A Letter from the Director

Congratulations on choosing to immerse yourself in another culture and embark on the experience of a lifetime. International Programs’ dedicated team of faculty and staff in Tallahassee and abroad stand ready to support you on this adventure, as we have for so many students over the last 60 years.

As FSU and the world continue to navigate the challenges presented by COVID-19, we remain committed to the benefits and transformative nature of study abroad, and to the safety and well-being of our students, faculty, and staff. One of the biggest challenges we face moving forward is ensuring students and their families have realistic expectations for the study abroad experience.

While it is impossible to predict the future, our recent experience welcoming students abroad during COVID-19 has reinforced our confidence that powerful, mitigating practices like vaccinations, mask wearing, and rigorous hygiene can be employed to offer meaningful programs abroad even under the current circumstances.

However, it is important to realize there are many factors beyond FSU’s control, including host country laws and restrictions governing vaccination status or access to businesses, public spaces, personal or group travel within or between countries, and various other elements of life abroad. Although it is not always clear when or how local authorities will impose or modify such restrictions, our faculty and staff in Tallahassee and abroad stand ready to adapt our program plans and calendars to respond to changing circumstances and to support our students’ immersion into the host culture to the maximum extent possible.

A successful study abroad experience has always required high levels of adaptability and resilience, as well as the confidence to navigate new environments and recover from unexpected challenges. Few generations of students have exhibited such a high capacity for adaptability and resilience as you have demonstrated in response to the recent academic and personal challenges presented by COVID-19. For this reason, I am confident you are equipped with the characteristics necessary to make the most of this unique opportunity to immerse yourself in another culture, make lifelong friends, and gain increased confidence, independence, and maturity. We are committed, perhaps more than ever before, to ensuring you have that opportunity.

Sincerely,

James E. Pitts
Director, International Programs
FSU International Programs Frequently Asked Questions: COVID-19

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Are there students currently studying abroad?

After an extensive planning process, International Programs resumed face-to-face programming at FSU’s European study centers in January 2021; our faculty and staff look forward to continuing to welcome students abroad in future semesters as well.

FSU is awaiting approval from the Panamanian Ministry of Education to reopen the Republic of Panama Campus for face-to-face classes. While we remain hopeful the Republic of Panama campus will be able to resume face-to-face courses for the Spring 2022 term, FSU will not offer study abroad programs in Panama during the Fall 2021 term.

I’ve been admitted to a program: What should I do next?

- Complete all checklist items and read the notifications listed in the IP Student Portal
- Check the expiration date of your passport and apply for a new passport ASAP using expedited processing if yours is not valid until 6 months beyond the end of your program. Contact IP-Visas@fsu.edu with any questions.
- Confirm your participation by making payments for your program by the due dates listed in the IP Student Portal
- Remain informed of the guidance and restrictions in place for your program location before and after committing to your program

Can I visit the IP office?

IP staff are available to meet with students through a mix of in-person and virtual appointments. Click Here to find out how to contact or schedule a meeting with the IP Staff member who can best address your specific question.

COVID-19 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

How could COVID-19 impact my program?

Due to the uncertain nature of the pandemic, students, faculty, and staff abroad must be prepared to practice flexibility, adaptability, and resilience; all program elements including the program calendar, weekly schedule, classroom environment, course delivery method, housing arrangements, transportation policies, and international or in-country travel restrictions are subject to modification at any time in order to comply with local public health restrictions as well as the policies and practices of Florida State University.

Participants must prepare to be flexible and understand that host country authorities could reimpose, extend, further ease, or otherwise amend any restrictions with little notice before or during the program as conditions abroad change. IP staff will review host country restrictions with students during pre-departure and on-site orientations, but participants are expected to remain informed of the guidance and restrictions in place for their program location before and after applying.

What measures will be taken to mitigate the spread of COVID-19?

Students will be required to follow all COVID-19 related guidance and regulations as required by authorities in the program location and/or FSU. While the specific mitigation measures in place during your program cannot be predicted with exact certainty and are subject to modification with little notice, we have provided our best approximation of possible measures based on our recent experience operating programs during COVID-19.

Testing, Screening, and Contact Tracing

Students may be required to submit proof of a negative COVID-19 test in the days leading up to departure and/or be tested upon arrival or at other points during the program.

Students may be required to undergo additional testing, screening, or contact tracing during the program for a variety of reasons, including following a positive COVID-19 test, close contact with a COVID-19 positive or presumptive positive individual, display of COVID-19 symptoms, or as required by the host country or University.
All program participants will be enrolled in an international health insurance policy through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI). The policy will cover COVID-19 testing during the program for those who are symptomatic or those who have had a known exposure to a positive individual. There may be individual costs associated with testing when required for purposes other than being symptomatic or having had a known exposure.

Quarantine or Isolation
Students should prepare for the possibility of quarantine or isolation upon arrival, if mandated by your host country. Quarantine requirements may be affected by your vaccination status. IP will notify students of any applicable requirements closer to departure, as host country rules, regulations, and expectations surrounding self-quarantine or isolation requirements could change before your program start date.

Students may be required to quarantine or isolate at other points during the program, including due to a positive COVID-19 test, exposure to a COVID-19 positive or presumptive positive individual, display of COVID-19 symptoms, or as required by the host country or University.

Masks
Students will be expected to wear masks when required by FSU or local regulations; this could include during classes, site visits & excursions, when visiting the accommodation of other students, and whenever directed by faculty and staff.

Facilities
Program facilities will comply with host country guidelines surrounding social distancing, cleaning, and sanitation for educational institutions. Other preventative measures such as hand sanitizing stations and plexiglass barriers may be utilized where feasible.

Housing
Students will be assigned shared accommodation with other participants. All program housing will comply with host country capacity limits and social distancing requirements. Students are not permitted non-program visitors within program facilities at any time. Limitations may also apply to the number of students who may gather within individual accommodations or in common areas.

Instruction
Most courses will be delivered face-to-face, though faculty are prepared to pivot to remote delivery for individual students if necessary due to isolation/quarantine requirements, or for all students if required by host country restrictions. Class sizes may be reduced to allow for social distancing. Further, students may have assigned desks to minimize the amount of high traffic surfaces they are touching and to facilitate contact tracing. Instructors may use locally appropriate physical distancing or other mitigating strategies, including masks, face shields and physical barriers.

Independent Travel
FSU’s Independent travel policy currently allows students to travel independently within their host country during program dates, commensurate with any regional or national guidance & restrictions. FSU will continually review its independent travel policy as conditions abroad change; however, due to the ongoing presence of COVID-19 and the frequency of changing entry and quarantine requirements for countries across the globe, independent travel outside of the host country could remain restricted or limited during your program.

Program Planned Excursions
International Programs’ fees include social and cultural activities such as program planned events or excursions within the host country. However, IP reserves the right to modify the cultural calendar, including the timing, location,
amount of events or excursions as required to comply with local conditions, guidance, or restrictions affecting individual or group travel/events within the host country or due to unexpected expenditures related to COVID-19.

A copy of the calendar for your program will be distributed prior to departure or soon after your arrival. If changes to the calendar are necessary, programming will be adjusted to ensure students have a robust calendar of activities.

**Local Guidance and Restrictions**
Participants will be expected to abide by all local guidance or restrictions applicable in their program location. This may include, but is not limited to, reduced capacity or operating hours in businesses or public spaces such as restaurants, museums or other venues; vaccination requirements to enter certain venues or public facilities; limited contact with members of other households/apartments; or compliance with curfews or other restrictions. As mentioned above, program planned excursions & site visits are also subject to modification based on such local guidance or restrictions.

IP staff will review local guidance or restrictions with students during pre-departure and on-site orientations, but students are expected to remain informed of the guidance and restrictions in place for their program location before and after applying as host country authorities could reimpose, extend, further ease, or otherwise amend restrictions with little notice as conditions abroad change in the time between your application and departure.

**What if I test positive for COVID-19 while abroad?**
Students who test positive for COVID-19 must isolate immediately, regardless of symptoms or lack thereof, and notify the appropriate staff member or program leader, who can support tracing the COVID-19 impact on our community.

IP staff or program leaders will connect symptomatic students with local physicians or clinics as needed/requested, and students may also utilize main campus telehealth monitoring and case management services if needed.

All program participants are enrolled in an international insurance policy through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) covering international medical expenses, medical reunion, medical evacuation, and repatriation. The policy includes coverage for treatment of ill students, including COVID-19 related symptoms or illness. The CISI insurance policy may also reimburse qualified expenses related to quarantine or isolation for individuals who test positive for COVID-19.

**Vaccination Requirements**

**Will I be required to get vaccinated to study abroad?**
FSU expects all students to be fully vaccinated, and appointments are available through FSU or another vaccination site. Vaccines play a crucial role in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and keeping FSU and the host community healthy. Proof of vaccination is also increasingly required to access many elements of life abroad.

Most program locations require proof of vaccination to enter the country, to avoid quarantine, or to access certain venues, restaurants, public spaces, university facilities, or public transportation. Even if your program location does not require vaccination for one of these purposes at the time you apply or commit to participate, neither IP nor FSU can guarantee that host country authorities will not change restrictions before or during your program to require proof of full vaccination to enter the country or for other purposes.

**If I am not fully vaccinated, will that affect my experience?**
FSU expects all students to be fully vaccinated, either through FSU or another vaccination site. As vaccination rates increase in our host communities, host country restrictions beyond the control of FSU or IP may require all students to be fully vaccinated to participate in their program or result in aspects of the program not being fully available to those who are not fully vaccinated. Possible limitations include but are not limited to:
• Entry or quarantine requirements may be more restrictive for those without proof of full vaccination
• Unvaccinated individuals are more likely to test positive for COVID-19, and thus not be able to attend in-person classes or excursions during required periods of quarantine or isolation
• Additional personal costs may be associated with required COVID-19 testing, quarantine, or isolation
• Regardless of FSU’s independent travel policy during the program, travel opportunities may be more limited or require additional testing and/or quarantine based on vaccination status
• Access to venues, transportation, events, restaurants, university facilities or other areas may be restricted based on vaccination status, which could impact participation in the program, program excursions, cultural activities, and/or independent exploration

Before making a financial commitment to participate, students who are not fully vaccinated should carefully consider how such limitations may impact their study abroad experience and understand that host countries could implement vaccination requirements for entry or other purposes with little notice before or during your program. By paying or deferring program fees, students are assuming financial responsibility as explained in the fee liability & refund policy.

Will International Programs collect information about my Vaccination status prior to departure?
International Programs may ask participants to disclose their vaccination status to facilitate student compliance with local requirements, support our students, and plan for programs. Such information would be collected securely, kept private, and only utilized for planning and support purposes. Depending on program location, students may be required to provide proof of vaccination to board flights, enter the host country, and/or access public transportation or university facilities.

Students should bring proof of vaccination abroad (leaving copies at home) to satisfy local requirements and/or take advantage of any host country initiatives to document vaccination status, which may facilitate fuller access to elements of life abroad such as travel and entrance into venues/events.

Will I have access to Vaccines or boosters abroad?
FSU expects all participants to be fully vaccinated prior to international travel, either through FSU or another vaccination site. Students should not rely on the opportunity to get initial COVID-19 vaccinations or boosters while abroad as supply, availability, and cost of vaccines will be different in each program location. Vaccine or booster access abroad is not guaranteed, and the CISI insurance included in your program fee does not cover the cost of preventative treatments like vaccinations.

Airfare

When should I purchase airfare?
You should refrain from purchasing airfare until International Programs indicates you may do so. When it is time to purchase airfare, you will receive a notification via the IP Student Portal with “Airfare” in the subject line. This notification will include detailed guidance for purchasing airfare in accordance with current travel/entry requirements.

What if I already purchased my flights?
Airfare costs are not included in your program fee, and FSU will not reimburse any costs or fees associated with flight changes, delays, or cancellations should they occur. If you purchase airfare before IP advises you to do so, it is crucial you review and make changes to your itinerary as needed once IP provides its guidance. When we provide permission and instructions to purchase airfare, IP will strongly recommend purchasing a flexible/refundable fare and/or insurance covering flight cancellation/change fees, lost luggage, or other losses incurred while traveling. Click here for additional information about travel insurance and resources.
Immigration

Are there steps I need to take related to immigration and visas?

Visa requirements vary based on destination, citizenship, and length of study. Find out if you will require a visa by reading the information under the garnet Visa tab of your program page on the IP website. If required, the visa application process must begin no sooner or later than prompted by the IP Immigration Team. Monitor your IP Student Portal regularly for any location specific immigration tasks, deadlines, and updates.

- Non-U.S. citizens or U.S. citizens living outside of the U.S. should contact our Visa Specialists at IP-Visas@fsu.edu ASAP as you may have additional visa requirements.

- If you don't have a passport valid for at least 6 months beyond the end date of your program, you should apply for one immediately using expedited service.

- If your program requires a visa, you should not plan any travel requiring a passport in the months leading up to your program since your passport will need to be submitted for visa processing. Contact IP-Visas@fsu.edu if you have any questions/concerns or have already scheduled travel.

Will I be required to test and/or quarantine upon return to the U.S.?

Effective January 26th, 2021, all air passengers entering the U.S. must present a negative COVID-19 test taken within three calendar days of departure. Depending on program location, there may be individual costs associated with this requirement.

Payments

How do I confirm my participation in the program?

Admitted participants should make payments toward their program according to the due dates listed on the International Programs website and in the IP Student Portal. Failure to do so will result in cancellation from the program. By paying or deferring program fees, students are making a financial commitment to participate in that specific program and assuming financial responsibility as explained in the fee liability & refund policy.

Admitted program participants can make online payments via credit card or electronic check here. If you anticipate receiving financial aid, you can submit a financially binding Fee Deferment in the Money Matters section of the IP Student Portal.

Will I get a refund if my program is cancelled prior to departure?

We have every expectation that future programs will proceed as scheduled. Should it become necessary to cancel a program prior to the beginning of the applicable term due to low enrollment or other circumstances, International programs will issue a refund of paid program fees.

Will I get a refund if I am forced to leave my program after it begins?

In the unlikely event you are asked to depart your program prior to its conclusion due to a deterioration of public health conditions, IP would attempt to issue a refund that represents the unused or recoverable portions of the social cultural calendar and housing components of the program fee, if possible. In this scenario, courses would be transitioned to remote delivery for the remainder of the semester in order to minimize the impact on students’ progression toward their degree. As stated in the Fee Liability Policy, refunds or release of liability cannot be granted in instances of student withdrawal after a program has begun.
What if I am separated from the program as a result of a student conduct process?

If your participation in the program is terminated before the end of the regularly scheduled session because of a violation on your part of one or more program rules, regulations, instructions, and/or standards of conduct and behavior, you must make travel arrangements home at your own expense and will not be eligible for any refund of program fees.

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