

Attending university and college

Nova Scotia welcomes thousands of post-secondary students every year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, public health officials and post-secondary institutions are working closely to keep students, staff, and residents of surrounding communities safe.

To prevent the spread of this virus in our communities, there are rules for post-secondary students arriving in the province from outside Atlantic Canada. These rules are the law in Nova Scotia as part of the [public health order under the Health Protection Act](#).

ENTERING NOVA SCOTIA FOR POST-SECONDARY STUDIES

Are students from outside Atlantic Canada or outside the country allowed to attend university or college in Nova Scotia?

Yes. Most universities in the province and NSCC are offering only or mainly online courses. Some are offering in-person courses or components of courses, such as labs. Institutions with mainly online learning will still have some facilities open, such as residences (at lower capacity) and libraries.

Students coming to Nova Scotia from outside the country should visit the [Government of Canada website](#) before they travel.

Do students have to complete any forms or paperwork before arriving?

Yes. All students entering Nova Scotia on or after August 20, 2020 from outside Atlantic Canada to attend university or NSCC must complete the [Nova Scotia Safe Check-in](#). This includes students from all other Canadian provinces/territories and from other countries. Make sure you save the email with the submission ID that you receive after you complete the form.

Some institutions require students to submit a self-isolation plan. Please check with your institution on how to prepare your plan, where to send it, and whether there is anything else you need to submit.

Do students have to self-isolate when they arrive in Nova Scotia?

Any student coming to Nova Scotia from outside Atlantic Canada must self-isolate for 14 days. Students who live in Atlantic Canada do not have to self-isolate unless they have travelled outside the region within 14 days before coming to Nova Scotia.

Do students need to get tested for COVID-19?

Any university or NSCC student arriving in Nova Scotia from outside Atlantic Canada up to and including September 21 must get tested during their 14-day isolation period in Nova Scotia. (See more below.)

Do university and NSCC staff need to self-isolate and be tested?

Any staff who have been outside Atlantic Canada need to self-isolate for 14 days when they return to Nova Scotia. They do not need to be tested.

Do private career college staff or students need to self isolate and be tested?

Any private career college staff or students who have been outside Atlantic Canada need to self-isolate for 14 days when they return to Nova Scotia. They do not need to be tested.

TESTING

Why is testing required? Why do students need several tests? Why are you testing students with no symptoms?

Nova Scotia currently has very few cases of COVID-19 and we need to continue to keep the province safe. We are happy to welcome thousands of students to Nova Scotia. We also need to manage the risk of COVID-19 entering and spreading within university and NSCC communities. Testing several times over the course of a student's self-isolation can help us be certain they aren't carrying the virus. It will also help us identify and manage any COVID-19 cases very early.

How do students get tested? Will there be testing sites on campus?

Each institution has sent all their students an email with instructions to complete the [Nova Scotia Safe Check-in](#). Students will receive instructions based on the information they submit:

- Students from inside Atlantic Canada who have not traveled outside the region within 14 days before arriving in Nova Scotia will be advised that they do not need to self-isolate and do not need to be tested.

- Students coming to Nova Scotia up to and including September 21, 2020 from outside Atlantic Canada (or who have traveled outside the region within 14 days) will be advised to self-isolate. They will be told they need to get three COVID-19 tests during their self-isolation. Nova Scotia Health will email students their three testing appointments and tell them the location, either on campus or nearby.

Once each test is done and processed, the health authority will send the test result to the student. Even with negative test results, the student must complete their full 14 days of self-isolation.

If a student tests positive, public health will step in to manage the case (see below).

Can students be tested on any three days during their self-isolation?

No, they should be tested on a specific range of days for the best possible detection of the virus:

Day 1-2

Day 5-7

Day 12-14

Who can a student contact if they don't get the testing appointments?

If you do not receive the email from Nova Scotia Health with your testing appointments, please contact your institution for help with getting your appointments.

What happens if a student has already completed the Nova Scotia Safe Check-in with an arrival date of September 22 or later?

If this happens, the student can disregard direction to get tested because it is not required if they arrive on September 22 or later. We will also advise the university or NSCC if they have any students in this situation.

What happens if a student isn't able to get their tests done and results back before their self-isolation period ends or before classes start?

Students cannot begin in-person classes until their self-isolation and tests have been completed. They can begin online classes. If you haven't completed self-isolation or tests in time for in-person classes to begin, talk to your institution about your situation.

If a student gets negative test results, can they stop their self-isolation?

No. Even with negative tests results, students must complete the 14 days of self-isolation and all tests.

Can students get tested before they come to Nova Scotia?

No, we require the tests to be completed during each student's self-isolation period in Nova Scotia.

How do you break self-isolation to get tested?

You are allowed to go directly to the testing site for your appointment time and directly back to the place where you are self-isolating. Do not make any stops along the way. Stay at least 2 metres/6 feet away from other people.

Can you take a bus or a taxi to get to a testing site?

Do not take a bus or ferry to the testing site. Depending on the circumstances, transportation may be arranged for you. You can walk, bike, drive, or take a taxi. It is mandatory to wear a non-medical mask if you take a taxi. The mask is also mandatory in indoor public places and you may need to walk through one of these places to reach the testing site. Masks are required in the testing site.

Can a student refuse to get tested?

This testing is mandatory as part of the public health order under the Health Protection Act. Students who refuse to be tested may be subject to further actions under the Health Protection Act.

Do students have to pay for the testing?

No.

Do students have to bring any health information with them for testing?

All students should bring their student number with them. Canadian students also should bring their provincial health card with them.

How long will the on-campus testing sites stay open?

We are keeping the on-campus testing sites open for any students who arrive up to and including September 21 to complete their mandatory testing during their self-isolation period. On October 5, we will close those centres and focus our resources on our 26 testing sites around the province.

What happens if there is a case of COVID-19 at a university or NSCC?

Public Health will take the same approach with universities and NSCC as they do with other cases. They will direct the person to self-isolate. They will follow up and test close contacts of the person who is sick. Depending on the circumstances of the case, they will direct and work with the institution on any additional steps that must be taken, including communicating about the case to the community.

What if students have more questions?

If students have additional questions about these public health requirements, they should contact their institution.

SELF-ISOLATION

What does self-isolation mean?

Self-isolation means you go straight to the place in Nova Scotia where you plan to complete your self-isolation period and you stay there for 14 days. You cannot have visitors. You must have food and essentials delivered. If you're in a house, you can go outside but you cannot leave the property. If you're in an apartment, you cannot leave the apartment – you can go on a private balcony if there is one. If you're in a residence room, you must follow your institution's rules. If you share accommodations with other people, you must self-isolate from them. Learn more about [self isolation](#).

When exactly does your self-isolation end?

The day you enter Nova Scotia is considered day 1 and you must self-isolate up to and including the 14th day. For example, if arrive in Nova Scotia on August 23, your self-isolation period is up to and including September 5, and you are free to leave the place where you were isolating on September 6.

When do students need to arrive in order to complete self-isolation before classes start?

The start date may be different at each institution so check with yours about when classes start. Ideally, you should arrive with time to complete your self-isolation and then attend to any necessities such as buying textbooks before classes begin.

Can students do their self-isolation in residence?

Most universities are providing options for self-isolation in residence. They have specific move in dates for students who need to self-isolate in residence. Please contact your university or check their website for more information.

If students leave the province during the fall term, will they have to self-isolate again when they return? Will they have to self-isolate after Christmas and spring break?

Anyone who enters Nova Scotia from outside Atlantic Canada, including students, is required to complete 14 days of self-isolation.

We are currently evaluating the testing protocol that we required for university and NSCC students this fall. We will consider what we learned from this experience, as well as our testing capacity and the epidemiology in Nova Scotia and in other jurisdictions, to determine any future action.

How will you monitor that students are doing their self-isolation?

The onus is on students to do a daily check through the [Nova Scotia Safe Check-in](#). They will receive a daily email with questions that they must answer. A student's institution will be notified of non-compliance and will take reasonable steps to help students comply.

Can you be fined for not self-isolating?

There are penalties in the Health Protection Act. For a first offence, there is a \$1,000 fine. If you are found guilty of a second or subsequent offence, you could be fined up to \$10,000 or sentenced to imprisonment for up to one year, or both.

Can you be disciplined or expelled by the university or NSCC for not-self-isolating?

You should ask your institution about their expectations for their students and what happens if those expectations are not met.

Can parents drop off students in their residence or at their apartment or other accommodations for the school year?

Yes, parents can drop off their students to the place where they will self-isolate for 14 days. This may be the same place where they will live for the school year, or a different place.

If you are dropping off a student on campus, please follow the university's rules for this process.

Other than while doing the brief drop off, parents (or anyone else) coming from outside Atlantic Canada to accompany a student must self-isolate while in Nova Scotia. This means you do not go shopping, do not get groceries etc, do not go to restaurants, do not visit/ explore the community, etc.

You can leave the province anytime (ie, you do not need to stay here for 14 days). When returning home, you should make as few stops in Nova Scotia as possible. You must self-isolate as much as you can, stay 2 metres/6 feet away from others, and wear a mask in indoor public places.

UNIVERSITY AND NSCC PLANS

What safety protocols are in place?

All universities and NSCC submitted their campus re-opening plans to the Chief Medical Officer of Health and to Labour and Advanced Education for review. All prevention plans have been approved. They were developed in accordance with the latest public health directives and safety protocols.

Why isn't there just one plan? Why does every university need to have a separate plan?

We asked each university and NSCC to develop their own institution specific campus re-opening plan to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Their plans are tailored to address their unique circumstances, but they are all based on the same public health principles.

How are the plans being communicated? Where do I find my institution's plan?

Each university and NSCC is responsible for communicating their plans to students and parents, their staff, and their surrounding communities, as well as keeping them up-to-date with the latest information. All of their plans are posted on their websites.

PUBLIC HEALTH RULES IN NOVA SCOTIA

What other public health requirements do students have to meet in Nova Scotia?

Everyone has to play their part to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Students have a responsibility to protect each other, the staff at their institutions, and the communities where they live.

In Nova Scotia, there are public health rules that are law in the [public health order under the Health Protection Act](#).

Students should familiarize themselves with the public health rules and direction in advance. For example:

- Everyone must stay 2 metres/6 feet apart unless they are in the same household or a close social group of up to 10 people

- Masks must be worn on public transportation:
 - o municipal transit buses and ferries
 - o school buses
 - o motor coaches (except those that provide charters or tours)
 - o community transit vehicles
 - o private taxis and shuttles
- Masks must be worn in most indoor public places – on campus, that means public areas such as the library, student union building or common areas of a faculty building, but not classrooms, labs, offices or residences – [learn more about masks](#).

Please visit our [website](#) to learn more. We also encourage you to follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

Is your residence considered to be your household?

No, the entire residence is not considered to be your household. If you have one or more roommates in a room or an apartment style unit in a residence, that would be your household.

If you live off campus and have roommates in a house or an apartment, that would be your household. If you board with a person or family, that person or family is your household.

If you have no roommates, then you are a household of one.

What is a close social group of 10 people?

Up to 10 people can choose to form a close social group that can be together without physical distancing (staying 2 metres/6 feet apart). You should choose your group carefully and try to stick with the same group.

Does that mean any group of 10 people can be together without staying 2 metres/6 feet apart?

No. People should not form random, spontaneous groups of 10. A close social group needs to be carefully chosen and should not change.

What are the rules for going to restaurants or bars?

- You must wear a mask except when you are eating or drinking – ie, you must wear it while entering, waiting to be seated, going to the washroom, and getting ready to leave.
- You must stay 2 metres/6 feet apart from other people, unless they are members of your household or close social group.

- Once you are seated, you must stay seated except to go to the washroom or to leave.
- Your food and/or alcohol must remain at the table.
- Food and alcohol service stops at midnight and patrons must leave by 1:00 a.m.

Will university sports teams go ahead this year?

You should ask your institution about their plans for sports teams this year.

Will gyms be open on campus?

You should ask your institutions about the availability of recreation and fitness facilities like gyms and pools. The public health order allows them to be open with strict adherence to prevention plans. You must wear your mask in the gym at all times, except when doing an activity that requires you to remove it.

What are universities doing about food safety in cafeterias and other food service spots on campus?

Every establishment with a food service permit must follow the [Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia prevention plan](#). You can also check with your institution for their specific plans and availability of food services.

Will universities or student associations be able to host large gatherings during the school year?

Nova Scotia has different gathering limits for different circumstances. Generally, there can be no gatherings of more than 50 people.

When the following events are run by a recognized business or organization, they can have 250 people outdoors, and 50% of a venue's capacity to a maximum of 200 people indoors:

- social events
- arts and culture events
- sports and physical activity
- weddings, funerals, and faith gatherings
- festivals
- special events

When these types of events are NOT run by a recognized business or organization, they are limited to 50. Physical distancing is still required in all these scenarios, except among people in the same household or social group of 10.