

March 12, 2020: Evening Update to Community

We are continuing to monitor global and local developments related to COVID-19 – our primary focus is ensuring we are providing support to our employees and students as this situation develops.

Going forward, we will have a daily update to share the latest COVID-19 news, as well as answer any questions we have been receiving.

Although the risk in BC remains low according to the BC Ministry of Health, new steps have been announced by the provincial government to slow the possibility of transmission.

The following recommendations have been made by the provincial government, which VIU is implementing:

#1: All non-essential travel outside of Canada – both personal and for work – should be cancelled and, if undertaken, individuals *must* self-isolate for two weeks upon return.

Please refer to the updated [Employee Leave Protocol](#) for how VIU is supporting employees who may need to take leave. It has changed slightly since this announcement was made.

Students, please refer to the email titled: **UPDATE: COVID-19, March 12, 2020** for more information on what to do if you are experiencing symptoms and cannot come to class.

Please note: Doctor's notes are no longer required for students who miss classes or assignments due to cold or flu-like symptoms. Please communicate directly with your instructors if you become ill so they can record your absences. Communication is required to receive accommodation for any missed classes or coursework.

#2: All events or gatherings of more than 250 people need to be cancelled.

CCAA Women's National Basketball Championships:

The Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA) made the decision to cancel the Women's National Basketball championships scheduled for March 18-21 at VIU's Nanaimo campus. VIU supports this decision although regrets the impact it will have on all the teams who worked so hard to gain a spot at Nationals, including our stellar Mariners, who had an incredible season.

Classes

As VIU does not have any classes over 250 students, this ban on group gatherings does not apply to our classes.

Day-to-day

In practical terms, you are free to go to the grocery store or into an office building or school where groups of larger than 250 may be. Please be sure to take the following steps to minimize risk:

- 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.
- Practice social distancing – keep space between you and those around you when in public place.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when sick.
- Cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash or cough and sneeze into your elbow.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

#3: If you are experiencing any type of illness stay home until you are symptom-free.

Supports for our community

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.

Students:

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.

The development of protocols regarding course completion during self-isolation or a prolonged university closure are well underway and will be announced next week.

Employees:

Counselling services are available to anyone who feels they may need support through VIU's Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) through Homewood Health. The telephone number is 1-800-663-1142.

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

- [VIU's COVID-19 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](#)

If you have any questions or need further information please let us know at university.relations@viu.ca.

Thank you for your patience as we work to provide the most reliable information possible as this situation develops. We want to support our community as best we can and appreciate your feedback.