



Carleton
UNIVERSITY

Canada's Capital University



Planning for Fall 2021: A Gradual and Safe Return to Campus

Carleton University Scenario Planning (CUSP) Working Group

April 2021

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Executive Summary

The Carleton University Scenario Planning (CUSP) Working Group has developed recommendations for academic program planning for the 2021-22 academic year. The health and wellbeing of students, staff, faculty and the broader community remains the key principle guiding these discussions. In developing these recommendations, CUSP considered five key situational factors including COVID case trends, vaccination progress, public health restrictions, travel restrictions, and students' willingness to continue online education.

Based on analysis of these factors, CUSP concluded that the COVID landscape will look quite different in September 2021, compared to April 2021. The most likely scenario for Fall 2021 is that increasing rates of vaccination will lead to reductions in cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. Public health restrictions – based on cases and health care system capacity – should progressively be lifted as the number of cases fall. This will allow for a significant return to on-campus activity in Fall 2021. By Winter 2022, vaccination programs should be complete, allowing a return to normal campus activity.

Most students are eager for a return to face-to-face learning. Face-to-face courses will only be delivered, however, if public health authorities deem them to be safe. Further, international students may not be able to participate in on-campus activities due to delays in student visa processing. Consequently, enhanced online options will be needed to accommodate this group.

The guidelines that CUSP recommends for academic program planning can be summarized as follows:

- Ensure that there are both face-to-face and online learning opportunities at all levels of every program.
- Plan classroom capacities in line with physical distancing requirements for face-to-face learning, and online delivery for all class sections with more than 60 students.
- Prioritize courses for face-to-face delivery based on learning outcomes, pedagogy and choice for students.
- Provide individual faculty and staff with reasonable accommodations where needed for medical, family status or other human rights grounds.

The key principle underlying these guidelines is flexibility to adapt to the situation as it evolves. Pivoting from face-to-face classes to online learning is significantly easier than trying to add in-person learning to courses that have been planned for online. Preparing our academic program in this way will allow us to deliver safe on-campus learning by implementing physical distancing as required or pivoting to fully online delivery if necessary. These guidelines are also meant to provide flexibility for individual students, faculty and staff.

CUSP is part of a broader planning ecosystem that has developed at Carleton over the course of the pandemic. The Return to Campus Committee is responsible for managing the safe and gradual return to campus. The Carleton University Flexibility Arrangements Working Group is developing guidelines for flexible work arrangements during the transition back to campus and post-pandemic. These three groups are working in close coordination in order to ensure that Carleton's transition back to campus is safe and successful.

Introduction

CUSP Working Group Mandate

Reporting to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and the President and Vice-Chancellor, the Carleton University Scenario Planning (CUSP) Working Group was tasked with looking at all options for a successful Fall term in light of the current public health crisis.

CUSP Working Group Members

- Lorraine Dyke, Deputy Provost (Academic Operations and Planning) – Chair
- Benoit-Antoine Bacon, President and Vice-Chancellor (Ex officio)
- Jerry Tomberlin, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) (Ex officio)
- Chuck Macdonald, Dean of the Faculty of Science
- Pauline Rankin, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
- Patrice Smith, Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
- Sandra Crocker, Associate Vice-President, Strategic Initiatives and Operations (Research)
- David Hornsby, Associate Vice-President (Teaching and Learning)
- Janice O'Farrell, Associate Vice-President (Enrolment Management)
- Bruce Winer, Assistant Vice-President (Institutional Research and Planning)
- Kim Hellemans, Chair, Neuroscience and Academic Colleague, Council of Ontario Universities (COU)
- Jamie Carmichael, Associate Registrar, Scheduling and Systems
- Angela Marcotte, Controller, Financial Services
- Justin Mihalic, Planning Manager, Office of the Deputy Provost

CUSP Consultations

An important part of CUSP's mandate was to engage in consultations with a broad forum of stakeholders including, among others, academic leaders, faculty, unions and student leaders. CUSP's consultations and analysis focused primarily on academic programming as distinct from the steps required for a return to campus.

CUSP's analysis and recommendations were shared with the following groups throughout the process of developing this report. The committee appreciates the thorough and thoughtful feedback provided by:

- Academic Heads Roundtable
- Board of Governors
- Board of Governors Executive Committee
- COVID-19 Operations Committee
- COVID-19 Steering Committee
- CUASA
- CUPE 4600, Units 1 and 2
- CUPE 2424

- Departmental Administrators' Round Table
- Office of the Vice-President (Finance and Administration), Leaders
- Office of the Vice-President (Students and Enrolment), Managers and Directors
- PSAC 77000
- Senate
- Sprott Faculty Board
- Student Government Leaders
- Undergraduate Affairs

Planning for Fall 2021

We often look to the past to predict the future. This is problematic during turbulent times such as the current public health crisis. Fall 2021 will probably look quite different from Fall 2019 or Fall 2020. It will also likely be quite different from our present situation. Carleton needs to plan for where we will be in September – not where we are now.

As we contemplate the third wave of COVID, it can be difficult to imagine how the situation and our mindsets will have evolved by September. But as the COVID landscape continues to change, our mindsets will also evolve. For instance, prior to March 2020, few of us would have readily worn a face mask but now it is standard practice. Last spring, many of us were sanitizing our groceries until we learned that surface transmission is rare. Last summer when case counts were lower, many of us were going to restaurants. As has happened throughout the pandemic, our mindsets will continue to adapt as the situation evolves.

One of the challenges in planning for September is that the situation is constantly changing and in ways that are not always predictable. Despite this uncertainty, we need to plan for the fall now for three key reasons:

- To create our course timetable so that students can register in a timely fashion,
- To provide faculty with enough time to prepare fall courses, and
- To provide enough time to fully plan a gradual and safe return to campus.

The guidelines that CUSP is providing in this report are predicated on projections about the evolution of the public health crisis over the coming months. If the pandemic evolves in unanticipated ways that make it unsafe to return to campus, fall plans will need to be adjusted accordingly.

Principles to Guide Decision-Making

We remain committed to the following principles, which were first articulated last year as we contemplated planning for the Fall 2020 term. Since that time, these principles have continued to guide Carleton's decisions.

1. **We will place the health and wellbeing of students, staff, and faculty above all other considerations.**
2. We will continue to provide the best possible learning experience for our students throughout the pandemic.
3. Decisions regarding modes of learning within given constraints will be driven by learning outcomes.
4. Student support services will continue to be delivered in accordance with our Service Excellence standards.
5. Equity across student groups will be a key factor in decisions.
6. Research activity will be maximized to the extent possible.
7. We will foster collaboration within the university and with peer institutions to create and share academic programming where possible to enhance academic quality.
8. Decisions will support the long-term success of the university.
9. We will provide as much certainty as possible to students, faculty and staff by making and communicating decisions as early as possible.

Key Factors Considered in Planning

CUSP considered five key situational factors in developing program guidelines. This section will cover the following key factors in more detail.

COVID-19 case trends

Vaccination progress

Public health restrictions

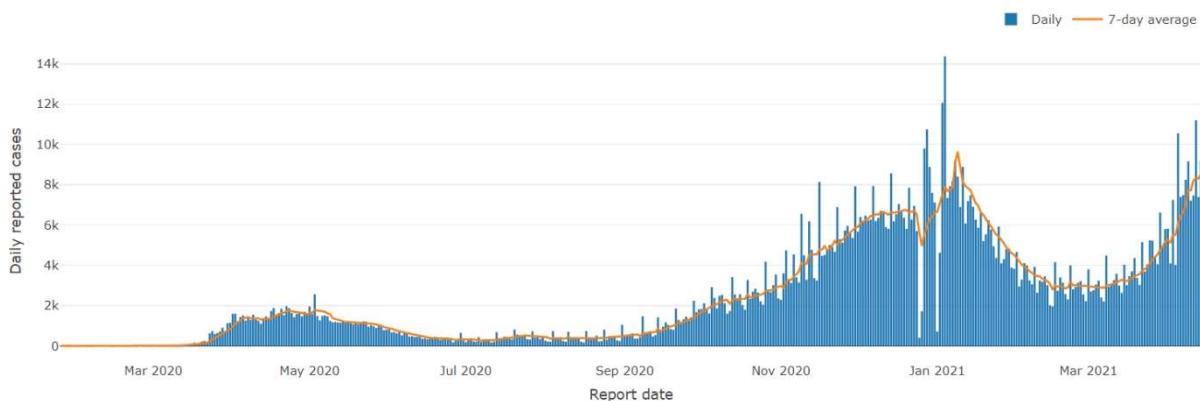
Travel restrictions

Students' willingness to continue online education

COVID Case Trends

Canada has already experienced two [waves of COVID-19](#) and is now experiencing a third. We are currently in a race between new variants of concern and immunization programs. The short-term picture is concerning; however, as more people are vaccinated, transmission and case numbers will drop.

Daily reported cases & 7-day rolling average in Canada (n = 1,094,749)



The course of the COVID-19 pandemic is, in many ways, not dissimilar to that of the 1918-19 Spanish flu pandemic. That epidemic went through [three waves](#) of widespread illness and then the flu became endemic.

The flu is still with us today but its impact is less extensive. This evolution happened without the benefit of vaccines. Then too, people's mindsets evolved and the pandemic was followed by the Roaring '20s.

Fortunately, there are presently four vaccines approved for use in Canada – all with high rates of efficacy. The Canadian government has ordered up to 180 million doses of these four vaccines – enough to vaccinate all Canadians several times over.

Vaccination Progress

[Vaccines are effective](#) – particularly at reducing the worst outcomes (hospitalization, admission to an intensive care unit and death). Immune response [after one dose of vaccine is substantial](#). [Extending the time between vaccine doses](#) has been deemed safe and will allow people to be vaccinated more quickly.

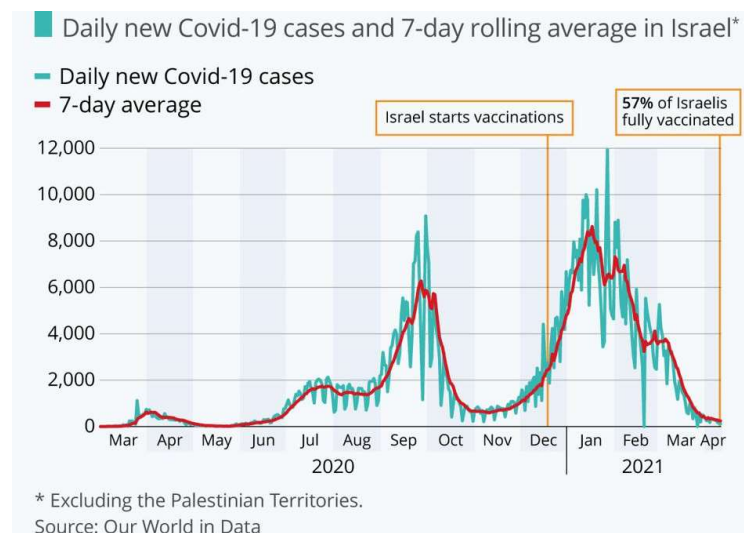
Rare but serious blood clots have been associated with two of the vaccines; however, [Health Canada continues to assure Canadians of vaccine safety](#) and experts indicate that the risk of such blood clots is [8-times higher](#) from

COVID than from the vaccine. Data is still accumulating regarding the efficacy of the vaccines against the new variants of concern, however, evidence is emerging that these vaccines can provide significant protection [against illness](#) and [transmission of the variants](#).

Vaccine delivery is ramping up. On March 17, 2021, the federal government announced that it expects to receive [enough vaccine for every Canadian](#) to receive a single dose by the end of June. Despite changes in delivery schedules, [the federal government maintains this commitment](#).

The United Kingdom has pursued a strategy of giving a single dose to as many people as possible. As of March 19, 2021, they had administered at least one dose to 38% of adults. As a result, cases in the [UK fell by over 90%](#). This is despite the more contagious B.1.1.7 “UK” variant now being the dominant strain there. Similarly, [Israel saw a dramatic decline](#) in new COVID cases as their vaccination program has progressed.

While the expected immunity is not achieved until two weeks after the second dose of vaccine, significant immunity is achieved with the first dose. There will be a time lag for other indicators. However, we can expect to see significant reductions in illness prior to complete vaccination as



in the UK and Israeli experience. Medical experts are already preparing for the possibility that booster shots may be required to [maintain immunity](#).

Public Health Restrictions

Public health restrictions have been essential in reducing the spread of the virus and demands on the health care system. They also entail significant economic and social costs – for instance, with respect to mental health.

Adjustments to [Ontario public health restrictions](#) are based on:

- Number of COVID-19 cases
- Health care system capacity (e.g., Intensive Care Unit beds, ventilators)
- Public health system capacity (e.g., testing, tracing)

Vaccination programs are being rolled out in such a way as to first [protect those who are at highest risk](#). Public health restrictions have been put in place to protect the most vulnerable and prevent the health care system from being overwhelmed. As vaccination proceeds, the number of cases will fall and allow for a gradual lifting of restrictions over the latter part of 2021.

The timeframe for the removal of public health restrictions is uncertain and will lag vaccination progress to some degree. Nevertheless, we are already seeing changes to guidelines in the U.S. as vaccination programs in that jurisdiction progress. Recently, the Centers for Disease Control in the U.S. issued [new guidelines](#) indicating that those who have been fully vaccinated can gather unmasked with others who have been vaccinated, or even with those who are unvaccinated, if they have no underlying health conditions. Once restrictions are relaxed, however, some people may need a period of psychological adjustment before they are comfortable in close contact with other people, due to the lingering effect of having been advised to maintain physical distancing for many months.

Travel Restrictions

Approximately 15% of Carleton students are international students. International student mobility is currently constrained by a number of factors. As a result of the pandemic, there are very significant delays in the processing of international student visas.

Other challenges affecting travel include testing and quarantine requirements and their associated costs. In addition, there may be vaccination issues as the vaccination rollout will be slower in other parts of the world and some countries are using vaccines that have not been approved in Canada – both of which will add complications and uncertainty. Consequently, some new (and possibly returning) international students may not be able to come to Canada.

Students' Willingness to Continue Online Education

The Strategic Counsel, in conjunction with Higher Education Strategy Associates, recently released the results of a study they conducted with almost 1,400 university students in early December. The results of this study show that [students want to return to campus](#). Some key findings include:

- 20% were dissatisfied with their Fall 2020 experience
- 77% missed the campus experience
- Only 40% reported being satisfied with online education

In Carleton's own Fall 2020 survey, more than 70% of students identified the following as challenges in the online environment:

- Lack of in-person contact with classmates
- Lack of motivation for online learning
- Lack of in-person contact with instructors

Of course, Carleton will only deliver face-to-face courses if it is deemed safe. The most likely scenario is that it will indeed be safe to progressively return to face-to-face teaching and as such we must ensure that we can meet students' expectations. This is especially important in a competitive landscape where all Canadian universities are preparing for a significant return to campus.

Most Likely Scenario

Fall 2021

Increasing rates of vaccination will lead to a significant reduction in the number of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths. This will allow for a progressive lifting of public health restrictions and the resumption of substantial on-campus activity. Returning to campus may be difficult for international (and some domestic) students; therefore, some online course options will be needed for these students. In that context, neither a fully online nor a fully in-person term makes sense, and a mixed model of program delivery offers the most sensible option for transitioning back to campus in a safe and gradual manner.

Winter 2022

Vaccination programs should be complete and restrictions should be lifted. This will allow for an essentially complete return to normal campus activities. However, enhanced online course options will still be needed for students who are not able to return to Ottawa in a timely manner.

Guidelines for Academic Program Planning for Fall 2021

In light of the factors noted and in consultation with various groups across the university, we recommend that Carleton structures the academic timetable in a way that will facilitate flexible planning. Pivoting from face-to-face classes to online learning is significantly easier than trying to add in-person learning to courses that have been planned for online. The recommended guidelines will allow the university to provide face-to-face options for students who are eager to return to campus and online options for students who cannot be in Ottawa, as well as the ability to pivot to online learning if necessary. The CUSP Working Group recommends the following guidelines for preparing the academic timetable:

- Maximize face-to-face learning opportunities for students

- Provide some face-to-face learning opportunities at all levels of every program
- Provide some online programming options for those students who cannot come to campus (Note: Not all courses will be available in online format.)
- Prepare to implement physical distancing without redoing the course schedule
- Make strategic decisions regarding the mode of course delivery based on program needs and sound pedagogy
- Provide individual faculty and staff with reasonable accommodations where needed for medical, family status or other human rights grounds

Capacity Constraints

The return to campus in the Fall 2021 term will not be a return to full capacity. If physical distancing guidelines are in place, classroom capacity will be reduced. Even if physical distancing requirements are relaxed, people may not initially feel comfortable in close contact. Consequently, we recommend that the university:

- Plans for reduced classroom occupancy in line with public health restrictions
- Sets a maximum capacity of 60 people for face-to-face sections

Prioritizing Courses for Face-to-Face Delivery

Courses should be prioritized for face-to-face delivery based on the following considerations:

Learning Outcomes

Experiential learning, lab components, skill development and centrality to program objectives

Pedagogy

High-impact practices and graduate programs

Options for Students

For each program and year level, at least one to two course sections that are face-to-face and one to two that are online (Note: in some cases, this may require collaboration across units.)

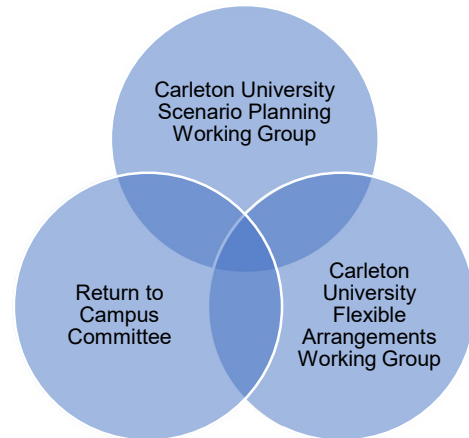
Accommodations for Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff members who are unable to return to campus due to medical or unusual family reasons should speak to their manager about possible accommodations. These accommodations will follow existing protocols and processes. Managers should reach out to Human Resources – or in the case of academic employees, to the Office of the Deputy Provost – for guidance on these processes.

Guidelines are also being developed to support the transition back to campus in the fall and flexible work arrangements post-pandemic. In the scheduling of courses, Chairs and Directors should try to accommodate faculty preferences for online or face-to-face teaching where these can be aligned with program delivery requirements.

The Planning Ecosystem

While CUSP's mandate is to make recommendations for academic programming, other Carleton committees are developing related protocols. The Return to Campus Committee is looking at all aspects of a safe return to campus. The Carleton University Flexible Arrangements Working Group is developing flexible workplace policies. All three of these committees work in collaboration and report to the COVID-19 Steering Committee.



Return to Campus (RTC) Principles

The return to campus will be gradual and phased. Community health and safety will be the primary concern and guiding principle behind the return to campus. The return will abide by Provincial Government Orders and the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Required staff will return in phases prior to the return of students and classes, to prepare offices, buildings and other areas.

Areas should return in priority sequence as follows:

- Core services that remained on campus include Facilities Management and Planning, Campus Safety, Campus Services, Health and Counselling Services, Residence and Athletics
- Areas that support labs and research, including the library (already on campus)
- Research – for those with approved research plans (already on campus)
- Areas that directly support students (e.g., Registrar, Financial Aid, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, Academic Management, Student Accounts, Academic Departments, etc.) and Teaching and Learning Services
- Administrative and governance areas (e.g., Information Technology Services, Financial Services, Human Resources, Business Office (excluding Student Accounts), University Secretariat, etc.) and other areas as required

There may be some deviations from this plan. For instance, some Information Technology Services staff may need to return sooner than their colleagues in order to support student-facing units.

Return to Campus Committee Responsibilities

RTC has broad responsibilities for setting and monitoring the parameters of a safe return to campus. RTC works closely with Ottawa Public Health in determining the most appropriate safety protocols for various campus activities such as classroom conduct and tunnel usage. RTC is also responsible for ensuring that these protocols are supported with appropriate resources. All departments will need to prepare detailed plans for their own return to campus. Departmental plans will be reviewed and recommended by RTC before final approval from the COVID-19 Steering Committee. Key RTC responsibilities are summarized below followed by departmental responsibilities in preparing for a safe return to campus.

RTC Issue	RTC Actions
Preparation of buildings, common areas, tunnels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning protocols, supplies and staffing • Screening protocols and building access issues • Symptom reporting, contact tracing and isolation requirements • Physical distancing and room capacity • Mask and sanitizer use • Signage, crowd control, barriers and traffic flow • Remote work where appropriate • Non-academic space utilization
Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement of necessary supplies for departments • Signage and directional markers • Cleaning supplies • Plexiglass barriers and related requirements
Vaccinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Ottawa Public Health to develop a strategy for Carleton community and community at large (e.g., possible clinic) • Develop a vaccination policy and guidelines based on legal advice and government recommendations

Departmental Responsibilities

Department Issue	Department Actions
Develop or update return to campus plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare or update the unit's return to campus plan using guidelines and templates provided by RTC • Submit plan (or revised plan) to RTC for review • Revise plans as needed (RTC will contact departments as needed)
Review staffing requirements and schedules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess staff capacity and prepare schedules based on space capacity and resources • Consider desk location, physical distancing requirements and traffic flow • Consider barriers needed for frontline services
Order supplies from eShop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning supplies • Plexiglass barriers • Signage • Personal care kits

The Return to Campus Committee will be conducting a series of consultations to share plans and identify all issues related to a safe and gradual return to campus. They will also work closely with departments to ensure that departmental plans meet all safety standards.

CU Flexible Arrangements Working Group (CUFA)

The Carleton University Flexible Arrangements Working Group has been created to develop flexible work arrangement frameworks for administrative staff and managers for the gradual

return to campus as well as post-pandemic. It includes membership from across the university, working in partnership with RTC and CUSP. Guidelines are being developed to help managers make decisions that prioritize organizational needs while providing some flexibility for staff. The guidelines will be distinct from processes of medical accommodation or accommodation on human rights grounds such as family status.

CUFA is currently engaged in consultations with key stakeholders and has already met with over 20 groups and 400 people. CUFA's guiding principles indicate that flexible work arrangements should be developed in an equitable manner, in accordance with academic needs, and reviewed on a regular basis. CUFA's guidelines – which will be released in May 2021 – will play a key role in helping managers to support a gradual, phased return to campus and flexibility for staff post-pandemic. Human Resources will provide support to managers in developing these arrangements.

Moving Forward in the Planning Process

Planning for the 2021-22 academic year is a dynamic process. CUSP's recommendations provide the basis for planning by RTC and CUFA. Consultations for each of these groups overlap and inform each other. As public health guidelines evolve and we get closer to September, adjustments to these plans may be necessary. To access the latest plans for each of these groups, please consult the following websites:

- [Carleton University Scenario Planning Working Group](#)
- [Return to Campus Committee](#)
- [Carleton University Flexible Arrangements Working Group](#)