

A MESSAGE FROM DR. JANET MORRISON

JANUARY 6, 2022



Winter 2022 and the COVID-19 Roller Coaster

January 6, 2022

Colleagues: Happy New Year! I hope you were able to rest and recharge over the break.

As you know, the provincial government announced new measures to temporarily move the province back to [modified Step Two](#) of its reopening plan. These measures came into effect yesterday: Wednesday, January 5. The Ministry of Colleges and Universities has advised that these changes do not impact instructional spaces in postsecondary institutions, but they have recommended that we move back to remote learning. Further, we've been encouraged to have employees work remotely whenever possible.

We knew in December that a post-holiday surge, fueled by the Omicron variant of concern, was likely. In anticipation of that -- and to provide as much certainty as possible to students and staff -- [Sheridan announced](#) in December that our start date would remain January 10, and that most courses would be delivered remotely until January 24. There are, as you'd expect, some exceptions where in-person learning will begin on January 10 as planned. These include some practical labs and health care programs; please be assured that all impacted students have been notified via email and that the information is [posted on myOTR](#). Please also note that student services will remain available online.

Notwithstanding that we are proceeding as planned, I have a few other updates to share today.

- **Vaccines**
- **Rapid antigen testing**
- **Masks**
- **Reporting**
- **Working remotely**
- **On-campus presence**
- **Roller coasters**

Vaccines

As I mentioned in December, we expect the definition of "fully vaccinated" will evolve to ultimately include booster shots. Until, however, third doses are readily available to everyone in our learning community, what we consider "fully vaccinated" remains the same - in most cases, two doses of a Health Canada-approved vaccine, with the final dose having been received at least 14 days prior. Our Health Centres are working to secure vaccines for booster shots, but the province's supply of vaccines is currently strained. **If there is sufficient demand, we would like to host a Moderna vaccine clinic for the Sheridan community. To gauge the need for vaccines -- including boosters, please [fill out this very short survey by January 10](#).**

Rapid antigen testing

Rapid antigen testing is available at the following times to any member of the Sheridan community who is eligible to be on campus and wants to test as a precaution:

- Davis: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. – B236
- HMC: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. – B194
- Trafalgar: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. – B101

Masks

Everyone who enters campus must wear a Sheridan-issued mask. Very recently, [Public Health Ontario](#) stated that both medical masks and respirators (e.g., N95s) are effective against the COVID-19 virus and that differences in efficacy between the two are likely small, especially when they fit well and are worn consistently.

However, Sheridan has been working to procure a stable and sustainable supply of N95 masks for employees who are deemed essential to be on campus. We will endeavour to have these masks available for the duration of the semester although the supplies of N95 masks in Ontario are extremely limited. Occupational Health and Safety will have guidance regarding appropriate use and disposal.

If you want to wear your own N95 mask on campus, you will be asked to wear the Sheridan-issued medical mask over your N95 as we are seeing many masks being marketed as N95s that do not meet applicable standards.

Reporting

Given the test positivity rate in Ontario, some have asked if members of the Sheridan community must continue to report positive cases. Rigorous reporting is the key to contact tracing and has been critical to our success in limiting infection and transmission on our campuses throughout the pandemic. Given that imperative, **employees and students must report if they have been on campus within the 48 hours before testing positive or having symptoms of COVID-19, or if you were on campus or expected to be on campus during your self isolation period.**

Students should report to the Health Centre at 605-845-9430 ext 5153. Employees should report to the Occupational Health and Safety Services at ohsservices@sheridancollege.ca.

If you are working remotely, you do not need to advise Sheridan unless accommodation is needed because you cannot work due to illness or caregiving responsibilities.

Working remotely

There are [options](#) for colleagues who are working remotely and trying to juggle caregiving responsibilities. We know that's really tough so please speak to your manager about temporarily modifying aspects of your work during this time. Managers are asked to be as empathetic as possible when considering flexible working options. In a similar vein, we're encouraging employees to propose practical, sustainable solutions that will enable Sheridan to meet its obligations in the face of ongoing resource challenges that are impacting every aspect of our operations.

Information about air quality improvements, cleaning and [other FAQs are posted on Sheridan's COVID-19 page](#). In addition, policies, teaching resources and support for managers and employees can be found on [Sheridan Central](#). Please also familiarize yourself with Sheridan's many [wellness programs](#) including mental health care, the Employee and Family Assistance Program and other related supports.

On-campus presence

Only students and employees who have in-person classes or have been deemed essential can be on campus at this time. Gyms are closed. Bookstores at all three campuses have curbside pick-up, but the Davis bookstore will be open for in-person shopping to accommodate a higher number of in-person classes. Tim Hortons at the Davis campus will be open on January 10 and all other food outlets, including those at Trafalgar and HMC, will open January 24. Cafeterias will remain accessible as study spaces, with the caveat that physical distancing must be maintained at all times. Xerox will accept online orders and offer curbside pickup, mailroom drop or delivery via Purolator. IT services will be available virtually and for curbside pickup.

The roller coaster

COVID is like a roller coaster – the ride is full of ups and downs. We anticipate a peak, but the unknown path and timing continues to cause tremendous uncertainty. Twenty-one months into this global crisis, however, we know more about what to expect and how to manage through it. In that vein, I'm asking every member of our learning community to continue: focusing on self-care; being vigilant about your own and others' health and wellbeing; and, demonstrating compassionate and empathy. Finally, please ask for help if you need it. This too shall pass, and I remain positive about 2022.

Back in March 2020, we were clueless about the length, volatility and consequences of this pandemic. Together, we articulated and have acted in accordance with five principles:

- The physical health and holistic wellbeing of our entire learning community is paramount.
- Across as many academic programs as possible, we will facilitate academic completion for learners through an alternate/remote delivery model and social distancing. In all instances, planning will respect the pillars of our Academic Plan: character, quality and accountability.
- Sheridan will navigate the pandemic response together, as a learning community, in ways that demonstrate kindness, generosity, and compassion.
- Safeguarding the long-term economic sustainability of Sheridan is an imperative.
- Our long-term lens will remain rivetted to the four priorities and five enablers crystallized in our Strategic Plan.

These principles have been our north star as we've navigated physical, mental and financial health challenges and risks – together -- over the last 20 months. They reflect our shared commitment to academic rigour and Sheridan's trademark kindness. You have my word that I will endeavour to continue leading with them always at the fore.

I really, really hope that this wave will peak quickly so we can be back on campus January 24. As always, however, Sheridan will make decisions based on data, and in consultation with public health experts.

You can be assured I'll continue to keep you updated.

Warmly,

Janet Morrison, PhD
President and Vice Chancellor