Instructions for Unit Heads and Supervisors in Administrative, Support, Academic and Ancillary Units: Returning to Campus

On the advice of the Provincial Health Officer, UVic is planning for a full return to in-person activities on campus, including in-person instruction, in September. By following the guidance of the Provincial Health Officer, the COVID-19 Return-To-Campus-Primer and the updated Go-Forward Guidelines for B.C.’s Post-Secondary Sector, we can safely and supportively accomplish a full resumption of in-person academic, ancillary, administrative, research and student support services in two steps. The following considerations will aid leaders in managing the transition. Decisions should be made in consultation with your dean, director and executive director/supervisor.

1. Develop a plan to gradually and steadily return employees to campus through two Steps.
   • Step 1: Planning Step. May 1, 2021 – June 30, 2021. In preparation for the fall semester, all academic, ancillary, administrative, research and student support services units will develop plans to gradually increase in-person services and activities during Step 2, while continuing to offer or support the predominantly online summer programming context for students.
   • Step 2: Implementation Step: July 1, 2021 – August 31, 2021. While continuing to offer or support the predominantly online summer programming context for students, all academic, ancillary, administrative, research and student support services units will implement their plans to gradually increase in-person services and activities. In order to facilitate an orderly and manageable return to campus, including for the services that support employee moves (University Systems, FMGT, OHSE etc.), units will be asked to phase employees back over this timeframe, while meeting your on-campus operations, service and instructional requirements.

2. Continue to update your Safe Work Plan.
   • Given the vaccine timetable, public health orders and restrictions are expected to gradually relax over the coming months such that universities can plan to safely overcome the indoor physical distancing public health requirements, which were necessary for the pre-immunization period of the pandemic, with other proven infection prevention and control measures this fall.
   • Please follow OHSE’s lead to ensure that your Safe Work Plan is up to date with the most current health and safety measures. Where possible, Safe Work Plan processes will be streamlined for the Fall term, and any new instructions will be posted on the OHSE website and communicated to units and researchers. At this time, all current safety plan processes and protocols remain in effect.
   • If your unit has not yet established a Safe Work Plan, please be aware that before resuming activities on-campus, WorkSafeBC requires that each unit must have an approved Safe Work Plan in place. The Safe Work Plan outlines the policies, guidelines, and procedures units have put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, and which follows the six-steps outlined by WorkSafeBC and informed by the Primer and the fall update to COVID-19 Go-Forward Guidelines for B.C.’s Post-Secondary Sector.
   • A website to support the Safe Work Planning process has been developed for your reference. Further, an OHSE Consultant has been assigned to every unit on campus. Your OHSE Consultant is available as your resource to help guide the development or updating of your Safe Work Plan through the applicable approval process. If you are unsure who your OHSE Consultant is, please contact Jaclyn Davidson, Associate Director OHSE, at jaclynd@uvic.ca
   • Leaders are responsible for developing or updating plans in consultation with employees and local safety committees. Your OHSE Consultant will assist with this part of the process.
• Note that safety plans must be posted at the worksite in accordance with our Safe Work Plan instructions and WorkSafeBC. Please share safety plans directly with employees so that they understand the protocols and to build a sense of confidence that their workplace is safe.

• A centrally supported, campus-wide approach to ensure that standardized university signage and safety protocols are in place for all campus building common areas, such as elevators, washrooms and lounges.

3. In Step 1, consider the on-site work/job requirements vis a vis the level of service that is required as the on-campus community grows.

• Which positions/roles should return first?
• Who has the skills/abilities needed to perform the responsibilities?
• Some people are looking forward to returning to work on-campus. Start with these people if there are similar roles and not everyone in the role needs to work on-site initially.
• Can some job requirements be performed remotely, at least on a part-time basis, during Step 2? Consider introducing a hybrid model and develop an on-campus schedule during the transition.
• Staff requests to work remotely beyond September 1 can be considered through the Remote Work Arrangements process that will be posted on the Human Resources website later in May. In advance of those tools and resources, this is a good time to engage in a conversation with your leadership team about remote working in your area. Please consider inviting an HR Consultant to a leadership meeting to review the preliminary principles for on-going remote work arrangements.

4. Be sensitive to the unique circumstances of individuals and develop plans that are equitable and inclusive.

• Ensure you are connecting with your faculty and staff regularly and have a sense of their individual circumstances, including those who are concerned about personal COVID-19 related health risks when teaching or working on campus.
• Review the safety measures in place in the unit and on campus.
• Consider organizing small group or virtual tours.
• Ensure faculty and staff know that you will do your best to factor in personal circumstances, provided that appropriate levels of service can be maintained to meet operating needs and there is an equitable distribution of work.
• Offer options, for example a temporary reduction in work hours/FTE, use of vacation and other accumulated leave banks, etc., or even a personal leave of absence without pay, where personal circumstances mean that it is not possible for an individual to fully participate in an equitable allocation of work. For faculty, consider the options in the Workload Support Toolkit (distributed June 12, 2020). Contact your HR or FR Consultant for assistance.
• Faculty and staff have the right to refuse unsafe work. If after all reasonable measures have been taken to understand and address an individual’s concerns, but the individual continues to refuse to return to work based on a belief that it is unsafe to do so, please reach out to your HR Consultant or Faculty Relations Consultant for support. https://www.worksafebc.com/en/health-safety/create-manage/rights-responsibilities/refusing-unsafe-work)
5. **Recognize if a temporary formal workplace accommodation**\(^1\) **is required.**
   - Faculty and staff with underlying health conditions who are at a higher risk for serious illness due to COVID-19 should be treated as you would any employee with a medical condition that who requests an accommodation under the Human Rights Code.
   - Similarly, some faculty and staff may be concerned about the impact of their return to campus on someone in their household who has a chronic health condition and request an accommodation based on family status.
   - Each request for an accommodation must be determined based on the individual circumstances and in accordance with our collective agreement and legal obligations.
   - Employees are required to provide relevant and appropriate information to support a request for accommodation. If there is an operational requirement for the employee to be in the workplace, employees should be informed of new or updated workplace safety procedures, and how they are designed to protect staff and faculty from COVID-19, before the return to the workplace. This allows employees with chronic conditions to consult with their doctor to evaluate the level of risk for their condition, and their confidence in protecting themselves in the workplace.
   - In some cases, it may be necessary, in consultation with a Worklife Consultant, to introduce a temporary alternative work arrangement or modifications to the workplace based on our relevant policy and collective agreement provisions regarding medical accommodation.
   - Some faculty and staff have health concerns (physical or mental) that they may or may not feel comfortable discussing with their supervisor. You, or your faculty or staff member, should contact your [Worklife Consultant](mailto:worklifeconsultant) directly for further guidance.

6. **Build in training requirements and ensure on-going communication.**
   - Ensure all faculty and staff who are working on-campus or planning to return soon have completed the current version of the online COVID-19 Awareness and Safe Return to Work [training module](#) as well any unit specific safety training. This workshop will be updated in the summer to incorporate the new Go-Forward Guidelines and will be available for faculty and staff to complete who are returning at that time. Those who have already completed the training previously will be provided with a refresher document to ensure that everyone is aware of the latest COVID-19 safety protocols at UVic.
   - Ensure faculty and staff do not attend campus sick. Communicate the need for [daily health screening](#).
   - Ensure regular and open communication with all faculty and staff, recognizing that the situation will evolve over time.

7. **Support individual and unit success during the transition back to campus.**
   - Establish working norms (hours, modes of communication, etc) so it is clear when people are available. For faculty this might include expected office hours or attendance at department meetings.
   - Identify methods for regularly communicating work progress. Celebrate successes.
   - Recognize that individual personal resilience might be low. Take time to maintain a positive work environment and support individual and team resilience.

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\(^1\) Guidance is also forthcoming in May from Faculty Relations and Human Resources to assist leaders in supporting those who are uncomfortable returning to campus based on a personal or family medical concern. In the meantime, you can continue to use the existing processes for addressing medical or family status accommodation.
• Be patient; if someone is struggling to work on campus or remotely, check in with them to see what they need. See notes 4 and 5.
• Familiarize yourself with resources available to support the mental health and wellbeing of faculty and staff.

8. Model the way
• Stay home when feeling sick.
• Take breaks. Take your vacation. Encourage your staff to take their vacation.
• Stay informed and keep your unit informed about the university’s changing circumstances; participate in university-sponsored training and discussions about its COVID-19 response.
• Include faculty and staff in developing and adjusting Safe Work Plans.
• Use and promote the use of technology to collaborate, conduct meetings, interview, etc. at least until Step 2 is complete.
• Periodically review your plans to increase on-campus activity and your plans to revert to remote working if directed by PHO.

9. Reach out for support if you need it.
For HR-related assistance or questions, supervisors are welcome to work with the applicable consultant assigned to your unit:

• Staff: Please contact your Human Resources Consultant
• Faculty or Librarians: Please contact your Faculty Relations Consultant
• Grant-funded Research Assistants or Post-Doctoral Fellows: Please contact Research Services

For Occupational Health and Safety assistance or questions, please reach out to your assigned OHSE Consultant.