

From: [FAFA](#) on behalf of [FA President](#)
To: fafa@lists.uvic.ca
Subject: [Fafa] COVID and January term
Date: December 23, 2021 9:44:05 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[FA COVID survey results Dec 2021.docx](#)
[ATT00001.txt](#)



Dear Colleagues,

I hope all is well with all of you, and you have some time to relax.

I know that there is concern about the coming term, with the case counts increasing significantly in BC. Thanks to those of you who filled out our COVID survey, and for your thoughtful comments. Over half of our members filled out the survey. I've attached the results most directly relevant to the question of the nature of January return. As you can see, while there were different perspectives on this issue, fewer than 8 per cent of those who responded preferred the option of the university continuing with face to face classes in January.

As you may be aware, Dr. Bonnie Henry is still strongly encouraging the postsecondary sector to remain in person in January. However, most universities in Ontario and many others across Canada have announced that they are going online for January, and in some cases longer.

Yesterday, UBC announced that its courses would be offered online for the first two weeks of term. See <https://news.ubc.ca/2021/12/22/covid-19-planning-for-2021-22-winter-session-term-2/>

Given the clear answer we have received from our members on this matter, the UVic Faculty Association is strongly advocating with the administration that UVic follow UBC's example, and start the January term online, for those courses where that is possible. In cases where online instruction is not possible, as last year, courses could remain face to face with adequate safety protocols. By starting online for the first two weeks of classes, we would have time to learn more about the omicron variant. We know that it is far more contagious than earlier variants, and is more likely to affect those who have been vaccinated, but we don't yet definitively know to what extent it may be less likely to cause serious illness.

For a recent report by a group of BC academics, including Dean Karlen of UVic's Department of Physics and Astronomy, on the potential risks of omicron, even if it were less likely to cause serious illness, see <https://bccovid-19group.ca/post/2021-12-22-report/>.

For a joint statement from our BC FA federation, CUFA-BC, and other postsecondary

FAs supporting the importance of greater university autonomy in making health and safety decisions, and the need to enable universities to start next term online see <https://www.cufa.bc.ca/post-secondary-unions-call-for.../>

Our members need certainty now about how they will be teaching in January. You should not be expected to risk your health and that of your families by teaching face to face in this context, or face the major stress and additional workload involved in doing another last minute pivot of your courses online.

The majority of Canadian universities have recognized these realities, including UBC. Given the rapidly rising case counts, and the limited knowledge we have about omicron, the FA strongly advocates that the UVic administration announce a decision now to take the first two weeks of January classes online. The situation for the rest of term can be assessed in early January, when we will know far more than we do now about the pandemic situation.

Accommodation

Some members may need certainty that they will not be teaching in person for all of next term. If this is a major concern, I would encourage you to consult with your Chair or your Dean and with the FA. If you have children under 5, or elderly parents and believe that you would be putting them at risk by teaching in person next term, I would encourage you to seek a family status accommodation to teach online when the university reopens on January 4th. If you have physical or mental health issues related to teaching in person, I would similarly encourage you to seek a medical accommodation to teach online on January 4th. You should seek relevant documentation from your health care practitioner prior to that date if possible. More information about accommodations is available here:

<https://www.uvic.ca/vpacademic/resources/howto/medical-leave/index.php>

The Association office is closed until January 4th. If you have an urgent question that can't wait until January, you can contact me, but I don't promise to have all of the answers.

Wishing those who celebrate Christmas a very Merry Christmas, and to all of our members a safe, enjoyable and restful holiday break. I very much hope we can start the break with positive news about the January term from the UVic administration.

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.