



**University
of Victoria**

**University
Secretary**

SENATE
Notice of
Meeting and Agenda

A special meeting of the Senate of the University of Victoria is scheduled for Thursday, March 24, 2022 at 4:30 p.m. in the Senate and Board Chambers, Jamie Cassels Centre.

AGENDA as reviewed by the Senate Committee on Agenda and Governance.

1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

ACTION

2. OTHER BUSINESS

- a. UVic's Mask Mandate (**SEN-MAR 24/22-1**)

ACTION

Motion: That Senate recommend to the President and the Board of Governors that the mask mandate at UVic that was dropped on March 11, 2022 be reinstated immediately and kept in place through the April exam period.

3. ADJOURNMENT



Date: March 21, 2022

To: Senate

From: Senate Committee on Agenda and Governance

Re: **Proposal Regarding UVic's Mask Mandate**

A request was submitted to the University Secretary's office, signed by nine Senators, for a special meeting of Senate to discuss a recommendation to the Board of Governors to continue a mask mandate until the end of the second term of the 2021/2022 Winter Session and corresponding final exam period. The request for a Special Meeting of Senate was submitted as outlined in the [Senate Rules and Procedures](#).

Special Meetings

- 15.00 Between June and September the Chair may call a special meeting if there is business that cannot be postponed until the next regular meeting. At any other time, a special meeting may be held at the discretion of the Chair, or at the request of at least eight members of Senate.
- 16.00 The notice for a special meeting will clearly specify the purpose of the meeting and will be circulated to Senate at least three days before the meeting.
- 17.00 At a special meeting, only the matter or matters specified in the notice may be considered.

This request was brought to the Senate Committee on Agenda and Governance whose [terms of reference](#) state that the committee will "ensure that the items included in the Senate agenda fall within the powers of Senate in accordance with the University Act and clearly state their purpose and intent."

In consultation with the university's General Counsel, and after consideration of the issue presented and the request it be considered in a timely way, the Senate Committee on Agenda and Governance agreed to move forward with a special meeting of Senate.

The request for a special meeting relies on Senate's specific jurisdiction in the *BC University Act* section 37(1)(o), which allows for the Senate to make recommendations to the Board of Governors "[considered advisable for promoting the interest of the university or for carrying out the objects and provisions of this Act](#)." The motion presented in the request before Senate asks that the mask mandate that was dropped on March 11, 2022 be reinstated immediately and kept in place through the April exam period. It does not indicate applicable academic locations or occasions.

This Senate meeting has been called to discuss the attached proposed motion. As per section 37(1)(o) of the University Act, Senate members are asked to consider whether a recommendation to the Board in this regard is advisable for promoting the interests of the university or carrying out the objects and provisions of the Act.

For additional information, a memo has also been provided by the Acting Vice-President Academic and Provost from Rob Johns, Manager Emergency Planning and COVID-19 Response Lead, outlining the reasons for the March 11, 2022 mask use decisions for the university campus. Please also refer to the university's communication of this decision distributed on March 11, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

2021/2022 Senate Committee on Agenda and Governance

Kevin Hall, Chair, President and Vice-Chancellor

Helga Hallgrímsdóttir, Vice-Chair, Dean, Faculty of Human and Social Development

Carrie Andersen, University Secretary

Aaron Devor, Faculty of Social Sciences

Mauricio Garcia-Barrera, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Mark Gillen, Faculty of Law

Helen Kurki, Faculty of Social Sciences

Susan Lewis, Acting Vice-President Academic and Provost

Kyle Risby, Student Senator

Carolyn Russell, Convocation Senator

Lara Wilson, Libraries

Ada Saab (Secretary), Associate University Secretary

Kathy MacDonald, (Recording Secretary), Senator Coordinator

16 March 2022

TO: Kevin Hall, President & Vice-Chancellor, and
Chair of Senate
Carrie Andersen, University Secretary

We, the undersigned members of the University of Victoria Senate, are writing to request a special meeting of Senate. We understand that section 15.00 of UVic Senate rules and procedures states that a special meeting “may be held at the discretion of the Chair, or at the request of at least eight members of Senate.”

Proposed purpose of the special meeting: To discuss and vote on the following motion:

THAT Senate recommend to the President and the Board of Governors that the mask mandate at UVic that was dropped on March 11, 2022 be reinstated immediately and kept in place through the April exam period.

Rationale for the motion: UVic is dedicated to principles of equity and inclusion. Dropping the mask mandate in mid-March fundamentally alters the learning and working environment overnight for immunocompromised students, staff, faculty and librarians, leaving them no time to seek accommodations or make alternative educational plans. It increases the risk for such community members to be on campus, without providing time for them to arrange viable alternatives. It also increases the chance of significant absences of faculty, staff and students leading up to and during the exam period, with the attendant disruptions to teaching and exams.

Jurisdiction of Senate:

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infectious as Omicron, so there is no way of knowing what the impact of removing masks will be. Given that uncertainty, it is in the interests of the university to delay that action until the end of the exam period.

Urgency: We request a special meeting to consider this motion because the University community is affected immediately by the sudden change in the mask mandate, and some members of that community immediately face higher risk without time to seek accommodations or make alternative educational plans. For such community members, every day without those protections makes a difference to their safety. Waiting until the next regularly scheduled Senate meeting on April 1 to discuss this motion contributes to their risk.

Accordingly, we request that a special meeting be scheduled as soon as possible to discuss and vote on the above motion.

Sincerely,

Erin J. Campbell

16 March 2022

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Chair of Senate
Carrie Andersen, University Secretary

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Accordingly, we request that a special meeting be scheduled as soon as possible to discuss and vote on the above motion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Foster". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D'.

David Foster, Student Senator (Graduate Studies)

16 March 2022

TO: Kevin Hall, President & Vice-Chancellor, and
Chair of Senate
Carrie Andersen, University Secretary

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Accordingly, we request that a special meeting be scheduled as soon as possible to discuss and vote on the above motion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Matthew Koch", written in a cursive style.

Matthew Koch

March 16, 2022

16 March 2022

TO: Kevin Hall, President & Vice-Chancellor, and
Chair of Senate
Carrie Andersen, University Secretary

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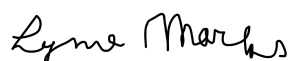
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynne Marks".

Lynne Marks, Professor, Department of History

16 March 2022

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Chair of Senate
Carrie Andersen, University Secretary

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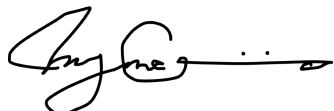
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martha McGinnis', followed by a long horizontal line.

Martha McGinnis,
Department of Linguistics

16 March 2022

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Chair of Senate
Carrie Andersen, University Secretary

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Phalguni Mukhopadhyaya

16 March 2022

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Carrie Andersen, University Secretary

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Cindy Ann Rose-Redwood". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

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Rebecca Warburton

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We, the undersigned members of the University of Victoria Senate, are writing to request a special meeting of Senate. We understand that section 15.00 of UVic Senate rules and procedures states that a special meeting “may be held at the discretion of the Chair, or at the request of at least eight members of Senate.”

Proposed purpose of the special meeting: To discuss and vote on the following motion:

THAT Senate recommend to the President and the Board of Governors that the mask mandate at UVic that was dropped on March 11, 2022 be reinstated immediately and kept in place through the April exam period.

Rationale for the motion: UVic is dedicated to principles of equity and inclusion. Dropping the mask mandate in mid-March fundamentally alters the learning and working environment overnight for immunocompromised students, staff, faculty and librarians, leaving them no time to seek accommodations or make alternative educational plans. It increases the risk for such community members to be on campus, without providing time for them to arrange viable alternatives. It also increases the chance of significant absences of faculty, staff and students leading up to and during the exam period, with the attendant disruptions to teaching and exams.

Jurisdiction of Senate:

Section 2.00 of the University of Victoria Senate Rules and Procedures states, “The *University Act* sets out the powers of Senate.” Section 37.1(o) of the *University Act* empowers the Senate “to make recommendations to the board considered advisable for promoting the interests of the university or for carrying out the objects and provisions of this Act.” The interests of the university and all its community members are best served when the university’s actions support its stated commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. Removing protections abruptly in the ninth week of an academic term *without time for people to change their educational plans or obtain accommodations* runs counter to the university’s stated values of equity, diversity and inclusion. It affects the safety of immunocompromised people, those with some types of disability, those with the many pre-existing conditions that raise susceptibility to bad outcomes from COVID-19, and those with vulnerable family members, including children too young to be vaccinated. As the Public Health Orders permit businesses to make their own decisions about mask mandates, there is no clear reason why it was necessary for UVic to remove protections before the end of the academic term. Changing the status quo mid-term without evident necessity undermines trust in the sincerity of UVic’s commitment to EDI, to the detriment of the university.

Further, it is in the interests of the university to avoid disruptions to the end of term and the exam period that would be caused by a significant increase in illness. Public Health orders are designed to prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed. This is different from the university’s interest, which is to avoid illnesses that would interfere with the end of term regardless of whether they result in hospitalization. The university has not tried functioning without masks in the context of a variant as

infectious as Omicron, so there is no way of knowing what the impact of removing masks will be. Given that uncertainty, it is in the interests of the university to delay that action until the end of the exam period.

Urgency: We request a special meeting to consider this motion because the University community is affected immediately by the sudden change in the mask mandate, and some members of that community immediately face higher risk without time to seek accommodations or make alternative educational plans. For such community members, every day without those protections makes a difference to their safety. Waiting until the next regularly scheduled Senate meeting on April 1 to discuss this motion contributes to their risk.

Accordingly, we request that a special meeting be scheduled as soon as possible to discuss and vote on the above motion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victoria Wyatt". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Victoria Wyatt
Senator representing faculty, at-large
Associate Professor, Department of Art History & Visual Studies



memo

To: Members of Senate
From: Rob Johns, Manager, Emergency Planning and COVID-19 response lead
CC: Carrie Andersen, University Secretary
Date: March 18, 2022
Re: COVID-19: Changes to mask requirements March 2022

After several weeks of signaling that changes to provincial health orders would occur, on March 10th the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) indicated that effective later that evening masks would no longer be mandatory in most indoor public spaces across the province.

On that date the President and members of the UVic executive team met to review this change and determine the course of action for the university. A number of options were explored and the decision was made to follow the PHO's guidance. Given the short notice from the PHO the university felt it was important to convey a decision as soon as possible. Effective March 11th mask use for most areas on campus shifted from "required" to "strongly encouraged" when in close proximity to others in indoor public spaces. Health care locations on campus (e.g. Student Wellness Centre) continue to require masks under a separate health order. The decision regarding masks was communicated on the evening of March 10th via a broadcast email, notice at uvic.ca and social media posts.

Throughout the response to the COVID-19 pandemic the university has strived to adhere to the evidence based advice, guidance and direction provided by the Provincial Health Officer and has adhered to all public health orders and health and safety measures required by the Provincial Health Officer.

The university recognizes that this transition may have felt sudden to some people on campus. The change announced by the PHO left very little time for organizations to communicate and implement the change. Recognizing that the university community needed certainty for the following day, the decision was made as quickly as possible.

In her address on March 10th, the PHO stated "I want to assure you I feel confident about what we are doing and that we are in a place to do this now. These decisions are grounded in science and in the data we have about what's happening in our communities for where we are right now." The PHO indicated that the decision to change the mask mandate was made in the context of declining illness rates and hospitalizations due to COVID-19. Further, the very high rates of vaccination in most areas of the province have provided strong protection, particularly against severe illness and hospitalization. Vaccination remains the primary layer of protection.



The PHO has on several occasions communicated that the Omicron variants have created a shift in disease characteristics and with that have come changes to the response to COVID-19. While COVID-19 is not gone, and indeed will likely be with us for the foreseeable future, the most common variants cause less severe illness in most people. Public health guidance is now shifting to a model where people will personally manage decisions related to COVID-19 prevention and move at their own pace based on their needs and level of comfort.

The university encourages mask use in indoor public settings where people are in proximity to others. Variations of this messaging has been provided to the campus community via broadcast email, website update, social media and digital signage. During the week of March 21st further messaging related to mask use, daily health assessment, and stay at home if ill will be shared with students through a variety of modes. The goal is to encourage people to continue to take responsibility to reduce the risk to others and to themselves.

While mask use is no longer required, people do have a choice of what type and quality of mask to use and where they wish to use them.

It is recognized that a mask requirement on campus is very difficult to enforce without a supporting provincial order. This decision helps to reduce conflict associated with enforcement. As well, the incongruity of what people experience on and off campus if an on-campus mask requirement was in place would likely create potential conflict as it may fall on instructors to enforce a university mandate upon entry to a lecture or lab environment.

Of particular note the approach taken by the university is consistent with what people are experiencing in most settings in society and aligns with most other post secondary institutions and major service providers in the province. Following the announcement from the PHO it was noted that 23 post secondary institutions in BC have shifted their guidance to align with the Provincial Health Officer. Seven of those, including UVic, have messaged their preference that masks are recommended or strongly encouraged. Sixteen post secondary institutions have simply stated that masks are optional. Two post secondary institutions – the University of British Columbia and Kwantlen Polytechnic University – have indicated that masks are required. Major services across BC, including BC Transit, BC Ferries, and Translink no longer require that masks be used, though some recommend their use.

Masks are just one of many potential control measures outlined in the communicable disease plan. Each of these additional core safety measures help to reduce risk. All members of the university community are reminded to do a daily health self-assessment, to stay home if ill, to follow good hand hygiene practices, and to be vaccinated. The university continues to maintain a clean environment through routine cleaning practices, ensure that building heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are operating and maintained in accordance with WorkSafeBC requirements and relevant ASHRAE Standards, and where still required utilize the BC Vaccine Card.

As we navigate these changes it is important to stress the need to be kind and compassionate and continue to be respectful of the personal choices that each individual may make regarding mask use and physical distance.

Rob Johns
Manager, Emergency Planning and COVID response lead



From: [Rob Johns](#)
Subject: COVID-19 update: Changes to campus mask requirements
Date: March 10, 2022 7:41:59 PM

The Provincial Health Officer (PHO) today announced changes to the face covering mandate for BC, effective 12:01 a.m. March 11. View news release: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022HLTH0081-000324>

Beginning tomorrow, masks are no longer required in indoor public spaces across the province.

While mask wearing will be a matter of personal choice, on campus we strongly encourage you to continue wearing a mask in indoor spaces where you may be in close proximity to others, or anywhere you feel more comfortable to do so.

This change may feel sudden and unexpected. Please continue to be kind and compassionate as we navigate this change. As we move into this next phase of the pandemic response it is essential that we all continue to be respectful of the personal choices that each individual may make regarding mask use and physical distance.

In the days to come related signage on campus will be removed or updated.

We continue to adhere to all public health orders and implement all of the health and safety measures required by the Provincial Health Officer (PHO).

Please continue to follow public health guidance, including doing daily health checks and staying home if sick. Vaccination continues to provide the best protection from the more serious effects of COVID-19.

Sincerely, Rob Johns
Manager, Emergency Planning and COVID response lead