

Return to in-person learning- January 2022 Post-Secondary Sector

Leaders in public health and post-secondary settings are working hard to ensure that students, staff, and faculty, and their surrounding communities, remain safe while we all live with COVID-19.

In-person learning is critically important for students, not just in P-12, but also post-secondary as well. The in-person experience allows students to participate in environments like classrooms, labs and libraries and interact in-person with instructors and resources that give them a supportive post-secondary experience. Students learn from each other and from the formal settings provided. While online learning can be effective, we also know some students learn better in the classroom.

There were times during this pandemic that we moved classes to online learning to ensure safety and to do our part as a university community to flatten the curve and minimize the spread. We've done that work again over the last few weeks, and I want to thank you all for your resilience and patience, and your continuous commitment to keeping yourselves and your fellow students safe.

Nova Scotians are being asked to slow down their social activities outside of work and school and restrictions are in place to encourage that. Everyone is being asked to do their part so that students can attend school, in person, and to ensure the healthcare system can continue to respond to COVID-19 and maintain urgent and emergency services.

Last week, the university sector met with Nova Scotia Public Health, and parties were in agreement that it is safe to return to in-person learning as long as appropriate measures are in place. There is a balance between the risk of getting the disease with the impacts of isolation and the loss of the in-person experience.

With enhanced and layered public health measures and protocols in place on all university and college campuses across the province, students, faculty, and the university community should feel confident that these spaces are safe.

Additionally, the vast majority of people on university campuses are vaccinated or may be required to be vaccinated before the return to in-person learning and activities. I want to congratulate the institutions for their leadership in promoting the benefits of the vaccine. We know it is the best form of protection against the virus.

Omicron is all around us and we will continue to work together to solve the problems it will undoubtedly present. The enhanced public health measures in place in p-12 schools and post-secondary institutions are built on the following foundation:

- Get vaccinated if you are eligible, including a booster shot
- Stay home if you are feeling unwell and follow guidance for testing and isolation
- Wear your mask (three-ply is recommended) and ensure it is fitted to your face
- Wash or sanitize your hands
- Daily cleaning of high-touch surfaces

Additionally, as we return to in-person learning, we remind students that public health restrictions and guidance are still in place to help manage the risks, including:

- isolation requirements for [domestic travelers](#) and [international travelers](#)
- an informal gathering limit of 10 people from your household or consistent social group
- [proof of full vaccination](#) for discretionary activities
- [testing and isolation requirements](#) for people with symptoms, who are identified as close contacts or who test positive for COVID-19
- [basic precautions](#) to protect yourself and others