

COVID-19 Guidelines for Operation of Private Language Schools

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Background

Languages Canada is the national association representing approximately 200 accredited English and French language education programs in over 180 study locations in nearly all regions of the country. Member programs include private language schools and public universities and colleges. Languages Canada members welcome approximately 150,000 international students to Canada every year.

A list of LC members can be found [HERE](#).

Languages Canada membership is limited to programs that meet the rigorous requirements of our Quality Assurance Framework, which involves a commitment to student protection, an independent accreditation process, and adherence to Languages Canada's Standards and Code of Conduct. LC's membership Standards and Code of Conduct require all members to comply with relevant Canadian federal and provincial/territorial laws with regards to employee and student protections.

In the reopening of private language schools following the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, Languages Canada member schools are committed to operating in a way that prioritizes the health and safety of students, staff, host families, and communities, and adheres to the reopening regulations and guidelines of the government of Canada, as well as provincial and local public health authorities.

The following guidelines have been developed to support LC private member schools in the development of their readiness plans and provides a baseline from which each member will determine the best operating procedure for their respective schools to ensure a safe workplace and study environment. Individual plans for each school will be required, and will vary depending on the size, configuration and use of each facility, and must be in compliance with local and provincial health and safety directives and COVID-19 directives of the Public Health Agency of Canada, such as the [Public Health Institutional Readiness Requirements for International Students](#).

Note that the measures listed here are understood to be the minimum requirements for compliance with COVID-19 public health directives and will be updated as needed to reflect current public health and safety guidelines. LC members may choose to go above and beyond these guidelines in order to ensure that staff, students and communities are safe and protected.

Roles and responsibilities

Top management will demonstrate leadership and commitment to ensure compliance with public health requirements. Top management will:

- Develop a comprehensive COVID-19 readiness/operations plan for their school facilities, based on the guidelines outlined in this document and in compliance with provincial public health and workplace safety guidelines;
- Submit their COVID-19 readiness plan for approval to designated provincial authorities;
- Communicate and enforce their COVID-19 plan to all staff and students, including a comprehensive induction of this protocol in new staff and student orientation sessions;
- Provide resources as needed to ensure their COVID-19 plans are implemented successfully, including training, signage and equipment/supplies;
- Assign a representative or representatives at the school who have been given the authority to enforce all required policies and ensure the requirements of the protocol have been established, implemented and maintained.

Monitoring of staff and students

- Staff will be trained on observable symptoms of COVID-19, [as per Public Health Agency of Canada](#);
- Schools' staff will conduct daily monitoring of students for visible cold, flu, fever or COVID-19-related symptoms. Schools may choose to conduct temperature checks at the point of entry. Students will be informed of expectations for daily-self monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19;
- If any symptoms are present, the student, faculty or staff member will be asked to head directly to an isolation room in the school or return home immediately. [See "Case Management and Outbreak Response" section below](#);

- A daily attendance will be taken of staff, students and visitors which can be provided, if necessary, to public health authorities for the purpose of contact tracing. [See “Case Management and Outbreak Response” section below.](#)

Physical distancing

Schools will introduce measures that will ensure adherence to [physical distancing guidelines, as promoted by the Public Health Agency of Canada](#) and provincial/territorial health authorities, both in the classroom and during circulation in the premises.

- Occupancy in classrooms and communal spaces will be managed to allow the recommended minimum distance between students and staff (2 metres). Classrooms will be arranged in such a way that students do not directly face one another;
- Occupancy limit signage will be displayed at the entrance of each classroom and common spaces;
- Timetables will be staggered to reduce student contact between classes and during breaks, when necessary;
- Pedagogical models will be adopted, if/when necessary, that manage higher risk activities such as group and pair work, providing guidance and alternative modes for communication and interaction to facilitate these activities;
- Schools will not offer adjunct social activities on site but may choose to provide students with opportunities to participate in virtual activities;
- Management will establish staffing schedules that reduce the in-person presence of staff on school premises, when necessary. (E.g. allowing some staff to work from home where possible; staggering attendance to reduce the number of employees on site on a given day.);
- Where there are possibilities of queues (e.g. at the reception desk) schools will install markings on the floor to guide students to observe appropriate physical distancing;

- In high-traffic and thoroughfare areas, schools will install arrows on the floor to guide students to observe appropriate physical distancing;
- Where physical distancing is not possible and/or in high-traffic areas, schools will institute additional protective measures (e.g. plexiglass partitioning at the reception desk) and/or use of masks.

Sanitization

Strict protocols on cleaning and disinfecting premises and other aspects of environmental health will be observed, using [approved hard-surface disinfectants](#) and following [guidelines from the Public Health Agency of Canada](#):

- Public spaces and communal areas shall be cleaned and disinfected multiple times per day, with emphasis on high touch surfaces such as front desk, door handles, desks, light switches, tables, shared computer equipment;
- Washrooms will be cleaned and disinfected daily, with more frequent cleaning of high-touch washroom surfaces (e.g. flush handles, faucets.);
- Communally used objects (e.g. coffee-makers, shared utensils/plates, microwaves) will be removed where practicable.

Staff and student hygiene

- Hand sanitizer dispensers shall be available in communal spaces and classrooms. A minimum of 60% ethyl alcohol or a public health or government-approved product is required. (Approved products are [listed here](#).) These dispensers will be checked regularly to ensure they are not empty;
- Adequate hand-washing facilities, including soap and hot-air or paper towel driers, will be provided;
- Signage on proper hand-washing technique will be displayed in all restrooms and sinks, [such as that provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada](#);

- Adequate respiratory hygiene products, (e.g. paper tissues) and bins for hygienic disposal will be provided in all classrooms and common spaces;
- Signage on cough/sneeze etiquette shall be displayed in all classrooms and common spaces, [such as this](#);
- Any employee cleaning any common areas/high-touch surfaces must wash their hands with soap and hot water, per recommended hand washing instructions after completing the cleaning task and prior to performing any other duties;
- Student/staff orientation shall include training on required hand washing, cough/sneeze technique. Staff and students will be advised to wash hands or use hand sanitizer: upon arrival; before eating or drinking; before preparing food; after touching shared items; after using the washroom; after handling garbage; and before leaving the school.

Personal protective equipment

Students, faculty and staff members will wear masks in all common areas of the school (hallways, lounges, entryways, washrooms, etc.). Students, faculty and staff members are not required to wear masks in the classroom as long as students are sitting at least 2 metres (6 feet) apart and facing in the same direction.

Schools will refer to [recommendations from the Public Health Agency of Canada](#) and provincial directives around appropriate personal protective equipment and the proper use and care of masks.

Protecting mental health

Recognizing that staff and students may also be affected by the anxiety and uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic, schools will:

- Provide information to students and staff on available resources specific to supporting mental health in a time of pandemic, such as [those provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada](#), the [Wellness](#)

[Together Canada portal](#) and other resources available from provincial health authorities;

- Maintain regular communication/check-ins with students/staff on mandatory self-isolation.

Students purchasing a [Languages Canada Study Safe Corridor – TRAVEL SAFE Canadian Arrival and Quarantine Package](#) will hold comprehensive health insurance coverage, including for COVID-19, and access to 24-hour mental health [Student Support Services](#), provided by [Guard.me International Insurance](#).

Promotion of reliable, accurate messages about COVID-19-related stigma and anti-racism supports

All schools will ensure their students receive accurate and up to date messaging regarding COVID-19 as part of orientation, during quarantine, and at any other time during their studies as appropriate.

In preparing their messaging, schools will reference reliable sources including the WHO, federal, provincial and local departments of health:

- WHO document "[Social Stigma associated with COVID-19](#)";
- Public Health Agency of Canada "[COVID-19: Testing and reducing stigma](#)";
- Public Health Agency of Canada "[Addressing Stigma: Towards a More Inclusive Health System](#)";
- Public Health Agency of Canada "[Addressing stigma in Canada's health system](#)";
- Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety handout "[Preventing Stigma](#)".

Schools will include information about COVID-19-related stigma and provide anti-racism supports to all students, both as part of orientation students and on an ongoing basis, as appropriate.

School staff will make it clear to all students, during orientation, that they must abide by all public health and school requirements related to physical distancing, hygiene, and sanitation.

Schools may need to adapt the provision of information and PPE for their student body, including – but not limited to – providing free masks to all students, providing information in multiple languages, and/or providing culturally appropriate options for students to meet requirements.

Case management and outbreak response

A robust plan for case management and outbreak response can limit the transmission of COVID-19 in the institution if individuals who are infected can be rapidly detected and isolated and contacts traced and quarantined. Please note that these measures will be updated as needed to reflect current public health and safety guidelines.

Schools will create an emergency plan for case management and outbreak response, including, but not limited to:

- Establishing a designated outbreak response team to address any outbreak or other significant COVID-19-related event on premises;
- Establishing notification and reporting protocols to the local Public Health Authority (PHA) in the event of a symptomatic student, faculty or staff member. Members will appoint a liaison between their institution and the PHA to establish a working relationship and effective communication. Schools may share their case management and outbreak response plans with the local PHA in advance of the academic year to ensure measures are in place to help protect their faculty, staff, students and guests;
- Establishing a plan to rapidly notify affected students, faculty, and staff members to take necessary actions, including rapid response measures for separating a symptomatic individual from others and returning them to their place of residence (arranging for safe transportation if required), and cleaning and disinfecting any space used and/or surface touched by the symptomatic individual;
 - A student, faculty or staff member who becomes unwell will perform a self-assessment using a provincial or federal online

COVID-19 self-assessment tool (i.e. [Health Canada COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#)) and follow the directions provided. If the student, faculty or staff member becomes unwell while at school, they will proceed directly to an isolation room in the school to perform the self-assessment;

- If the self-assessment results indicate that COVID-19 testing is not required, the student, faculty or staff member may return to school as soon as they feel well enough to do so;
- If the self-assessment results indicate that COVID-19 testing is required, the student, faculty or staff member will self-isolate until their test results are available;
 - If the test is negative, the student, faculty or staff member may return to school once they have felt free of symptoms for 24 hours;
 - If the test is positive, the student, faculty or staff member will continue to self-isolate and follow the directions of local public health authorities;
 - If the student, faculty or staff member chooses not to be tested, they will self-isolate for the minimum period directed by local public health authorities and until they are free of symptoms;
- Instituting comprehensive quarantine and isolation policies and procedures to reduce the transmission of COVID-19, in accordance with the federal government's *Updated: Public health management of cases and contacts associated with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) – Appendix 1: [Instructions for isolating a case in the home or co-living setting](#)*;
- Instituting policies and procedures for maintenance of up-to-date records of contact information of students/faculty/staff/visitors, in accordance with federal and provincial privacy laws and regulations, to support local PHA's contact tracing activities. Institutions may choose to explore options for students/faculty/staff to track their activities/contact/movement (e.g., contact tracing apps, journaling, calendar, buddy-system) in the event they become extremely sick and are unable to report this information themselves.

Schools will post their case management and outbreak response plan on premises and ensure students/faculty/staff are familiar with and follow rapid response measures in the event they or another individual develops symptoms.

Schools will demonstrate flexibility for personal circumstances, including flexible attendance and sick-leave policies and ensure that students, faculty and staff members are aware of financial and other support programs available to those with financial instability related to COVID-19 (e.g., for those who are not able to work due to illness/exposure, isolation/self-isolation, or loss of job/income), that may be offered through the institution, as well as those offered by federal, provincial/territorial/ and local governments. Information on Government of Canada assistance is available at [Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](#).

Institutions in Québec

Languages Canada member programs operating in Québec will abide by the directives issued by the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur and the guidelines of the Direction générale de la santé publique (DSPG):

- [Lettre du 1^{er} septembre 2020 du Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur aux chefs d'établissements d'enseignement supérieur et dirigeants d'établissements d'enseignement collégial](#);
- [Protocole d'urgence – Aide-mémoire](#);
- [COVID-19 Plan de la rentrée en enseignement supérieur : automne 2020 – Version actualisée Août 2020](#);
- [Affichette « Tous contre la COVID-19 au CÉGEP, au collège privé et à l'université »](#).