the province reaches phase 5.

By coming to campus, you attest that you are feeling well and are not aware of any potential exposures to COVID-19.

Masks:

We expect that Nova Scotia's mask mandate will be removed at some stage in 2021; however, mask requirements at NSCAD are expected to continue in the fall 2021 semester. NSCAD is firmly committed to upholding the health and safety of our community and will, in consideration of the provincial recommendation, make a decision on when mask requirements will change for our community.

- Masks continue to be required in all common spaces regardless of your vaccination status; you may remove your mask when seated at your desk or workstation. **Common spaces include classrooms and studios.**

- If you have an office and would like people visiting your office to wear a mask, please make this clear through appropriate signage (to be provided).
- Additional information on mask requirements is found below in the return to campus guidelines.

Vaccinations:

- NSCAD strongly supports and encourages vaccination.
- NSCAD is focused on removing barriers to individuals accessing vaccines.
- **UPDATED: NSCAD requires either proof of full vaccination before returning to campus, or for those who do not wish to disclose their vaccination status, those who do not yet have full vaccine coverage, or those who remain unvaccinated, we will require proof of regular testing (twice weekly).**
- Faculty, staff and students are able to provide their status [here](#).
- We will continue to offer public health information on vaccines to address vaccine hesitancy. We emphatically support the value of vaccines and the importance of vaccination.
- Out-of-province or international students who are not fully vaccinated prior to arriving will be able to get vaccinated at no cost to them once they arrive in Nova Scotia.

Testing:

- **UPDATED:** Starting September 20 2021, NSCAD will be offering observed, self-administered rapid COVID tests on campus. More information on testing times and locations can be found [here](#).
- Asymptomatic on-site testing is available for any member of the University community (faculty, staff and students).
- NSCAD continues to encourage regular asymptomatic testing as part of our response.
- For those members of the university community who have opted to participate in testing twice per week, they are able to receive testing at a location of their choosing, including on-campus. For those receiving testing off campus they are able to upload their tests to the [COVID testing form](#).

Return to Campus Guidelines

1. Masks

It is expected as we enter the post-pandemic phase of COVID-19 that Nova Scotia Public Health will eliminate the formal requirement for mask wearing; however, continued use of masks is recommended by public health. Until the university is satisfied with the safety implications of discontinuing the use of masks, the requirement will remain. This may continue beyond the provincial phase 5 implementation.

Until such a time, in order to limit COVID-19 spread within our campuses, masks will be required by our NSCAD community if:

- You will be working within 1 metre of another NSCAD community member.
- You are sitting in groups of 8 or more of other NSCAD community members.
- You are walking through the campus corridors to and from classes, studios, etc.
- You are in a situation where a task or learning experience requires you to be physically close to another person.
- You are in physically confined areas such as elevators, hallways, stairwells, and washrooms where another person is or may be present.

Masks will not be required in the following circumstances:

- When NSCAD community members are in their offices, studios spaces or other rooms by themselves or where adequate space can be maintained with other NSCAD community members.
- When NSCAD professors and/or faculty are teaching, presenting or explaining.
- When students are asking a question in class, they may temporarily remove their mask for this purpose.
- When information is being orally presented where people rely on lip movement to understand.
- When NSCAD community members are eating and/or drinking.

Some people may also wish to continue to wear masks as a personal preference in any situation and for any duration on our campuses. We continue to be supportive of every individual's choice to continue wearing a mask.

In the event that proper personal protective equipment (PPE) is required for a specific task where a greater level of PPE is needed, that PPE must be used in replacement of the non-medical mask (i.e., N95). If you have any questions about whether a mask or proper PPE is required in a particular studio, the area technicians or supervisor will be able to assist you.

Our NSCAD community members can expect communication, signage, and education for wearing masks until the university removes the requirement.

2. Physical Distancing

Physical distancing strategies have been implemented in common areas at the university since spring 2020. Although proper physical distancing can add an additional level of protection against COVID-19 and will continue to be encouraged, physical distancing of 2 metres will not be required where masks are maintained.

Areas where the university deems it necessary for 2 metre physical distancing include any areas where NSCAD community members are eating/drinking.

Although there will not be a mandatory requirement for physical distancing by Nova Scotia Public Health, classrooms and studios have been laid out so students will be at a minimum of 1 metre distance.

3. Capacity Limits and Controlling Movement

NSCAD will continue to control and stagger class start/end times and general gathering limits around our three campuses to help mitigate situations that could cause crowding, and thus, transmission. NSCAD will stagger and control movement to avoid 'choke' points in:

- areas that are deemed to have designated entrances and exits
- classes and studio times that start/end at the same time and could cause a great number of students to congregate in a small space like a hallway, stairwell, or elevator

Events, Visitors and Openings:

- Local and out-of-province classroom visitors are permitted following NSCAD's COVID-19 protocols and the provincial guidelines for travel. We are encouraging any talks and workshops open to the wider NSCAD community and general public continue to be held online. Should such an event be planned for an in-person audience, the location is limited to the Bell Auditorium, which will have an event capacity of 50 per cent occupancy. This requirement will be reassessed every semester. The Art Bar +Projects is currently not available for events.
- The Anna Leonowens Gallery will resume openings on Monday evenings to celebrate the exhibitions, limited to 50 per cent of the venue's capacity. Visitors are encouraged to use the Gallery 3 exit on Hollis St.

4. General Area Ventilation

Adequate ventilation reduces the airborne concentrations of infectious agents, reducing the potential for spread of all communicable diseases/illnesses. Ventilation can be a combination of mechanical systems (HVAC) as well as natural systems (windows).

- Where possible, NSCAD has increased the amount of fresh air being brought into buildings through air handlers.
- Where possible, air filters were replaced/upgraded in HVAC systems to improve air quality.
- NSCAD will continue to promote the use of operable windows during favourable weather conditions. During 2020, our facilities team installed wooden screens to allow previously sealed operable windows to be opened where possible.

5. Hand Hygiene

Frequent proper hand hygiene remains an important part of reducing COVID-19 spread. We continue to encourage NSCAD community members to practice good hand hygiene.

Practice hand hygiene (wash hands or use hand sanitizer) often, including but not limited to: immediately upon entry to a facility; between activities; moving from indoor to outdoor space and vice versa; before and after eating, drinking and handling food; after cleaning; toileting; handling bodily fluid; sneezing; coughing; blowing your nose.

Necessary hand sanitation supplies will be provided and personal hygiene measures will be reinforced to protect and reduce exposure to viruses. To support proper hand hygiene:

- a hand washing station, such as those available in studios or washroom will be available with soap, water, and a drying apparatus or;
- hand sanitation stations, with a minimum 60 per cent alcohol base, will continue to be readily available around our campuses

6. Cleanliness / Sanitation

The routine cleaning of common touch points as well as general cleaning helps to reduce the buildup of bacteria/viruses and prevents their easy spread from person to person. NSCAD cleaning staff will continue to thoroughly address all high-touch areas **daily**. This includes but is not limited to:

- doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, faucets and taps, elevator buttons, railings
- all visibly dirty surfaces, which will be cleaned before disinfecting (unless otherwise stated on the surface).

Given the nature of the learning environment, the cleaning team will not be able to address certain equipment or work spaces:

- Specialized equipment that requires enhanced cleaning will be completed by NSCAD technicians with the knowledge and expertise to properly and safely clean it.
- Employees are expected to frequently clean their own work areas. Additional cleaning/disinfection will be done for shared areas.
- NSCAD will continue to ensure a supply of disposable towels and spray cleaners, or disposable wipes, to regularly clean/disinfect commonly used surfaces.
- If a confirmed case of COVID-19 occurs on one of NSCAD's campuses, a specific cleaning protocol will be initiated.

7. Symptoms and Campus Access

If anyone is experiencing one or more of the following new or worsening symptoms, they will not be permitted to access any NSCAD campus:

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Fatigue
- Overall aches and pains
- Sore throat
- Diarrhoea
- Conjunctivitis
- Headache

- Loss of taste or smell
- Skin rashes, or discolouration of fingers or toes
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Chest pain or pressure

If you are experiencing one or more of these symptoms, NSCAD community members are required to stay home and, for staff and students, contact your manager/supervisor/instructor. You will be advised to complete Nova Scotia Public Health 811's self-assessment tool and follow public health guidance for testing, treatment, monitoring, and/or return to work.

8. Return to Campus

As the university prepares for the safe return of in-person teaching, research and programming on campus in September, we continue to adapt our initial response protocol to help everyone in our NSCAD community feel prepared and confident.

Beginning September 1, 2021, a Campus Access Authorization Form will no longer be required to enter a NSCAD campus.

The university will continue to follow Nova Scotia Public Health's [Reopening Plan](#) and members of the NSCAD community should continue to adhere to the guidelines in place throughout the transition back to campus. As the province moves through stages of the reopening plan, the university will use the plan to respond and update the NSCAD community accordingly.

Accommodation and Support

As NSCAD begins to return to in-person service and operations, we recognize some staff and students may require accommodation as part of their individual return to campus. Employees with a circumstance that may make it difficult to return to campus in the fall and who may require accommodation must contact humanresources@nscad.ca as soon as possible.

Students requiring assistance can continue to access support through the office of Opportunity and Belonging by contacting belong@nscad.ca.

Additional resources for staff and students can be found on our [Mental Health and Wellbeing: Our Response](#) and through the [additional COVID-19 OHS Resources](#). We encourage all employees and students to utilize these resources as needed.

9. Self-Assessment and Contact Tracing Measures

NSCAD will encourage and reinforce the need for all NSCAD community members accessing the campus to self-screen daily prior to departing for the university. NSCAD community members will be advised to self-screen each workday before departing their household for the signs or symptoms of COVID-19. If symptoms are present, members should follow the current guidance from Nova Scotia Public Health plus refrain from traveling to campus and, for staff, faculty and students, to notify their manager, supervisor, or instructor.

10. Occupational Health and Safety Program

COVID-19 has demonstrated the importance and effectiveness of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) program within our NSCAD community and there is learned value in embedding these infection control activities within the workplace OHS initiatives.

During the period of COVID-19, NSCAD created an [addendum to the Code of Conduct](#) to address expectations for the NSCAD community's behaviours relevant to COVID-19. The university, through the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC), also enhanced significantly the NSCAD OHS Program and will continue to learn from the OHS lessons the pandemic has provided.

Since 2020, the JOHSC has been monitoring campus activity as it relates to protocols in place to combat the spread of the virus. For example, the JOHSC developed and implemented a COVID-19-specific safety inspection for all three campuses and will continue to learn from Nova Scotia Public Health guidance on evolving best practices.

Our university is committed to sustainable diligence in our efforts to better control communicable diseases within the NSCAD community.

Monitoring and Communicating the Plan

Everyone must be flexible and considerate as we move forward together.

It is critical to maintain and adapt our plan to return to campus as the pandemic's situation changes. We also appreciate the need to communicate our plan to the NSCAD community to ensure everyone understands it, and will err on the side of over communicating to support ongoing transparency.

As we continue through the return to campus phase, this response plan and associated guiding principles will be used as the initial stage of our approach to full university operations in a post-pandemic landscape.