

**From:** [FAFA](#) on behalf of [FA President](#)  
**To:** [fafa@lists.uvic.ca](mailto:fafa@lists.uvic.ca)  
**Subject:** [Fafa] Further COVID Updates  
**Date:** December 14, 2021 8:00:12 AM  
**Attachments:** [image002.png](#)  
[ATT00001.txt](#)

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Dear Colleagues,

As some of you may be aware, the University and Island Health put out a joint press release yesterday evening, providing:

*An update on the cluster of cases associated with people who attended off-campus events.*

*Lab sequencing has confirmed that at least four of the cases associated with this cluster are the Omicron variant of concern. Sequencing continues on additional positive test results and confirmation of additional Omicron cases is expected.*

*As of December 13, there are a total of 124 cases associated with this cluster.*

The press release also suggests that most or all of those getting sick were vaccinated and states that:

*we are seeing mild illness and are not aware of any hospitalizations associated with this cluster at this time.*

This is reassuring, but I would note that it is our understanding that most or all of those who are ill are students, and therefore relatively young.

See full press release in the link below.

<https://www.uvic.ca/news/topics/2021+notice-covid-cases-update+notice>

## **Online exams**

### **Deadline for submitting grades is extended**

In developments related to moving exams online, I am pleased to let you know that Susan Lewis announced at the Forum yesterday that the University has agreed to move the deadline

for submitting grades to January 10th, which will provide more time to complete your grading, although I am aware that that could also impact the time you need for course prep.

### **No exams deferred to January**

The University considered our request to defer some exams to early January, but I'm sorry to say that they declined this request. Apparently agreeing to this request would also have required government approval, which further complicated the matter. All exams must be completed within the regular exam period (ending December 20th).

### **January classes**

A number of you have written to me, either requesting that the FA lobby for all courses to move online in January, or that faculty members have the option to move their courses online. The University is currently stating that all courses that are scheduled to be in person will continue to be in person over the January term. However, if the Omicron variant continues to spread, both the University (and the government, which ultimately makes these decisions), may change their minds.

In the meantime, the Association will lobby the university to allow faculty who wish to do so, to offer courses online in the January term.

We are also discussing possibly surveying our members on their preferences regarding online or in person courses for January, or some combination, in which people could teach online until two weeks after they receive their booster.

I am aware that the FA may have caused some survey fatigue among you (thanks so much for filling out our surveys, which will provide us with strong leverage in negotiating for you at the bargaining table!), but if we were to lobby for online courses for January, we would need to have a clearer sense of the preferences of the majority of our members on this matter. Although I realize that what happens with Omicron in the next few weeks will also of course have a major impact on your perspectives.

The Association will do its best to discourage the University from doing another instant pivot to online that those of you with exams this week are experiencing. We will strongly advocate that the University provide as much notice as possible for any future change in policy in this regard.

### **Support available**

Those of you who are transitioning exams to online or other formats should remember that additional TA support should be available both to assist with the additional work of such transition work, and for any additional marking caused by this shift. I realize that this is not a viable option for all of you, but for those of you for whom additional TA support would be helpful, please don't hesitate to let us know if you have any difficulties accessing this support

If you need additional support beyond TA support and would like us to advocate for you in this regard, please let us know. We are also pleased to advocate for you if necessary for support in relation to any additional workload you are facing related to requirements for accommodating students in online exams.

If you need support, please contact one of our membership services officers:

[Ben Johnson](#)

[Reuben Kellen](#)

[Nathan Todd](#)

At the same time, you should be aware that the FA office is closed for our holiday closure from December 20th to January 3rd. Assistance will be available in urgent cases between December 20 and 22nd.

### **Research on campus**

I wanted to remind you that at this time in person research is still permitted on campus, with the existing COVID protocols. I would encourage those of you who employ RAs, other grad students, postdocs and research staff to recognize any COVID-related concerns they may have, and be as flexible as you can be in this regard at what is a stressful time for many.

Given all the work that is still ahead for many of you, I can't wish you a restful break yet, but hope to do so soon.

All the very best,

Lynne

Lynne Marks

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University of Victoria

Victoria, B.C.

We recognize with respect the WSÁNEĆ (Saanich), Wyomilth (Esquimalt), and Lkwungen (Songhees) peoples on whose territories the University of Victoria stands, and whose relationships with this land remain profound today.

We acknowledge the devastation that government-created residential schools and Indian

hospitals has inflicted on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples and the ongoing effects of concentric trauma that continue to this day.