VCUarts Qatar
Spring 2022 Return to Campus Plan
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Introduction/Scope

VCUarts Qatar recognizes the importance of protecting the health and safety of its community while maintaining its academic mission and physical presence within the VCUarts Qatar building. This is particularly true because the situation surrounding COVID-19 continues to develop and the future of the pandemic remains unclear.

As public health guidance, government restrictions, and clinical best practices change, VCUarts Qatar also understands the need for flexibility as a method of success in addressing the evolving and uncertain situation.

This document outlines the approach that VCUarts Qatar will continue to implement as it endeavors to reduce the risk of contracting and spreading the COVID-19 virus in the building. This is essential, given that varying forms of restrictions and limitations in activities will be in place for the near future, and in order to be prepared for the possibility of a resurgence of infections that could result in new restrictive measures being put in place.

Key Objectives

The objective is to align, as much as possible, VCUarts Qatar’s Return to Campus Plan with the plans of Qatar Foundation (QF), Qatar’s Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), other Education City Partner Universities (EC PUs), and where appropriate, home campus. The key objectives are as follows:

- To minimize the risk of COVID-19 to the community through the implementation of policies and guidelines set by the MoPH in cooperation with QF and EC PUs;
- To ensure close coordination and communication between members of VCUarts Qatar’s Crisis Management Team (CMT), academic and administrative departments, the school’s leadership, and home campus;
- To facilitate a phased reopening in alignment with maximum building capacity and classroom/office occupancy requirements as set by MoPH that continue to support research, teaching, and service.

The resumption of on-campus activities under these guidelines does not imply a return to “business as usual.” Employees have returned to the building as their primary place of work. However, to align university operations with VCU Richmond Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs), up to 40% of working hours per week are allowed to be completed remotely for non-student facing positions pending approval of the direct supervisor.

Students will receive in-person instruction for the majority of classes with set building access hours described in detail below. This document deals specifically with the approach for a wider return to campus than the previous semester and will be updated as required.
Crisis Management Team

VCUarts Qatar established a Crisis Management Team (CMT) in the Spring of 2019 to address and develop plans and courses of action in response to safety issues, for the well-being of its community, and in support of the continuation of its academic mission. With the recent developments surrounding COVID-19, the CMT has developed a comprehensive plan to safely and sustainably open the VCUarts Qatar building, to allow the return of employees and students, and to carry out normal operations.

The guiding principles in helping the CMT formulate the plan are as follows:

- Safety and well-being of our students, faculty, staff, and contract workers
- Minimize the transmission of the virus among our community
- Maintain a healthy learning and work environment
- Continue the academic mission

The CMT members assigned to addressing VCUarts Qatar’s Return to Work plans are:

- Amir Berbić, Dean
- Kathryn London-Penny, Associate Dean for Administration (Int)/Dir of Comms
- Mohamed C Amor, Associate Dean for Academics
- Diane Derr, Associate Dean for Research
- Greet Provoost, Assistant Dean for Enrollment and Registration Services
- Katherine Wildman, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs
- Lejla Niksic, Director of Strategic Engagement
- Mirza A Baig, Chief Technology Officer
- Zeyad Bateiha, Director of Academic and Career Advising
- Omer Javed, Director of Finance
- Archana Kumar, Interim Director of Human Resources
- Andrea Cecetka, Deputy Safety Officer
- Dana Rohani, Deputy Director Facilities and Safety
- Isabelle St-Louis, Manager of exhibitions and lectures
- Amy Andres, Director of Libraries
- Caroline Kariuki-Ochieng, Executive Administrator for the Dean
- Jovita Pereira, Guest Relations Specialist

Health and Safety

Qatari Government Requirements

The MoPH published the COVID-19 Qatar National Response Action Plan (2020) which outlines the response to the pandemic in the country. The document also identifies clear action plans for the well-being of the public and considers the required actions necessary to prepare, monitor, respond to, and recover from, any outbreak.
As further documentation related to the phasing of a return to work/study is published by the MoPH or other government entities in Qatar, they will be incorporated into VCUarts Qatar’s plans when appropriate, to comply with local laws and regulations. As a result, VCUarts Qatar’s community will need to remain flexible, as building operations may change.

**VCUarts Qatar Return to Campus Risk Assessment**

A risk assessment was conducted by VCUarts Qatar to comply with the MoPH’s Precautions Guidelines for Lifting of COVID-19 Restrictions and is provided as Attachment 1 of this document. The assessment identifies risks that will be faced by VCUarts Qatar’s community upon its return to the campus, and engineering/administrative controls which have been implemented to reduce those risks. The information provided in the risk assessment also meets many requirements listed in Appendix 3 of QF’s Return to Work Guidance Framework document.

**A Phased Approach to Reoccupy the Facility**

VCUarts Qatar will support any reopening and building operations guidance issued by Qatar’s government and will follow any percentage occupancy mandates outlined by the MoPH and QF. On October 3rd, 2021 Qatar entered Phase 4 of its planned reopening.

As on-site activity increases and operations expand, VCUarts Qatar, along with other Education City Partner Universities and Qatar Foundation, will closely monitor and assess the situation on the Education City campus, including the course of the virus locally and the effectiveness of our policies and procedures to mitigate it. Tighter restrictions and reduced staffing may need to be implemented if localized outbreaks occur.

**Building Access Protocols**

In accordance with MoPH guidelines, employees/students/visitors are required to show their vaccination status through their EHERAZ app or a rapid antigen test completed in the last 7 days to Security at the main entrance prior to entry into the building. In June of 2020, the MoPH published Precautions Guidelines for Lifting of COVID-19 Restrictions- Phase 1, which denies entry if the EHERAZ app indicates Yellow, Grey, or Red; these rules continue in the current phase of reopening. VCUarts Qatar’s community will also be required to either swipe their university issued ID on a card reader, or sign-into the facility using their own pen, and to wear a face covering while in the building unless seated and socially distanced when consuming food/beverages, or in a closed office/room by themselves. Traffic flow measures are in place throughout the facility as well as furniture arrangements in studios, classrooms, and the cafeteria which support social distancing requirements.
As of July 5, 2020, the doors adjacent to the Library which lead to the parking lot were utilized as the main exit point. Phase 4 now permits the main entrance to also be the exit once again for the Spring 2021 semester and the fire exit doors next to the library will only unlock when the fire alarm sounds. While entry to the building may be a lengthy process, it will enable VCUarts Qatar to provide detailed records of all who enter the building, and will assist with contact tracing should it become necessary. As restrictions are gradually lifted, the building access process will be modified accordingly.

**Compliance and Safety Enforcement**

The role of the Safety Officer is mandated in the MoPH Precautions Guidelines for Lifting of COVID-19 Restrictions- to monitor, reinforce, and report compliance with the precautions set by MoPH. This position will be held by a member of the Facilities & Safety Department. In the event the Safety Officer is unable to be present in the facility, the role of Safety Officer will be held by the Lead Guard assigned to VCUarts Qatar from the contracted QF Security team as this position is covered beyond normal business hours.

The MoPH guidelines for school operations also emphasize the importance of school leadership and the school community in reinforcing compliance of precautions. The Dean has emphasized adhering to guidelines set forth by the State of Qatar and continues to communicate his support of Qatar’s state mandates.

If a member of the VCUarts Qatar community approaches someone in the facility to remind them of a precaution in place that they are neglecting to follow (mask wear in public, eat/drink while seated and socially distanced in a reasonable amount of time, etc.) this should be seen as assisting a community member in support of a safe environment for all. If the guidance is not followed or the community member is not comfortable approaching the individual, non-compliance can be reported to Human Resources (for employees) or Student Affairs (for students). Both Human Resources and Student Affairs have processes in place to deal with a community member that violates university policies and procedures; this includes non-compliance with COVID safety protocols detailed in this document.

Any member of the VCUarts Qatar community, whether they be a student, faculty, staff or a visitor, who continues to disregard Qatari law and Human Resources or Student Affairs interventions may be denied future building access. Should the issue escalate, QF Security will notify their supervisors and dial 16000 to involve Qatari law enforcement.

**Social Distancing/Traffic Flow**

VCUarts Qatar applies the 1-meter (physical distancing rule) to determine room capacity in each space at VCUarts Qatar, as articulated in the latest MoPH Precautions Guidelines for Lifting of COVID-19 Restrictions document (Phase 4) and
guidance from the Ministry of Education and Qatar Foundation. Room capacity in each space at VCUarts Qatar will be clearly identified on door signage for ease of recognition. Within each classroom, studio, and the cafeteria designated seating will be marked with green circles to indicate which spaces are available for use. The furniture configuration in each space ensures social distancing guidelines are met; re-arrangement of furniture is prohibited as this may interfere with social distancing guidelines. Social distancing guidelines should also be respected in common spaces such as hallways, elevators, student lounges, common areas, break rooms, restrooms, and prayer rooms.

Traffic flow patterns are identified in areas of the building with high traffic using appropriate wayfinding strategies, including signage, color coding, and video display terminals located throughout the facility in coordination with the Communications department.

**Infection Prevention and Control**

Disinfection wipes, sprays, and hand sanitizers are available throughout the VCUarts Qatar building for use by its community.

Greater care and attention to detail will be given to common touch areas throughout the building by QF-contracted cleaning staff to include handrails, elevators, break rooms, washrooms, and prayer rooms. Deep cleaning operations will occur more frequently by the QF-contracted cleaning staff in high-traffic areas and during nights and weekends.

If specific disinfectants are required for operations within a department, the Facilities & Safety department will provide consultation support as necessary. Signage will be installed in coordination with the Communications department throughout the facility to assist with identifying infection control requirements.

**Face Coverings**

Face coverings must be worn while in all public spaces within the building, and may only be removed when seated while eating/drinking where social distancing can be practiced. Community members may use their own cloth face coverings, including single-use surgical masks. The same cloth face coverings cannot be worn on repeated days unless they have been properly hand-washed or laundered beforehand for use on the following day. Face coverings may vary, however they should:

- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- Be secured with either ties or ear loops
- Cover the nose and mouth
- Allow for breathing without restrictions
- Be able to be laundered without damage or change to shape.
Care and Use of Face Coverings

When putting on a face covering/disposable mask:

- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer prior to handling the face covering/disposable mask
- Tie the straps behind the head and neck or loop around the ears.

When taking off a face covering/disposable mask:

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Loop your finger into the strap and pull the strap away from the ear, or untie the straps
- Wash your hands immediately after removing the face covering/mask.

Throughout the process:

- Avoid touching the front of the face covering/disposable mask. Try to avoid adjusting the mask during the day and wash your hands/use sanitizer after any adjustments
- Cloth face coverings should be replaced immediately if soiled, damaged (e.g. ripped, punctured), or visibly contaminated
- Disposable masks must not be used for more than one day and should be placed in the trash after your shift or if they are soiled or damaged (e.g., stretched ear loops, torn or punctured material), or visibly contaminated.

Eating and Drinking in the Building

As more time is spent in the facility, food/beverage outlets have reopened. Eating and drinking requires removal of the face covering. It is important that community members follow the MoPH guidelines in the Precautions Guidelines for lifting of Lifting COVID-19 Restrictions.

To avoid affecting the physical distancing parameters or table occupancy rates in the cafeteria, re-arrangement of furniture is prohibited as this may interfere with social distancing guidelines.

In addition, food and beverages brought in from deliveries or home should not be shared among community members at this time (i.e. pizza/donuts, etc. for an office or studio to share) as traditional buffet-style eating is not allowed. These activities discourage social distancing and may lead to an environment which reduces the likelihood of proper face coverings being worn in the building.

Community members are expected to refrain from walking while eating/drinking within the facility. Outside of the cafeteria, items may be consumed socially distanced once seated. Food/beverages should be finished in a reasonable timeframe and the face covering should be re-applied. All trash should be disposed of properly.
COVID-19 Symptoms or Positive Case Identified at VCUarts Qatar

In the event that a member of the community falls ill or exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 while at the VCUarts Qatar building and is not well enough to drive home, they should immediately isolate themselves and notify the VCUarts Qatar Control Room at 4402-0769 of their location in the facility. QF Security will make the necessary notifications to MoPH for the individual by dialing 16000 and notifying a member of the Facilities and Safety Department.

If a COVID-19 positive case has been officially identified to the VCUarts Qatar Facilities and Safety Department through either Human Resources, Student Affairs, or other official notification, the Facilities and Safety Department will cooperate with the MoPH and QF to assist with contact tracing and disinfection protocols.

Qatar Foundation’s Safety Directorate and Health Clinic will work in collaboration with the QF CMT, MoPH and each entity on the Education City campus as our building populations may overlap (cross-registered students, dorms, etc.). Communication from QF may be sent through to the Education City Partners Universities in three distinct manners:

- Through the QF CMT universities focal point(s), who liaise with the university Deans and relay messages directly to be disseminated through each of the EC PU’s CMTs;
- Using the QF PU Crisis Comms WhatsApp group; and
- Sent via the HVAP group email address to be shared via the EC PU focal points.

In conjunction with VCUarts Qatar’s Dean’s Office, the Communications department will manage any messages to the community regarding positive cases.

Return to Campus Training

Virtual training was developed by the Office of Human Resources at home campus and was required for all VCU employees, including those at VCUarts Qatar, before returning to work on campus in the Fall semester 2020, including within Education City.

Central to the training is an understanding that some members of VCUarts Qatar’s community face greater risks from COVID-19 than others, and VCUarts Qatar has identified processes that are available for employees and students to seek accommodations or adjustments as warranted by their individual circumstances.

Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

The university recognizes that the situation with COVID-19 may be stressful for members of VCUarts Qatar’s community, especially those with family and friends who are affected. The Health and Medical section on VCUarts Qatar’s intranet contain information on the Employee Wellbeing Program. During the remote work
phase, various webinars were conducted to address factors affecting employee wellbeing and additional counseling sessions were provided to assist employees and their families dealing with difficulties during this pandemic.

Students should continue to seek assistance through Personal Development and Counseling Services within the Student Affairs department.

**Academic and Administrative Plans**

**Academic**

Spring semester 2022 academic instruction is scheduled to begin on January 4, 2022. Instructional modality will be "in-person/in-classroom, with the exception of a handful of courses offered in online synchronous or asynchronous modality. Students may access the facility from 7:00am – 9:00pm.

All academic personnel are provided with operational guidelines and accommodation-options to ensure compliance with safety measures. All instructional and operational plans support the mission of the university while prioritizing the health and safety of students and employees alike. Reminders will be sent to faculty, students, and staff as policies and/or behavioral expectations are updated or changed.

The VCUarts Qatar FabLab, PrintLab, WoodShop & FlexLab will operate in accordance with the university’s Return to Campus Plan and the directives of QF and MoPH. These facilities will be open to faculty, staff and students as follows: FabLab/Woodshop from 9am to 5pm (both reservations and walk-ins allowed) and PrintLab from 8am-5pm. The Service Bureau option will remain available for all 3D printing and wide format inkjet printing. Walk-In & On-line consultations will remain available. The three PrintGrids will be available and the A1 printers will be back online for use. For more information please visit the [FabLab website](#).

Recruitment and admissions continue to be a priority for the university. Utilizing social media, high school counselors, the VCUarts Qatar website, and new delivery platforms, such as electronic acceptance letters and virtual meetings with applicants and prospective students, VCUarts Qatar continues to recruit and virtually, or in person, meet with prospective students and families by appointment as a preference. When staffing, schedules, space, and entrance requirements are met, the office will meet with drop-in visitors, moving closer to previous operations.

**Administrative**

As the campus returns to normal, there is an intent is to also offer a certain degree of flexibility through Flexible Work Arrangements to eligible employees. Flexible Work Arrangements allow up to 40 percent of work to be completed at home, or potentially more in some special cases if the employee’s role is suitable for this type of work arrangement. The arrangements must be made in conjunction with supervisors who will determine the appropriateness to the role and other factors
that impact department operations, before approving the request. Approval from the Dean’s office is required for FWA’s that exceed 40 percent of work time.

Library/Gallery/Bookstore/IT

The VCUarts Qatar Art and Design Library and the Materials Library operate in accordance with the university’s Return to Campus plan and the directives of QF and MoPH. Both libraries will be accessible to students, faculty, and staff. The Art and Design Library will be open from 9am-5pm; the Materials Library will be open from 10am-5pm.

The online collections of the VCUarts Qatar Art and Design Library remain available to students and faculty 24/7 and may be accessed through the library’s discovery platform.

Students and faculty may also schedule a virtual consultation with librarians and materials curators. Librarians and curators are available to join classes in-person, or online, for instruction and workshops.

Innovative Media Studios can be booked online. The Studios are available for in-person equipment checkouts. The spring semester hours are pending but will be posted and shared as soon as they become final.

The Writing Center continues to offer online appointments. In-person appointments will become available when MoPH guidelines permit distances less than 1 meter.

The VCUarts Qatar Gallery operates in accordance with the university’s Return to Campus plan and the directives of QF and MoPH while also serving the VCUarts Qatar’s community needs. The Gallery is planning to have exhibitions in the Main Gallery and the Project Spaces (Saffron Hall, Glass display cases located on the ground floor and first floor, and in the Library) at the beginning of the Spring semester. Exhibitions will be open to the public and will include works produced by visiting artists in the Main Gallery. Lectures and workshops on the campus will also be open to the public; however, visitors should respect attendance capacity in recognition of building capacity and social distancing guidelines, as they apply.

The VCUarts Qatar Bookstore operates in accordance with the university’s Return to Campus plan and the directives of QF and MoPH while also serving the VCUarts Qatar’s community needs. The Bookstore is fully operational for in-person purchases but strictly adhering to a more stringent regulation on social distancing and wearing of masks.

The Information Technology department operates to maximize support to the VCUarts Qatar community. Should a member of the faculty, staff, or student body require IT support, this should be coordinated by contacting the IT Helpdesk on +974 4402 0575 or vcuqithelp@vcu.edu.
Communication

As in any crisis, clear communication to the community is key to any successful response and recovery operations. All communications regarding health and safety policies continue to be approved by the Dean and forwarded to the Director of Communications for final review prior to release. They are then conveyed to VCUArts Qatar’s community through the VCUQ Alert email and the https://qatar.vcu.edu/index.php/?/coronavirus-updates page. The community is notified of policy changes in a timely manner, along with the home campus.

University Sponsored Events

The Events Guidelines & Procedures document was shared with VCUArts Qatar community and shall be referred to by any and all individuals who wish to organize any type of in-person event or activity on and off campus. Additionally, the university events management and booking tool has been updated to include an expanded approvals process/lead times to insure MoPH guidelines are met. Please direct any event booking questions to: imvlatayan@vcu.edu.

Community and Continuing Education Program

Community and Continuing education classes have resumed in-person at VCUArts Qatar; the complete list of courses is available on the university website. All registered attendees meet VCUArts Qatar building access requirements and follow MoPH protocols while in attendance.

Travel

University sponsored business travel resumed mid-fall of 2021 and will continue to be supported in the spring semester in accordance with the temporary addendum to the university travel policy. VCU defines essential travel as supporting activities that are necessary for academic degree completion or work and must be done in person. Essential travel may include research, teaching, study, and other activities of immediate importance to the university’s mission.

As of the writing of this document, VCUArts Qatar is not yet permitting University sponsored international travel for students. However, local student trips have resumed around Qatar in support of academic and student life programs. All local trips adhere to Qatari MoPH guidelines.

Sustainability and Adaptable

Sustainability

VCUArts Qatar strives to incorporate sustainability into every initiative. Reusable hand sanitizer bottles have been placed around the building which can be refilled in the Facilities and Safety Department, reducing plastic waste. A limited supply of
cloth face coverings is also still available upon request in the Facilities and Safety Department.

**Building Back Better**

VCUarts Qatar continually strives towards improvement in all aspects of working, teaching, and learning. The current situation has shown that the university community is able to adapt to, and overcome, obstacles through innovation. As in-person instruction continues to be the primary mode of instruction and learning in Spring 2021, lessons learned from our remote experience have been assessed and are being applied to ensure the most opportune academic/pedagogical outcome for all involved.

The Teaching Lab site can be found here: [https://www.teachlab.info/](https://www.teachlab.info/).

**Maintaining an Inclusive Community**

VCUarts Qatar is committed to maintaining an environment that is free of all forms of discrimination. Each institution must seek to foster mutual respect, support, and inclusion for every member of the community to thrive, especially as the university continues to navigate life and university operations during a global pandemic.

During this public health event, where there are many unknowns, taking care of each other is just as important as taking care of ourselves. Making assumptions about or engaging in negative treatment of others based on perceived symptoms, medical conditions or abilities, national origin, racial and ethnic characteristics, or any other protected status negatively impacts the community. Every person’s care, compassion, and empathy for each other makes a positive difference.

**Conclusion**

VCUarts Qatar acknowledges and accepts its responsibility in ensuring the health and safety of its community while maintaining the academic mission. While the future of the pandemic remains unclear, VCUarts Qatar maintains a positive approach and continues to develop and implement new strategies and techniques that allow our faculty and students to continue to thrive academically as well as answer the tough questions in an ever-changing environment. With the support of QF and guidance of MoPH, VCUarts Qatar will continue to follow public health and safety guidance, government restrictions, and other restrictions and limitations as it endeavors to reduce the risk of contracting and spreading the COVID-19 virus on campus.
References


- Qatar Foundation, (June, 2020) QF Return to Work Guidance Framework