

COVID-19 Re-opening Plan – Fall 2020

Last updated August 12, 2020

The Vector Institute is committed to taking a thoughtful and transparent approach as we open the Vector suite at 661 University Avenue in the MaRS Centre, West Tower.

The intent of this document is to summarize current access plans, which will continue to evolve over time and change based on guidance provided by government orders, public health authorities, the MaRS Centre (home to the Vector Institute), and the University of Toronto (Vector's most closely-affiliated university).

Additional resources and instructions will be provided as they become available. The most current version of this document will also be posted on Vector's COVID-19 webpage at:

<https://vectorinstitute.ai/covid-19-updates/>

Vector Institute Plan (Last updated August 12, 2020)

Those staff members and researchers wishing to return to the office for any reason are welcome to submit an access request by contacting their direct supervisor by **August 21, 2020** for access beginning on September 8. Requests should detail the number of days per week as well as the preferred day(s), if applicable, on which the individual would like to be in the office.

Users who would like to access the space after September 8, 2020 will have the opportunity to **submit access requests on a monthly basis** depending on individual needs, which is intended to accommodate those who may have fluctuating schedules and commitments during the start of the academic term.

After September 8, 2020 **access requests will be accepted on a rolling basis two weeks before the start of each month.**

For example, if you would like to access the Vector Institute space starting in October, you must submit a request to your direct supervisor no later than September 15. If you wish to access Vector starting in November, requests must be received by October 15, and so on.

Approved access requests will be assumed to carry over into the next month unless specifically stated otherwise or if an individual's term at Vector comes to an end.

Note that users who request access but do not visit the space for 60 consecutive days may have their access revoked.

To allow for physical distancing and to promote safety and hygiene in the office, the **number of available desks at Vector has been reduced by approximately 50 per cent.**

Desks that were previously assigned to lab groups may be assigned to researchers or professional staff from other teams, depending on demand and availability.

If you have personal items at Vector, you may be asked to retrieve and remove these items. The Office Services team will contact users individually if this is required.

Those users not wishing to use a desk at Vector may only gain physical access to the office if so approved in advance of the visit by the Office Services Manager.

Further, **the Vector Institute will be closed to all non-access card holders and external guests during this time.**

Staff and researchers who do not wish to return to the office will continue under work-from-home arrangements until at least December 31, 2020.

Arrangements have been made to facilitate access to computing resources for both onsite researchers and for those connecting remotely.

Frequently Asked Questions

Access

Q: *Will guests, visitors, or other non-access card holders be granted access to the Vector Institute's offices?*

A: In accordance with MaRS guidelines, only access card holders may enter the building and the Vector suite.

Although the MaRS Centre has setup access requirements for external guests and visitors, the Vector Institute is not generally prepared to accommodate these requirements at this time.

Meetings with external visitors or guests should be conducted electronically or take place in-person outside of the MaRS building, provided that the participants can satisfy public health guidelines and maintain social distancing.

Q: *How many members of my team or research lab will be eligible to be in Vector on a given day?*

A: Density and occupancy restrictions will be based on guidance provided by government orders, public health authorities, and the MaRS Centre.

Generally, you should expect that not all members of a professional staff team or lab group will be eligible for access at any given time and that large group meetings (e.g., meetings of four* individuals or more) should be conducted electronically or take place in-person outside of the MaRS building provided that the participants can satisfy public health guidelines and maintain social distancing.

*The maximum number of individuals permitted to occupy one multi-purpose room simultaneously is four, but multiple MPRs combined may be able to accommodate a larger meeting.

Q: *Am I required to wear a face mask in Vector?*

A: Vector and the MaRS Centre will observe and enforce all public health recommendations on social distancing (e.g., remaining six feet apart at all times and wearing a mask if social distancing is not possible). Therefore, one should wear a face mask when travelling to and moving around the Vector office and common areas of the MaRS building. However, one need not wear a mask if one is working alone, able to satisfy public health guidelines, and maintain physical distancing; or if one is exempt from wearing a mask under Toronto by-law 541-2020: <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-what-you-should-do/covid-19-orders-directives-by-laws/>

Q: *Will Vector provide face masks?*

A: All personnel are encouraged to acquire and wear their own face masks for reasons of comfort, fit, and preference.

Vector has provided a supply of face masks intended to accommodate personnel who forget their mask, have a mask damaged while at Vector, or may not yet have been able to acquire their own.

Q: *If I do not request regular access to Vector initially, will I be able to enter the Vector Institute's offices for the purposes of picking up equipment and/or personal belongings for at home use?*

A: Staff and Vector Researchers can contact the Office Services team to coordinate a time to enter Vector to pick up personal belongings, business resources, or assigned equipment.

Vector equipment can be loaned to both professional staff and Vector researchers under certain conditions. For research labs, there must also be equipment available i.e., Vector does not guarantee that dedicated equipment is available for every individual researcher.

Vector equipment cannot be loaned to non-Vector researchers.

Q: *Will access to Vector continue to be allowed on evenings and weekends?*

A: If your request for access to the Vector Institute during this time is approved, your card will allow you to enter the office for the full 24 hours on the day(s) you have requested. Policies in respect of physical distancing and mask use are in effect at all times, including those times when professional staff are not onsite in the office.

Health

Q: *If I am feeling unwell will I be eligible to enter the Vector space?*

A: If you are feeling unwell in any way, regardless of the severity of your symptoms or whether or not your symptoms are recognized symptoms of COVID-19, you should not enter either the MaRS Centre or Vector Institute offices and should comply with all guidance set by public health authorities.

Q: *If I have come into contact with someone who has a presumptive or confirmed case of COVID-19, am I required to notify Vector and/or self-isolate for a period of two weeks?*

A: Should you come into contact with someone with a presumptive or confirmed case of COVID-19, please notify your direct supervisor (who will inform Vector Human Resources) and suspend visitation to the Vector suite immediately.

The duration of your suspension will be based on guidance from public health authorities. Should you test negative for COVID-19 following the contact, you are not displaying symptoms of the virus, and exposure to the individual with the presumptive or confirmed case has not continued, you may be eligible to return to Vector earlier than the recommended public health quarantine period.

Q: *Am I required to notify Vector and/or stay home for a two-week period if I have a presumptive or confirmed case of COVID-19?*

A: Should you be diagnosed with a presumptive or confirmed case of COVID-19, please notify your direct supervisor and suspend visitation to the Vector suite immediately.

The duration of your suspension will be based on guidance from public health authorities.

Q: *Will I be notified in the event that someone in the Vector space has a confirmed or presumptive case of COVID-19?*

A: Yes, a general notice will be shared with all individuals with active access cards to the Vector Institute.

The privacy of the individual will be maintained to the extent that is possible while ensuring we are taking the most appropriate steps to preserve the health and safety of others (e.g., those who work most closely with the individual may be provided additional communication including the dates and times of the individual's recent access).

Q: Will the office be closed in the event that a user has a presumptive or confirmed case of COVID-19?

A: The Vector Institute will work closely with MaRS Centre and follow all public health guidelines in respect of the different situations that may arise. Part of these guidelines may involve closing the Vector Institute for disinfecting, which may take several days to coordinate and execute.

As the Vector Institute could close at any time without significant notice, you are advised to take essential items home with you on a daily basis.

Should additional public health guidelines regarding organizational response to a presumptive or confirmed case of COVID-19 in a workplace be provided, Vector will comply with these recommendations.

Physical Space

Q: What changes can I expect regarding the layout and use of the Vector space?

A: The Vector Institute has considered several approaches and options and has made decisions intended to preserve the health and safety of all members of the Vector community.

Decisions considered guidance from public health authorities and the MaRS Centre, evaluation of their both real and perceived practicality, cost of implementation, impact to Vector culture, and projected overall effectiveness.

Conditions of access will evolve over time, but the following changes are being enacted in the Vector office:

- Upon arrival in MaRS and the 7th floor, all access card holders will be asked to wash their hands before entering the Vector Institute and to use an alcohol-based sanitizer upon entering the suite.
 - Hand sanitizer stations are available throughout the MaRS Centre and Vector office.
- Public health recommendations on social distancing (e.g., remaining six feet apart at all times and wearing a mask if social distancing is not possible) will be observed and enforced.
- In respecting social distancing guidelines, access to meeting rooms will be restricted to the following:
 - Huddle rooms and unassigned private offices – one user at a time; and
 - Hilbert, Banach, Euclidean, or Sobolev spaces – four users at a time, ensuring social distancing requirements are respected.
- All meeting room bookings must be arranged ahead of time, via direct online calendar booking or by contacting services@vectorinstitute.ai. Room booking panels will not be available for walk-up booking use.
- Private offices will be restricted for use by the assigned occupant only unless the occupant is under a work-from-home arrangement.
- VOIP phones will be temporarily removed from huddle rooms.

- Access to common area refrigerators, shared dishes, and the dishwasher will be temporarily suspended.
- Microwaves in both kitchens will remain available with users being required to wipe down surfaces before and after use.
- Coffee and tea services will be temporarily suspended.
- Workstation availability will be staggered such that social distancing measures can be respected (i.e., desks that are directly adjacent to one another will be off-limits).
- Workstation shuffles and the availability of floating or shared workstations will be temporarily suspended.
- Desks will be assigned directly to those individuals who have requested and have been subsequently approved to return to the Vector space.
- The amount of reception/lounge furniture available for use will be reduced.
- All users of the space will be required to wipe down public surfaces throughout the day with alcohol-based disinfecting wipes. This requirement includes wiping down your workstation upon arrival into the office and prior to your departure, as well as wiping down any shared spaces immediately following use including desks and doorknobs, meeting rooms, printers, keyboards, and the kitchen counter.
 - Alcohol-based hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes will be available in all high traffic areas including printer and meeting rooms.
- Additional and more frequent cleaning and janitorial services will be provided.
- If necessary, fixed schedules for access may be introduced to help ensure social distancing.

Q: *What other protection measures had Vector considered for implementation?*

A: The Vector Institute has considered various additional control measures such as:

- Installation of new, taller, frosted glass dividers between workstations, including an additional barrier at the front desk.
- Installation of thermal cameras, or temperature scanning at all entrances.
- Installation of touch-free door opening mechanisms.
- The requirement for all personnel to wear face masks at all times while in the Vector space.

However, the Vector Institute may implement additional protective measures based on guidance from public health authorities and the MaRS Centre.

Q: *Will a member of the Office Services Team be on site at all times for assistance and questions regarding the physical space?*

A: A member of the Office Services Team will, pending scheduling conflicts and regular breaks, be available at the front desk Monday-Friday during the day (approximately 9:00am to 4:00pm).

Should a member of the Office Services Team not be immediately available for support, you can contact them on Slack) or speak with another member of the professional staff.

Q: *Can we expect other restrictions within the MaRS building?*

A: Yes. Vector expects to receive regular updates to the guidelines that are made available from MaRS.

Events and Meetings

Q: Will Vector in-person events resume during this initial access period?

A: As described in the Ontario Government's *Framework for Reopening our Province*, large public gatherings such as concerts and sporting events will continue to be restricted for the foreseeable future.

In the absence of direction to the contrary from public health authorities and the MaRS Centre, large Vector events will continue to be delivered virtually until further notice.

Q: Can meetings such as reading groups or talks be held in the Vector office?

A: Meetings can be held within the Vector space so long as they respect the abovementioned measures surrounding social distancing (i.e., all individuals must maintain a distance of six feet from one another), meeting room occupancy (i.e., no more than four users can be in a large meeting room at any one time), and access (i.e., only access card holders are permitted into the space).

Travel and Commuting

Q: When travel restrictions are lifted, will staff or researchers be eligible to travel for business purposes?

A: Professional staff of the Vector Institute will be eligible to travel for business-critical purposes only. Approval will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Researchers should look to the guidelines of their home institutions for clarity on travel authorization and procedures e.g., the University of Toronto describes that, "International travel restrictions will likely remain in place for some time. When these restrictions are lifted, there will likely be strict quarantine requirements for those coming to our campuses from abroad, such as international students and new faculty. The University will support travelers to meet these self-isolation requirements."

Q: Will I be required to quarantine or suspend access to the Vector space following travel?

A: The Vector Institute will not impose its own instructions separate and apart from public health guidelines regarding quarantine guidelines following travel.

Q: Will professional staff be eligible for reimbursement for parking, Uber, taxi or other ride services that will limit my use of public transit in travelling to and from Vector?

A: As an organization funded in part by the federal and provincial governments, we are unable to provide perquisites such as reimbursement for travel to and from the Vector Institute except for reasons of public safety after hours.

All members of the Vector community are encouraged to review and adhere to the various guidelines set forth by public health officials and transit authorities to ensure a safe commute.

Compliance and Questions

Q: Who should I contact regarding questions or concerns surrounding office procedures?

A: You may contact the point-of-contact most directly accessible to you, which is usually either your direct manager or faculty supervisor. You may also contact the Office Services team,

Human Resources team, or the Chief Operations Officer in the event that your direct manager or faculty supervisor is unavailable.

Q: *Is compliance with these new procedures and guidelines mandatory while in the Vector space?*

A: Yes, you are required to comply with all procedures and guidelines set forth in this document as a condition of access to the Vector Institute. The primary goal of these conditions is protecting the health and safety of all members of the Vector community.

Non-compliance with any of these measures may be met with disciplinary action up to and including temporary loss of access to the Vector space, the end of your term at the Vector Institute and/or dismissal.

Q: *Will there be changes to any of Vector's existing policies and programs (e.g., the Code of Conduct, Health and Safety Policy, Access agreements, or terms of Short-Term Disability)?*

A: In a response to COVID-19, a review of applicable Vector policies is currently underway. Material changes to policies that are applicable to you in your role at the Vector Institute will be shared with you directly.

Resources

Should you require remote scientific computing support please contact a member of the scientific computing team.

If you have questions related to COVID-19, you can contact Telehealth Ontario, which is a free, confidential service that provides health advice and information. Call 1-866-797-0000 or visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-medical-advice-telehealth-ontario> to learn more.

Should you require resources related to your personal or mental health, please contact the Vector Institute's Employee Assistance Plan, which is available to all staff and researchers.

Researchers may also contact their Student Services or Human Resources department at their respective institutions for additional support programs.

Anyone in crisis is encouraged to contact the Crisis Services Canada national line at 1-833-456-4566 or text 45645 (in Quebec, call: 1-866-277-3553) If the risk is immediate, call 9-1-1.

Should you have general questions regarding COVID-19, or Vector's COVID-19 response including ongoing research projects, please visit our dedicated [public web page](#).