

# COVID-19 HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

The university's response to COVID-19 continues to evolve in accordance with public health guidance and orders. The university has fully implemented the core COVID-19 prevention measures recommended or required by public health for post-secondary institutions in BC. A summary of these measures can be found on the [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BC CDC\)](#) website and the [Return to Campus Public Health Guidance](#) published by the BC CDC and Ministry of Health in October.

With these measures in place, the BC CDC continues to advise that post-secondary educational settings are low-risk settings for COVID-19 transmission, particularly in the context of a highly immunized population. Our own experience this semester is a good illustration of these expectations. While there have been about three isolated cases of COVID-19 in the UVic community of **27,900** people each week, there has not been a single case of COVID-19 transmission anywhere on campus, including in student housing. To be clear, to date and throughout the 22 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been no instances of transmission of the virus in a campus learning environment. COVID-19 case rate and vaccination information by local health authority and by community is available on the [BCCDC COVID-19 surveillance dashboard](#).

## CURRENT HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

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The Provincial Health Officer has extended the mask mandate in indoor public spaces to continue to slow the transmission of COVID-19. The Face Coverings (COVID-19) Order applies to students, faculty, staff and visitors in post-secondary common spaces including lobbies, hallways, public bathrooms, classrooms, labs, and to those present at inside events. The Order does not have an expiration date. The province has also announced a booster dose program to provide an additional shot of vaccine that helps maintain and lengthen protection against COVID-19.

These core public health measures include mandatory proof of vaccination in many on-campus settings, including:

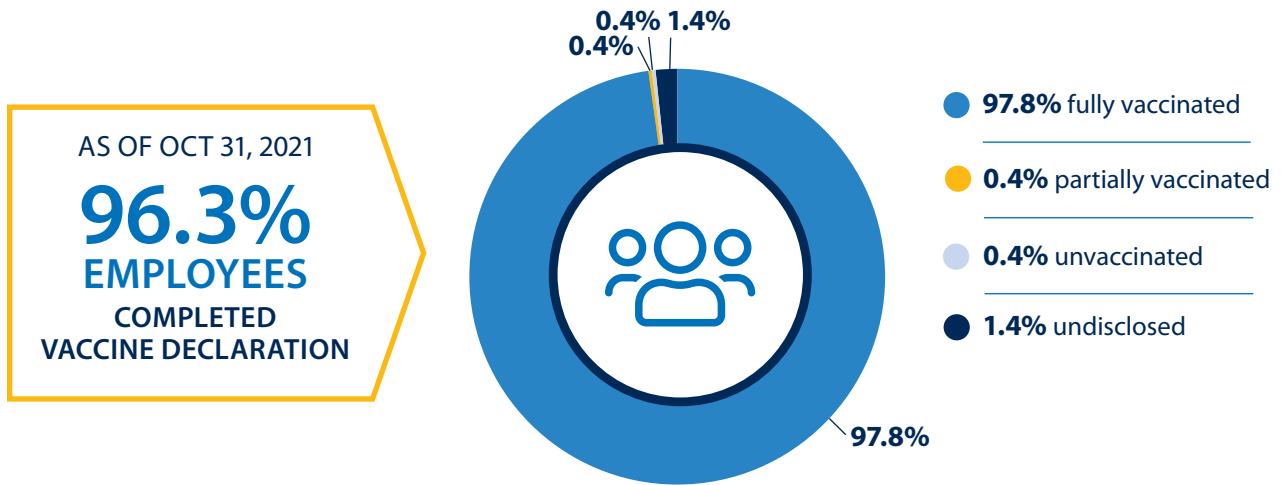
- ▶ Campus pubs/restaurants
- ▶ CARSA/Vikes athletics and recreation
- ▶ Cinecenta movie theatre
- ▶ Indoor organized events with 50+ people (including Convocation ceremonies)
- ▶ Indoor concerts
- ▶ Indoor sports events
- ▶ Student housing
- ▶ Academic programming and experiential learning in settings where mandatory vaccination is required (e.g. health care settings)

## VACCINATION SELF-DECLARATION PROGRAM UPDATE

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UVic requires all students and employees to declare their COVID-19 vaccination status. Those who have not yet been vaccinated against COVID-19 or who choose not to disclose their vaccine status are required to participate in ongoing COVID-19 rapid testing if they plan to come to campus, or attend an off-campus facility or activity controlled or organized by UVic.

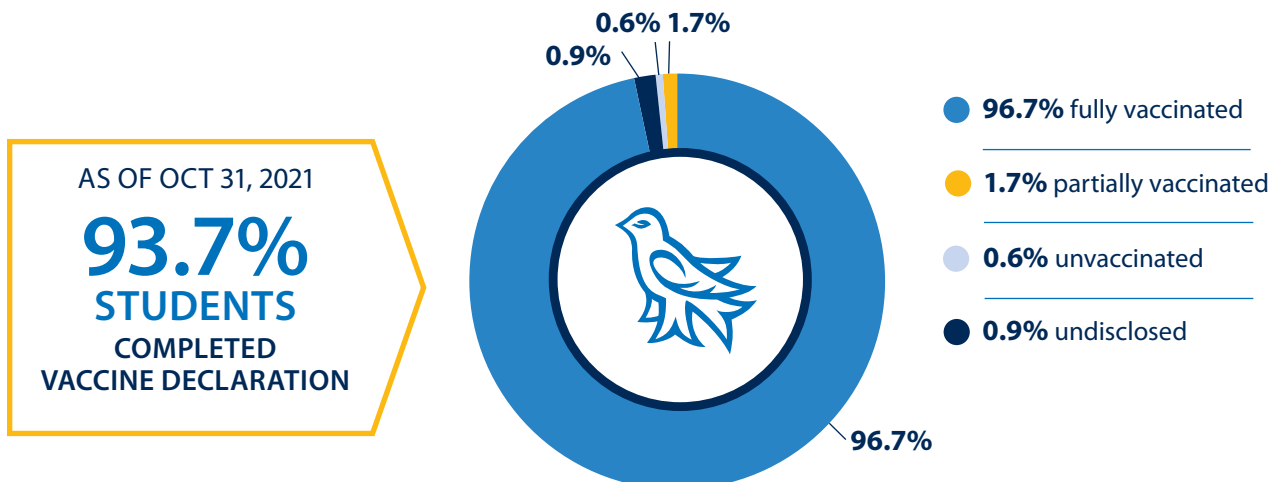
FIGURE 1



97.8% of UVic employees say they are fully vaccinated. See Figure 1 above.

All employees who are not fully vaccinated and any employees who have not submitted their declaration status have been referred to the rapid testing program. During the follow-up stage we are learning that many of these employees are not on campus this fall (working remotely or on leave) or have ceased working at the university.

FIGURE 2



96.7% of students declared they were fully vaccinated, as of Oct. 31. See Figure 2 above.

All students who are not fully vaccinated have been referred to the rapid testing program. The Office of Student Life is following up with students who have not submitted their declaration status.

## AUDIT OF PROOF OF VACCINATION STATUS

The university is undertaking periodic audits of the vaccination declaration data. This work is led by the Internal Audit team, while sampling is being informed by the Institutional Planning and Analysis team. A statistically significant sample of individuals who have indicated they are vaccinated were asked to upload proof of vaccination to Thrive. The samples are drawn from the population to achieve a  $\pm 5\%$  margin of error within a **95%** confidence interval. As of Nov. 2, **92.3%** of audited students and employees had uploaded proof of vaccination. The Office of Student Life is following up with the remaining students (**29**) to complete the upload process. All employees have complied with the audit request. A second audit will be undertaken later in November.

In student housing, **99.2%** of students have provided confirmed proof of vaccination in accordance with the PHO Order. Students who have not provided proof of vaccination are required by the Order to wear a mask when in any area of student housing other than their rooms.

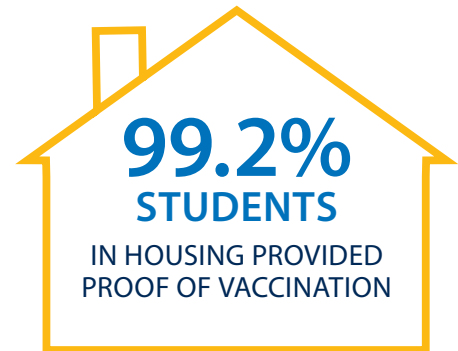


**92.3%**

OF AUDITED STUDENTS AND  
EMPLOYEES HAVE UPLOADED  
PROOF OF VACCINATION

**100%**  
UPLOADED  
RECORDS VERIFIED

**29**  
REMAIN TO COMPLETE  
UPLOAD PROCESS



**99.2%**  
**STUDENTS**  
IN HOUSING PROVIDED  
PROOF OF VACCINATION

## RAPID TESTING

The rapid testing clinic is testing approximately **300** people each week. There has been only one asymptomatic test positive result out of all of the tests performed. Based on a review of literature and local modelling, the BC CDC has concluded that the benefit of routine asymptomatic screening of unimmunized students and staff is limited when immunization coverage is **80%** and “vanishingly small” at **90%** or above. We will continue to work with public health officials to evaluate the efficacy of the rapid testing program in light of our vaccination levels, test positivity rates and other key public health indicators.



= **1** ASYMPTOMATIC TEST  
POSITIVE RESULT OUT OF  
ALL TESTS PERFORMED

## COMPLIANCE MEASURES

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Students and employees who do not comply with the vaccination, testing or audit requirements without a valid exemption may be subject to discipline under appropriate university policies. For students, this falls under the Resolution of Non-Academic Misconduct Allegations Policy while faculty and staff discipline would be in accordance with the applicable collective agreement or terms and conditions of employment. Consequences for not following university policies may include discipline, loss of access to UVic services or premises, or loss of other privileges.

## PUBLIC SECTOR CONTEXT

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Finally, we are aware that a number of public sector employers, including healthcare organizations and some school districts, are introducing mandatory vaccination policies for their employees. In healthcare, the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) has introduced a Public Health Order as an additional measure to reduce the likelihood of exposing hospitalized patients or the frail elderly to COVID-19. In the public school system, these policies are being introduced in some, but not all, school districts to reduce the likelihood of exposing students, most of whom are ineligible to be vaccinated.

Vaccine public health orders are in place for all students living on campus and for anyone accessing a wide range of non-essential services on campus. At this time, the PHO does not believe it is necessary for all universities to introduce a mandatory vaccination policy for either students or employees. With over **98%** of UVic students and employees declaring that they are vaccinated, including **99.2%** of students living on campus, and with all of the core health and safety prevention measures required by the PHO in place, the BC CDC advises that the risk of transmission to anyone in our post-secondary setting is very low. We are not aware of any BC universities that are contemplating a mandatory vaccination mandate for their employees at this time. We will continue to monitor these developments and consult with our ministry and provincial public health officials on this topic.

## THANK YOU!

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Thank you for all that you are doing to make this fall semester safe and successful. We will continue to evolve our health and safety measures in accordance with public health advice, as we have through every stage of the pandemic. We will produce an update similar to this in early December that reflects our November vaccination data and outcomes.

As a reminder, we ask anyone who is feeling sick to not come to campus or attend class and to do the [self-assessment](#) or call **811** and, as directed, book an appointment for a COVID-19 test visit: [islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/covid-19/symptoms-and-testing](https://islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/covid-19/symptoms-and-testing). Students living on campus who are feeling ill are asked to follow the [COVID-19 Guidelines for Students Living in Residence](#) and, if facing barriers to accessing community-based testing centres, contact Residence Services at [rescovidsupport@uvic.ca](mailto:rescovidsupport@uvic.ca) for assistance.

For more information about UVic's health and safety protocols, visit the Health and Safety section of the [Fall 2021 website](#).