Preface

On September 8, 2022, Governor Inslee announced the termination of the WA State emergency proclamation effective October 31, 2022. With the end of this proclamation, the WA Guidance for Higher Education also ends Bellingham Technical College (BTC) will no longer require attestations of vaccination for enrollment, although some programs may require vaccinations based on health care requirements.

As we move forward, we remain mindful of the lessons we have learned and how we can apply those lessons to all contagious or infectious diseases that our campus may encounter. BTC will monitor future guidance from Whatcom Department of Health to ensure the campus remains a safe learning environment.

This procedure articulates our guiding principles and process going forward to maintain a healthy campus community in a sustainable way. The college will continue to provide support and information to our campus community as we move forward.

Principles

Stay healthy and engage in healthy practices. BTC encourages all students to manage their health through proper diet, exercise, and stress reduction to the extent possible. Please check these links for general advice and consult your health care provider: [CDC Healthy Living](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyliving/index.html), [WA DoH You and Your Family](https://www.doh.wa.gov/).  

Engage in good public hygiene practices. This includes frequent hand washing, appropriate masking, and staying current on all recommended vaccinations (including COVID-19 and all applicable booster shots and flu vaccines). Make staying healthy and keeping your community healthy a consistent practice. Please check these links for general advice: [CDC Hygiene](https://www.cdc.gov/hygiene/index.html), [CDC Vaccine Information for Adults](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/index.html), [WA DoH Immunization](https://www.doh.wa.gov/).  

If you are sick, stay home. Students and employees have a social obligation to help keep each other healthy and take steps to prevent the spread of illness. It is the responsibility of the individual to determine if they should stay home and not come to campus due to an illness. 

It is the student’s responsibility to notify faculty when they are ill and to stay current with coursework. Students must report all illness to faculty and may be required to follow Whatcom County Health Department guidelines regarding quarantine or isolation for infectious illness. If quarantine or isolation is required, students may not be released to return to class until certain conditions are met or a medical release is provided. BTC is committed to the success of students who may be affected by illness. To the extent possible, faculty will work with students to help them stay current with coursework and access alternative means of instruction. However, it is ultimately the student’s responsibility to contact their faculty member(s) and meet stated course deadlines. If a student is unable to meet course outcomes, they may withdraw from the class (standard refund dates apply).
Students with flu or COVID-like symptoms

If a student starts to exhibit flu or COVID-19 like symptoms, it must be reported to faculty, and the student should take a COVID-19 test. If the student tests negative for COVID-19, isolate for at least five days. If during the five days of isolation the student becomes asymptomatic for over 24 hours without medication, the student may return to campus with second negative COVID-19 test result. It is recommended that they wear a well-fitting mask (KN-95 or equivalent) for 10 days after the onset of symptoms after returning to campus.

Students testing positive for COVID-19

If a student tests positive for COVID-19, it must be reported immediately to faculty. The student should isolate for a minimum of 5 days or until they are asymptomatic for over 24 hours without medication. They should wear a well-fitting mask (KN-95 or equivalent) for 5 days after they return to campus.

Students exposed to COVID-19

If a student has been in close contact (within six feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes within 24 hours) with someone who has been confirmed with a positive case of COVID-19, report this to faculty as soon as possible. Students may return to campus and should wear a KN-95 or equivalent mask when on campus for 10 days. It is recommended that the student takes a test five days after exposure. If the student tests positive, follow the procedures for students testing positive for COVID-19.

Bellingham Technical College will not generally be closing or pausing instructional cohorts if illness is reported. When appropriate, the college may inform specific campus populations of an outbreak of infectious disease, advise them of pertinent guidelines, and/or possibly require modifications to operations. See btc.edu for any updates regarding college services and operations.

Process

Follow directions from the Whatcom County Health Department regarding COVID-19 exposure or infection.

Campus awareness. The college will notify programs or departments about public health issues of general concern. All communication about such incidents will come from the college and should not come from individuals.

Faculty response. Faculty who receive notification of a student with a positive COVID-19 test will report the information to the Illness Response Team (studentillness@btc.edu). The Team will contact the reporting student directly with clear instruction on the protocols to follow in response to their circumstance. Students may not return to campus sooner than allowed by applicable Whatcom County Health Department guidelines and will be subject to Student Code of Conduct sanctions if they do so. The Illness Response Team will be the follow-up contact for reporting students.
Faculty who receive notification of a student with a positive COVID-19 test in their class or cohort will work with their Dean and the Illness Response Team to determine if it is appropriate to advise students of potential exposure. If notification is appropriate, faculty will be provided communication templates that include guidelines for recommended response.