

MEDIA RELEASE

CUFA BC Responds to AEST Return-to-Campus Guidelines

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̓xwú7mesh (Squamish) & səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Territories – Vancouver, BC, July 5, 2021) – The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) welcomes the release from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training of the [COVID-19 Return-to-Campus Guidelines](#). This is the final document in a series of [sector-specific guidance](#) for post-secondary institutions released throughout the pandemic. It will facilitate the full return of faculty, staff, and students to campus this fall and aligns with the four-part provincial Restart Plan launched earlier in the year.

“Faculty are excited to return to a safe and healthy campus this fall,” says President Dr. Daniel Laitsch, “We commend Government for involving us in a formative process to develop these Guidelines, and for giving us the opportunity to share the faculty perspective.”

The Guidelines were developed in a consultation process that involved a steering committee, panel of experts, public health partners, and consultations with reference groups from labour, student associations, and Indigenous partners. CUFA BC was a stakeholder in the consultations this year and last, and spoke to the faculty perspective on matters of participation in institutional decision-making, the need for clear communications from government and administrations, and the value of supporting faculty as they moved mountains to support students toward the successful completion of their studies.

“Overall, we appreciate that the Guidelines prioritize support for faculty, staff, and students in their return to campuses across the province,” says Laitsch. “While we still have some concerns regarding particularly large classes running this fall, and would have liked to see greater support for department and Faculty autonomy in continuing remote teaching and learning in some instances, we have confidence that these guidelines will support our safe return to in person teaching and research.”

“The Guidelines acknowledge the anxiety felt by so many as we anticipate the return to campus,” says Executive Director Annabree Fairweather. “We are pleased with the emphasis from Government for faculty to be included in return-to-campus planning and encouraging institutions to be generous in their accommodations for faculty as well as staff and students.”

Over the longer term, the pandemic has exposed significant structural vulnerabilities in our post-secondary system. Government will need to work closely with the post-secondary sector to address issues, including health and mental health supports and services for all members of the campus community; paid sick leave for all campus workers; and reducing the over-reliance on both term-limited contracts and international tuition to cover systemic underinvestment. The greatest support institutions can provide faculty is fair and equitable working conditions.

CUFA BC looks forward to being an active partner over the summer in anticipation of the return to campus, and in future in helping to address the systemic vulnerabilities revealed by the pandemic.

For further information or comment please contact CUFA BC Executive Director Annabree Fairweather at 604-367-5856 or executive.director@cufa.bc.ca.

CUFA BC represents over 5,500 faculty members, including professors, professional librarians, lecturers, instructors, and other academics at the five research-intensive universities in British Columbia, which include University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, Royal Roads University and University of Northern British Columbia. CUFA BC [celebrates fifty years](#) of working closely with the member Faculty Associations at each institution. Our purposes are to support high-quality post-secondary education and research in British Columbia and to advocate for the interests of our members.

