

As you may know, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic. We wanted to clarify what that means for our community. Most importantly, the declaration of a pandemic does not change the risk within Canada, which remains low according to the Public Health Agency of Canada. So, for now, it is business as usual for our day-to-day operations, although we are asking our students and employees to follow the guidelines we have outlined below to minimize the risk to our community. We are not aware of any cases in our communities or on our campuses.

VIU has a COVID-19 Advisory Committee that is taking a proactive approach, meeting regularly and monitoring global and local developments. The group is also working closely with Island Health to adjust our responses to ensure we are protecting the health and safety of our community and minimizing the risks as best we can.

**Guidelines to minimize the risk to our community:**

1. If you have recently returned from a known high-risk area you should call 8-1-1, your primary care provider or local health office, and follow directions given by those sources. If you are directed by medical authorities to self-isolate for 14 days while self-monitoring for symptoms of illness, please contact your professors.
2. If you are not showing symptoms but believe you may have been exposed to COVID-19 by having contact with a person with a confirmed case or presumptive case you should call 8-1-1, your primary care provider, or local health office, and follow directions given by those sources. If you are directed by medical authorities to self-isolate for 14 days please contact your professors.
3. If you are experiencing flu-like symptoms, you should not be at VIU but should recuperate at home. This not only allows you to get well, but also protects other students and employees.

**We are also asking all of our community members to do the following:**

1. Wash your hands on a regular basis with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
2. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
3. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
4. Stay home when sick.
5. Cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash or cough and sneeze into your elbow.
6. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
7. Avoid travel to affected areas and/or coming into contact with infected or potentially infected people.

As this situation continues to develop, we are working on more detailed guidelines for student attendance in classes and at other educational activities and preparing plans to ensure we can continue to support our students' learning needs. More details will be sent soon.

You can find more information and updates on COVID-19 at these places:

- VIU Coronavirus Updates and Information [website](#) (go here first)

- Employee and student emails (email will be used for broad community updates and any major changes; the website will contain all the updates)
- [VIU's Safety App](#)
- VIU Twitter feeds: [@viunews](#); [@viuniversity](#)

We know that many people are feeling anxiety and concern around this quickly changing situation. We encourage anyone feeling impacted by this situation to access supports. Counselling and other services for students are provided by VIU's Student Affairs (Building 200, third floor) as well as by International Student Services in the Faculty of International Education (Building 255). You can also access other resources in the community such as the 24-Hour Crisis Line that has text, chat and phone support.

If you have any questions, please visit our Coronavirus [FAQs](#) section, and if it is not answered there, email [UniversityRelations@viu.ca](mailto:UniversityRelations@viu.ca).