

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a citizens' assembly?

An citizens' assembly is a small, representative group brought together to discuss and deliberate on a specific issue. Members are randomly selected in such a way as to ensure that they broadly represent the demographics and other considerations of the community. The random selection process also ensures that those who are interested in participating are selected fairly.

The aim is to gather valuable insights, opinions, and recommendations that can inform decision-making on important issues. Members are provided with background information, expert opinions, accounts from those with lived experiences, and other relevant data to help inform their discussions. They then use this information to develop recommendations, which influence policy and practices, helping to shape solutions to critical challenges.

Why is the university convening the students' assembly on reducing harms from toxic drugs?

British Columbia is in the midst of a toxic drug crisis and Uvic is not immune. We believe that every student has valuable knowledge they can share that can help inform how the university responds to this crisis and works to ensure a safer Uvic community.

Who is convening the students' assembly?

Uvic's Special Advisor on Overdose Response and Prevention is convening the students' assembly to ensure that the university's approach to harm reduction is shaped by student voices, drawing on the unique perspectives, knowledge, and insights that students have in their position within the university community.

What is within the scope of the conversation?

Members will focus on recommending how the university can reduce the potential harms to students related to illegal and unregulated drugs. Substances that are illegal include cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, fentanyl, ecstasy, pills produced illicitly, or prescription drugs sold in the unregulated market. All substances can become toxic and dangerous depending on whether they are combined with other substances and the amount taken.

The focus is on how the university can enhance student safety both on and off campus. While we have more control over measures on campus, supporting off-campus student safety is equally important. This can be achieved through meaningful collaboration with community partners.

Why should I participate?

- **Shape the university's response to reducing harms related to the toxic drug crisis:**
By participating, you will inform the university's approach to the toxic drug crisis, helping to develop recommendations for a safer and more supportive campus community. Your insights will play a crucial role in ensuring the university's approach aligns with the needs and concerns of students.
- **Gain hands-on leadership experience:**
Gain experience in deliberation, consensus-building, policy-building, and more.
- **Make a meaningful impact on health and well-being:**
Contribute to the advancement of the UN's *Sustainable Development Goal No. 3: Good Health and Well-being*. By participating, you will not only contribute to the well-being of your university community, but also tackle some of the most pressing health challenges of our time.
- **Meet and get to work with a diverse group of fellow students:** It often isn't easy to connect with students outside of your class, residence, or program. This is a great opportunity to meet and get to know a wide range of students from many different walks of life.
- **Receive a CIFAL Certificate from the United Nations:**
In recognition of your contributions, you will receive a [CIFAL](#) certificate, awarded by the United Nations. This certificate will be a valuable addition to your academic and professional portfolio, highlighting your commitment to global health issues.

What will be done with the student assembly's recommendations?

Members will be tasked with developing recommendations on how UVic can enhance its harm reduction strategies, focusing on both prevention and response. The recommendations will be formally submitted to UVic's Campus Overdose Prevention and Response Committee, chaired by UVic's Special Advisor on Overdose Response and Prevention. The Committee will use the recommendations to inform the university's response to the toxic drug crisis.

Who is eligible to participate?

In order to be eligible to participate, you must be enrolled in at least one UVic course in the Winter term. Every student's experience and voice matters. We encourage all interested students to apply, those that have direct lived experience with toxic drugs and those who don't. We will strive to make the space as welcoming as possible to everyone selected.

Why are you asking me questions about myself?

The registration form collects information about your background, including demographics and personal characteristics. We use this data in our Civic Lottery selection process. The Civic Lottery is a process that randomly selects people while still balancing demographic and other considerations, ensuring the final members of the assembly broadly represent the overall student population.

When will the students' assembly take place?

- **2-Hour Orientation:** Thursday, March 27 (Evening)
- **Full-day Sessions:** Saturday, March 29 & Sunday, March 30 (8 hours)
- **Location:** In-person at UVic (Attendance at all sessions is required)

What will be my role?

Over three sessions, members will learn from presenters, actively participate in the small-group discussions, and work with other members to develop recommendations that will inform UVic's whole-of-campus approach to addressing the toxic drug crisis. You will need to attend all three sessions. Your role is not to represent your specific experience, but to represent the wider student body. Other members of the assembly may have differing views or experiences than yourself — you will have the opportunity to learn, listen, and work with each other to find common ground when making representations.

What will happen during the three sessions?

The first day will be an orientation. This session will provide members with a high-level overview of the students' assembly, context for the conversation and an opportunity to ask questions. During day two, members will hear from experts about the current toxic drug crisis, harm prevention and response strategies and the university's current efforts. On day three, members will work together to create recommendations that will be formally submitted to UVic's Overdose Response and Prevention Committee. The recommendations will be used in shaping the university's approach to harm reduction and overdose prevention.

What is the time commitment?

- **2-Hour Orientation:** Thursday, March 27 (Evening)
- **Full-day Sessions:** Saturday, March 29 & Sunday, March 30 (8 hours each day)
- **Location:** In-person at UVic (Attendance at all sessions is required)

Students will also receive a package of resources to review prior to the start to get familiar with the topic.

I am unsure whether I can attend all three sessions. Can I still volunteer?

It is crucial that all 36 members attend all sessions. Please only volunteer if you are available for all of the sessions.

Will I be compensated for my participation?

While financial compensation is not provided, members will gain valuable experience, the opportunity to influence key decisions, and the chance to share their perspectives on this critical issue. Your input will directly impact the university's approach to harm reduction and overdose prevention, and you'll be part of a collaborative process that can create real change on campus. Meals will be provided.

Where will the sessions be held?

All sessions will be held in-person on campus.

I require an accommodation. Can you assist me in participating?

If you would like to volunteer but are concerned about a potential barrier to participating, please contact us at engagewithus@uvic.ca or 250-472-5048 (during office hours). We are committed to assisting everyone so they can participate, and if you are selected, we will work with you to accommodate your needs.

How can I register?

We sent a unique email invitation to every student who is enrolled in at least one UVic course in the Winter session. If you would like to participate, just complete the short registration form that was linked in that email form by **Sunday, February 16, 2025, 10 p.m. PST**.

How will my privacy be protected?

The University of Victoria is collecting information through this form to select a representative group of students to help inform the University's approach to harm prevention and response.

The information you provide will be used to select members, to contact selected members, and will be de-identified to develop aggregate statistics about participation for planning and evaluation purposes. Your personal information will not be used for any other purposes.

The collection of this information is authorized under sections 26(c) and 26(e) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

If you have any concerns or questions about your personal information, please reach out to the Privacy and Access to Information Office at privacyinfo@uvic.ca.

This survey is hosted through Survey Monkey. For more information about their privacy practices, please visit their [Privacy Notice](#).

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

Please contact us at engagewithus@uvic.ca or 250-472-5048 (during office hours) if you have any further questions.