

International Post-Secondary Student Institutional Readiness: Public Health Requirements

Original release of the requirements: October 13, 2020 (Update: July 21, 2021)

UPDATE

The Department of Labour and Advanced Education received confirmation from the Government of Canada that fully vaccinated adults, who have received the federal quarantine exemption, may leave their residence while they live in the same accommodation as unvaccinated accompanying family members who are in their 14-day mandatory quarantine. As a result, effective July 21, 2021, and in the specific case of international post-secondary students and their families travelling together, where at least one adult (18 years old or older) within the family is fully vaccinated and has received the federal quarantine exemption for fully vaccinated individuals, DLIs are not responsible to provide oversight or monitoring, nor to arrange or provide quarantine accommodations for the student and/or their family members travelling with them. In these cases, it is expected that the fully vaccinated adult(s) will provide the support necessary for the family to complete their quarantine successfully.

Further, DLIs do not have any oversight responsibility for international post-secondary students who indicate on the Nova Scotia Safe Check-In form that they have received the full series of a federally accepted COVID-19 vaccine or a combination of accepted vaccines at least 14 days prior to the day they enter Canada. A list of federally accepted vaccines may be found here: <https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid/travel-restrictions/covid-vaccinated-travellers-entering-canada#determine-fully>.

INTRODUCTION

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is maintaining a list of designated learning institutions (DLIs) that have been deemed ready to accept new international students by their province or territory (effective October 20, 2020). Canadian Border Service agents will use this list of DLIs as one of several criteria to determine the admissibility of the international student into Canada.

Institutions must meet the Province of Nova Scotia requirements in this document in order to be included on the IRCC list of approved DLIs. These requirements ensure that international students are provided with comprehensive supports before arrival, during their 14-day mandatory quarantine and after they complete their quarantine period.

To maintain its inclusion on the list of DLIs confirmed as ready to safely welcome international students, the institution must ensure continued compliance with the requirements listed in this document.

It is the responsibility of the DLI to decide how to meet the requirements provided in this document. Some variation in campus protocols and rules for international students may exist among DLIs related to campus size, facilities available and the number of international students attending the institution and studying and residing in Nova Scotia. However, in all cases, these requirements, as well as public health guidance and directives, must be followed.

The requirements outline scenarios for students completing their mandatory quarantine period in owned and operated DLI residences as well as for students completing their mandatory quarantine period in DLI accommodations arranged off campus. DLIs wishing to enable international student(s) to quarantine in private accommodations must submit a proposal to the Department of Labour and Advanced Education for approval by the provincial Chief Medical Officer of Health that demonstrates how the quarantine requirements will be met.

DLIs that do not maintain compliance risk removal from the IRCC list of DLIs deemed ready to accept new international students. The Department of Labour and Advanced Education maintains regular contact with DLIs and assists them with questions and concerns, to ensure compliance is maintained.

International students who do not comply with the quarantine requirements as laid out in this document are subject to referral to the Department of Justice by their institutions. Referrals should be sent by email to: DOJCOVID@novascotia.ca and must include the name of the student, date of birth, address, phone number and details of the non-compliance. On referral, the Department of Justice will contact the student to try to resolve the matter with the student directly. In the event the student does not comply, the matter may be referred to the RCMP/municipal police. The Department of Justice remains the liaison with the DLI, student and the RCMP/municipal police.

DLIs are also assisting the Province with student compliance follow-up in regards to the completion of the required daily digital check-ins. On a daily basis, reports are provided to DLIs noting any students who have missed a digital check-in. DLIs are following up with students to ensure their continued compliance.

COMMUNICATIONS

Liaison with Nova Scotia Public Health Officials

Nova Scotia Public Health (NSPH) will be leading any contact tracing efforts if a case is identified. The DLI will assist NSPH with these efforts when requested, including providing information and access to faculty, staff and/or students if need be. The Medical Officer of Health (MOH) liaisons with NSPH for the education sector are Dr. Jenni Cram and Dr. Daniela Kempkens. In the event of any COVID-19 cases, should it be determined, based on NSPH investigation, that there is an exposure related to the DLI, NSPH will work with the DLI on a response and communication plan.

Information provided to international students and their co-arriving immediate family members in advance of travel to Canada.

In general, the DLI must ensure they are using consistently the following language in their communication with international students:

- ‘mandatory quarantine’ (mandated by law under the Federal Quarantine Act for arriving international students);
- ‘quarantine’ or ‘self-isolation’ (implemented when awaiting a COVID-19 test result or for identified contacts of cases); and
- ‘isolation’ (implemented after an individual has received a positive COVID-19 test result).

The DLI must provide the following information to all international students prior to their travel to Canada:

- The requirement of having a 14-day quarantine plan in place prior to arrival. The DLI should provide support in the development of these quarantine plans. (Refer to Mandatory 14-day quarantine by international students and co-arriving immediate family members section below.)

- Information and resources about the public health measures put in place by the DLI and NSPH. This information should make it clear that they need to follow these practices upon their arrival, during, and after their 14-day quarantine.
 - The specific information provided must include:
 - The requirement to complete the Nova Scotia Safe Check-In form prior to arrival in Nova Scotia (<https://travel-declaration.novascotia.ca/en>).
 - The requirement to complete the Nova Scotia daily digital check-in. An email, containing the link to the check-in form, will be emailed to them daily.
 - The need to monitor for symptoms before, during, and after their arrival in Canada. If they are ill, they should stay home/avoid travel.
 - How to stay safe, protect others and help reduce the spread of COVID-19 by:
 - Physical distancing
 - Frequent hand hygiene
 - Practicing respiratory etiquette (e.g. cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Or use the inside of your elbow)
 - Frequent environmental cleaning (e.g. cleaning of high touch surfaces and objects)
 - Wearing non-medical masks (NMM)
 - Avoiding close contact with populations at high-risk for severe COVID-19 disease and outcomes (e.g. older adults, individuals who are immunocompromised and/or with underlying medical conditions).

The DLI must obtain information regarding the international student's confirmed arrival date/time in Nova Scotia. (See transportation section below.)

The DLI should be:

- Working with off-campus landlords and/or the community to ensure their readiness to welcome international students.
- Actively promoting on its campus (including virtually) reliable and accurate messages about COVID-19, including who is at higher risk of severe illness and messaging around stigma.
- Ensuring all messaging and information provided to international students is language and culturally appropriate.

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S ARRIVECAN APPLICATION

The DLI, in its communication to students prior to and after arrival, provides information about, and encourages students to use, the ArriveCAN application. (<https://arrivecan.cbsa-asfc.cloud-nuage.canada.ca/privacy>)

This mobile app may be used to speed up an international student's arrival process in Canada and they will be able to submit their information easily and securely using the app within 48 hours before arriving in Canada. The app helps an international student to provide the Government of Canada with voluntary updates on their quarantine compliance and the development of any symptoms during the 14 days after arriving in Canada.

MANDATORY 14-DAY QUARANTINE BY INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND CO-ARRIVING IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBERS

International students (and co-arriving immediate family members) are responsible for on-going self-monitoring and assessment of COVID-19 symptoms and for ensuring their compliance with the Quarantine Act. One of those requirements is the mandatory 14-day quarantine upon arrival in Canada.

In general, a suitable place to isolate or quarantine means a place where they:

- Will have access to basic necessities, including water, food, medication and heat during the winter months;

- Are not in a group or community living arrangement (on-campus residence arrangements with limited shared bathroom facilities are acceptable); and
- Will not have contact with people who:
 - are 65 years or older
 - have underlying medical conditions
 - have compromised immune systems.

To ensure compliance with the mandatory 14-day quarantine, the DLI must arrange or provide quarantine accommodations in Nova Scotia for all international students (and co-arriving immediate family members) regardless of where the student will be living (i.e. on or off campus) after they complete their quarantine period.

The quarantine location may be in an on-campus residence or arranged in off-campus accommodations such as a hotel. The DLIs have oversight responsibility and must ensure the international student (and co-arriving immediate family members) is monitored and has the necessary supports, to complete their 14-day quarantine successfully.

For students completing their quarantine period in an owned and operated DLI residence, the DLI:

- Assigns only one student per room.
- Has established an arrival and move-in schedule and protocols where move-in times are staggered and/or assigned to mitigate risk of transmission within large crowds potentially arriving at the same time. Measures such as physical distancing and the wearing of NMM are enforced during this process.
- Ensures the HVAC system is adjusted to increase airflow and/or encourages students to open windows in their accommodations.
- Ensures regular and robust institutional monitoring of quarantined individuals throughout the 14-day quarantine period for COVID-19 symptoms, general well-being, compliance with quarantine requirements, with an emphasis on individual COVID-19 infection control practices.
- Offers one or both options for dining services:

Option A:

Meals will be delivered by staff to the residents, leaving them outside the room door. The tray/container and utensils will be disposable, and each delivered meal will include a bag for all items to be placed in by the resident for disposal once the meal is consumed. The bag will be placed outside the room for pickup and disposal by DLI staff. From a risk mitigation perspective, Option A would provide less opportunity for potential COVID-19 transmission.

Option B:

Where meals are served at the DLI's Dining Hall, signage/floor markings are used to ensure unidirectional flow of foot traffic so physical distancing can be maintained as diners enter/exit the dining hall. Hand hygiene materials such as 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer, or soap and water, are readily available for students to use at each entrance and exit of the dining hall.

The DLI may consider creating residence "bubble units" consisting of a group of the same students who will attend as a group for dining. Each bubble will have designated times to attend, and appropriate social distancing and cleaning protocols will be used. Plated meals, wrapped utensils, labelled routes, and frequent cleaning will be active components of the strategies. This option also serves as a deliberate mental wellness strategy by creating a managed opportunity for access to fresh air and a physical exercise (walking) period.

- Will provide DLI staff who are working where international students are undergoing quarantine with information about, and encouraged to use, the provincial Self-Assessment Test and COVID-19 Self Assessment Questionnaire <https://covid-self-assessment.novascotia.ca/>.
- Provides custodial services as follows:
 - Students under mandatory quarantine are responsible for their own linen changes and environmental cleaning to mitigate risks of transmission. Custodial staff should do a no-contact drop-off of new linens to the students' room and a plastic bag for students to place their old linens in.

- When performing duties where they could come into contact with potentially infectious materials (e.g., linens, garbage, food trays), custodial staff should be wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g., mask, eye protection or facemask, gown). Custodial staff must perform hand hygiene immediately after handling materials originating from the international student in quarantine.
- Permits the use of designated outdoor spaces for mental health breaks during the international student's mandatory quarantine period only under the following conditions:
 - Students must complete self-screening forms such as the Self-Assessment Test and COVID-19 Self Assessment Questionnaire prior to using outdoor spaces <https://covid-self-assessment.novascotia.ca/> (security may also perform screening of students prior to leaving their accommodations).
 - Students who are experiencing any of the symptoms of COVID-19 may not participate in outdoor time for any reason.
 - Students must be following quarantine requirements to remain in their room in order to qualify for outdoor time.
 - Outdoor time must be scheduled, approved and supervised.
 - Students must wear a NMM at all times while travelling (both indoors and outdoors) to and from designated outdoor or recreational spaces back to their assigned quarantine room.
 - Students must always maintain a distance of 2 metres (6 ft.) from others while travelling to designated outdoor or recreational spaces and while participating in outdoor time.
 - Students must wash their hands frequently including before leaving their room/ washroom and avoid touching surfaces as much as possible while exiting the building. Students should avoid touching their face, nose, mouth and eyes. Students should also bring their own hand sanitizer with them for use to sanitize hands before re-entering their building.
 - Students must remain within the boundaries of designated outdoor spaces, recreation spaces, designated smoking areas, and/or identified travel routes at all times.
 - Students must not block pathways, entrances, or exits and ensure that it is possible for other campus users to pass by with 2 metres (6 ft.) or greater between them.
- Ensures signage is posted to direct foot traffic in potentially congested areas like entry ways.

- Will disinfect frequently using hard surface disinfectants , frequently touched surfaces (door handles, accessibility buttons, swipe access readers etc.).
- Will provide designated space limits to students where appropriate.
- Will ensure patrol or residence staff wear appropriate NMM or face coverings while performing duties.

For students completing their quarantine period in DLI accommodations arranged off campus, the DLI:

- Must ensure any accommodation arrangements made involving a third party includes established comprehensive COVID-19 quarantine protocols that align with public health directives as well as procedures in place for the monitoring of quarantined individuals throughout the 14-day quarantine period for their general well-being.
- Ensures only one student (including co-arriving immediate family members) is assigned per room.
- Ensures that three meals per day per individual are delivered to the room.
- Ensures the room is prepared with adequate toiletries, linens and other supplies for 14 days.
- Ensures that adequate supervision services exist to ensure the international student (and co-arriving immediate family members) do not leave their room.

TRANSPORTATION

The DLI must provide or arrange transportation for international students (and co-arriving immediate family members); as such, the DLI must ensure that:

- International students can practice physical distancing as much as possible during transportation as well as upon arrival to their accommodation (e.g., occupancy limits in vehicles/elevators/stairwells, sitting in the back of a vehicle, blocking of seats in a bus/shuttle, specific entrances/exits). Where possible, windows should be open in vehicles transporting international students from airport to accommodations.
- Adequate environmental cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces is being performed in transportation vehicles as well as when the international student is entering their accommodations.

- International students have access to hand hygiene materials (e.g., soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol) while in transit.
- International students are aware of NMM protocols and have access to NMM while traveling.
- they outline/describes how to quarantine safely and the regulations/restrictions related to mandatory quarantine when international students arrive.

HEALTH MONITORING

The DLI should encourage students to self-monitor during their quarantine period and provide information to support this, including <http://www.nshealth.ca/coronavirus-home/coronavirus-covid-19-resources>.

Students who become unwell or develop symptoms (<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/symptoms-and-testing/#symptoms>) should be directed to complete the online assessment (<https://covid-self-assessment.novascotia.ca/>). When completion of the online assessment is not possible, international students should be advised to call 811 for assessment by a nurse.

If the assessment determines that the student needs a test, Nova Scotia Health or IWK Health Centre will contact the student within 1 or 2 days to book the testing appointment.

Where possible, the DLI should support the student in arranging transportation to the Assessment Centre for their appointment. During transportation to the Assessment Centre, the student must wear a NMM, use proper hand hygiene, and maintain a distance of 2 metres (6 ft.) from others.

IN CASE OF A POSITIVE DIAGNOSIS OF COVID-19:

- When an international student receives a positive diagnosis, they transition from being in “mandatory quarantine” to “isolation”.
- While awaiting the test results, typically available within 48-72 hours, they will be required to isolate within their assigned room or be moved to a designated isolation room.

- While in isolation, if the international student is staying in residence, the student will only be permitted to leave to attend the designated washroom on that floor (assuming there is no washroom located in the room). If there are other residents assigned to that same washroom, they must be assigned to an alternate washroom. Custodial staff will ensure that the washroom is well stocked and sanitized at all times. Custodial staff will also provide janitorial services during the period of the active isolation. All appropriate PPE will be used by custodial staff while conducting their duties concerning the isolation. Any contact tracing required will be initiated and coordinated by NSPH.
- Meals will be delivered to the student by staff wearing all appropriate PPE. In addition to PPE, custodial staff will perform hand hygiene before and after pick up/disposal of meal trays. Timings for meals will be pre-arranged and left outside the occupied room(s) so that there is no possibility of encountering a student in isolation. The meal tray and utensils will be disposable, and each delivered meal will include a bag for all items to be placed in by the resident for disposal once the meal is consumed. The bag will be placed outside the room for pickup and disposal by custodial staff.
- An appropriate receptacle will be available outside the room and collected regularly.
- A phone will be provided within the room with all appropriate contacts, including Safety and Security, Residence Life, Counselling Services, Physical Plant, etc.
- For individuals who are diagnosed with COVID-19, use of a medical mask is preferred over a non-medical mask, if available.
- Frequent hand hygiene is recommended over the use of gloves. When appropriate, a risk assessment should be conducted with local occupational health authorities to determine proper use of gloves.
- A student who has tested positive must remain in isolation until they are determined to be recovered by NSPH

POST-QUARANTINE REQUIREMENTS

The DLI will continue to support international students and immediate family members after completion of their 14-day quarantine period.

This includes offering mental and physical health supports, anti-racism and COVID-19 stigma supports (<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/covid19-stigma-guide.pdf>), and mitigation of social barriers to support their compliance with individual COVID-19 infection control practices.

Any messaging and information provided to international students should continue to be language and culturally appropriate.

PHAC hard surface disinfectant list: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>