A Letter from the Director

Congratulations on choosing to embark on an experience of a lifetime! As a future First Year or First Semester Abroad student, you have a special opportunity to immerse yourself in another culture. 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. It is our deep commitment to internationalization that led IP to develop reopening plans for our study centers based on science and best practice; after tireless preparation by our study center directors and staff, we are thrilled students have once again brought life and soul back to our historic study centers.

One of the biggest challenges we face moving forward is ensuring you and your families have realistic expectations of what your time abroad will look like. While we can’t predict the future, our experience welcoming students abroad for the Spring 2021 term has reinforced our confidence that powerful, mitigating practices like mask wearing, social distancing, and rigorous hygiene can be employed to offer safer, meaningful programs abroad even under the current circumstances. We know there are factors beyond FSU’s control, including restrictions in host countries or cities that can affect businesses, public spaces, and travel within or between countries. Although we don’t always know when or how such restrictions will be updated by local authorities, our staff abroad stand ready to adapt our plans and calendars to fit changing circumstances and to support our students’ immersion into the host culture to the maximum extent possible.

Studying abroad has always required a certain level of adaptability and resilience, as well as the confidence to navigate new environments and recover from unexpected challenges. While possessing these characteristics has never been more important for an incoming cohort of First Year & First Semester Abroad students than it is for you, few generations of students before you have exhibited the same level of resilience in response to the academic and personal challenges of the last year. For that reason, I am confident you will 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 Fall 2021 Frequently Asked Questions: 
First Year Abroad (FYA) & First Semester Abroad (FSA)

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I’ve been admitted to FSU: What’s Next?

Will Fall 2021 programs be offered abroad?

After an extensive planning process last fall, International Programs received approval from the President and the Provost to reopen the Florence, London, and Valencia study centers; study center faculty & staff welcomed students abroad in early-January for the Spring 2021 term and look forward to welcoming students abroad for the Summer 2021 & Fall 2021 terms soon!

FSU is awaiting approval from the Panamanian Ministry of Education to reopen the Republic of Panama Campus for face-to-face classes. We are hopeful approval will be granted prior to the Fall 2021 term but recommend students interested in completing their First Year or First Semester Abroad in Panama contact IP-Freshmen@fsu.edu for more information before applying.

What action items should I complete at this time?

- Apply early to the First Year or First Semester Abroad Program, selecting the study center location of your choice. Students offered FSU admission via the Seminole Pathways program should submit the Pathways reply form on or before March 10th before applying to FYA or FSA.
- Once admitted to FYA or FSA, complete all checklist items listed in the IP Student Portal under your Fall 2021 record
- Check the validity & expiration date of your passport, and apply for a new passport if needed
- Make payments for your program by the corresponding due dates, including the Commitment Fee due by May 1st
- Frequently check your IP Student Portal notifications and FSU student email for updates from our office or FSU main campus

Will there be an orientation specific to FYA/FSA students?

- All incoming FSU freshmen are required to complete the “Starting at State” module before registering for orientation
- All FYA and FSA students should then register for the virtual “New Nole” orientation session hosted by New Student & Family Programs on June 14th & 15th
- Finally, all FYA & FSA students will complete the mandatory International Programs virtual “IPre-Depart” orientation modules using Canvas, FSU’s learning management system. An additional synchronous Zoom session will be hosted by study center staff in each location closer to departure. Students will receive additional information through the IP Student Portal.

Can I visit FSU main campus and the IP office?

While accepted students are welcome to visit FSU’s campus independently, FSU Visitor Services is not currently offering in-person guided walking tours; however, they have prepared many resources to introduce you to our beautiful campus, including virtual and self-guided tours. Additional information regarding visit options for accepted students was distributed with admissions decisions.

At this time, IP staff are conducting most appointments virtually. Students should contact IP-Freshmen@fsu.edu if they are interested in meeting with a member of our Freshmen Programs Team. Additionally, accepted students can sign-up for Virtual Information sessions on First Year & First Semester abroad hosted by IP student ambassadors & staff on the following days:

- Sunday, February 21st
- Wednesday, March 3rd
- Sunday, April 11th
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.

All students should expect restrictions and policies to change throughout their program as conditions and restrictions change in our host countries. As the rollout of vaccines continues in our host countries and around the world, we are optimistic changes will trend in positive directions. In particular, First Year Abroad students should know restrictions and policies in place for the fall term may change for the spring and/or summer terms.

What policies will be in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19?

Students will be required to follow all COVID-19 related guidance and regulations as required by local host authorities and/or FSU. While exact measures are subject to modification, we have provided our best approximation of the measures that will be in place for the Fall 2021 term based on measures currently in place for the Spring 2021 term.

Testing, Screening, and Contact Tracing

All students should expect to submit proof of a negative COVID-19 test in the days leading up to departure and to be tested at least once upon arrival to their study center location; some students may be required to test more than once if required by their host country.

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, suspected exposure to 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 insurance policy through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI). The policy will cover COVID-19 testing during the dates of coverage for those who are symptomatic, or those who have had a known exposure to a person who tested positive. There may be individual costs associated with testing when required for purposes other than being symptomatic or having had a known exposure.

Self-Quarantine or Isolation

Students should prepare for the possibility of self-quarantine or isolation upon arrival, if mandated by your host country. 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 between now and your program start date.

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

Study Center staff will provide support during these periods in various ways, including through support for arranging meal/food delivery and virtual services. Study center faculty and staff will ensure that students can continue their studies remotely if they are able to do so.
Masks
Students must wear masks at all times, except when inside their individual apartment interacting with their own roommates. This includes during classes, site visits & excursions, when visiting students in other apartments, and whenever directed by study center staff or required under local regulations.

Study Center Facilities
Social distancing guidelines likely will be in place at each study center. All study center facilities will be cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected according to local guidance for educational institutions. Consistent hygiene and social distancing signage will be displayed throughout each study center. Preventative measures such as hand sanitizing stations and plexiglass barriers will be installed.

Socially Distanced Housing
Students will be assigned beds within multi-occupancy apartments, complying with local social distancing requirements. Students are not allowed to change beds/apartments, to purchase new furniture/appliances, or to move the furniture within the apartments, as it will be measured specifically according to social distancing guidelines.

Students will be prohibited from gathering in large groups within the accommodation. Students are not permitted non-program visitors within program facilities at any time, and no more than two non-resident students on the program may visit another apartment at a given time.

A portion of program housing in each location has been set aside for quarantine/isolation purposes as needed during the program.

Socially Distanced Classes
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 local restrictions. Class sizes likely will be reduced to allow students to sit in socially distanced desks. Further, students may have assigned desks for each class to minimize the amount of high traffic surfaces they are touching. Instructors will use locally appropriate physical distancing and other mitigating strategies, including masks, face shields and physical barriers.

Laboratory facilities will also follow local requirements for physical distancing and other mitigating strategies.

Independent Travel
FSU’s President and Provost approved the reopening of the European Study Centers based on the specific condition that Spring 2021 program participants refrain from traveling independently outside their host city. This policy is expected to be reviewed prior to the Fall 2021 term or as conditions abroad change, but there is a possibility independent travel could remain restricted or limited during your program.

Program Planned Excursions
Study Center staff plan to offer a cultural calendar that includes program planned excursions within the host country; however, IP reserves the right to consider modifications to the cultural calendar, including timing, location, and amount of excursions, as required to comply with any local guidance or restrictions that affect travel within the host country. A copy of the calendar for your study center location will be distributed prior to departure. If changes to the calendar are required to comply with local restrictions, each study center will appropriately adjust programming to ensure students have a robust calendar of activities.
Local Guidance and Restrictions

Students will be expected to abide by all local guidance or restrictions applicable to their host city or host country. This may include, but is not limited to, reduced capacity or operating hours in businesses or public spaces such as restaurants and museums, limited contact with members of other households/apartments, or curfews. As mentioned above, program planned excursions & site visits are also subject to local guidance or restrictions, which may affect their logistics.

IP staff will review local guidance or restrictions with students during pre-departure and on-site orientations, but we also strongly advise students to remain informed of the guidance and restrictions in place for their Study Center location before and after committing to their program as host country rules, regulations, and expectations are likely to change prior to and during their program.

What if I test positive for COVID-19 while abroad?

Students who suspect or have tested positive for COVID-19 must isolate immediately, regardless of symptoms or lack thereof, and notify the appropriate member of study center staff, who can support tracing the COVID-19 impact on our community.

Study center staff 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. Study center staff will provide support in various other ways, including through support for arranging meal/food delivery and virtual services. Study center faculty and staff will ensure that students can continue their studies remotely if they are able to do so.

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 those with COVID-19.

Will I be required to get vaccinated to participate in the program?

IP staff are monitoring the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines both in the U.S. and abroad. We do not anticipate that FSU will require students to show proof of vaccination to enroll in classes, either on main campus or abroad. However, it is possible that airlines or our host countries may require travelers to provide proof of vaccination in the future in order to enter or remain in the country. No such requirement is currently in place at any of our study center locations, but IP will update admitted students of any relevant changes.

Will I have access to Vaccines abroad?

If you are unable to get vaccinated prior to leaving the U.S., IP staff abroad will attempt to connect interested students with local medical providers to receive the vaccine, though protocols, timeline, availability, and cost will be different in each study center location. Please note 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 under your Fall 21 portal record with “Airfare” in the subject line. This notification will include detailed instructions for purchasing airfare in accordance with guidance related to immigration/arrival circumstances unique to COVID-19.

What if I already purchased my flights?

If you already purchased your airfare, it is crucial you review and make changes to your itinerary as needed once IP provides detailed instructions about purchasing airfare. You should also consider contacting your airline to purchase
travel insurance or research other travel insurance providers. Travel insurance typically covers flight cancellation fees, lost luggage, or other losses incurred while traveling, etc. Click here for additional information about travel insurance and resources. Note: Airfare costs are not included in your program fee, and FSU will not reimburse any costs or fees associated with flight changes or cancellations due to COVID-19 should they occur.

**Immigration**

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

All U.S. citizens (except London FSA participants) will require a student visa. Visa application processes must occur on a very specific timeline, so it is vital to begin the process no sooner or later than prompted by the IP Immigration Team; monitor your IP Student Portal regularly for 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 ASAP.

- FYA and FSA students should not plan any Summer 2021 travel requiring a passport since your passport will need to be submitted to International Programs or the appropriate consulate for visa processing. Contact IP-Visas@fsu.edu if you have any questions/concerns or have already scheduled travel.

- FSA students: keep in mind it is not usually possible to extend your program beyond the fall semester due to immigration restrictions, but it is possible for students on the FYA program to decide to return to main campus after 1 or 2 semesters abroad. If you want to study abroad for more than one semester, you should consider the FYA program. Email IP-Freshmen@fsu.edu before you pay the commitment fee for details.

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

Effective January 26th, 2021, the CDC requires all air passengers entering the U.S. to present a negative COVID-19 test taken within three calendar days of departure. There may be individual costs associated with this requirement.

Students returning from their program should anticipate being required to quarantine according to local, state, and/or national guidance.

**Payments**

**How do I confirm my participation in the FYA or FSA program?**

You should make payments toward your program according to the payment schedules linked below; the Commitment Fee for FYA and FSA programs is due on or before Saturday, May 1:

- First Year Abroad Payment Schedule
- First Semester Abroad Payment Schedule

Students who pay the FYA or FSA Commitment Fee on or before May 1st are not required to pay the FSU admissions deposit; if you paid your FSU admissions or housing deposit prior to paying the Commitment Fee, you will be issued a refund by the appropriate main campus department.

It is imperative that you review the Fee Liability Policy for your program before making any payments or deferments. Click here for instructions on how to make a payment online or by check. Visit the Money Matters section of the IP Student Portal to submit a financially binding Fee Deferment if you anticipate receiving financial aid.
Will I get a refund if fall programs are cancelled prior to departure?

We have every expectation that Fall 2021 programs will proceed as scheduled. In the unlikely event we are unable to offer fall programs face to face, International Programs would coordinate with University officials to present students with various options, including:

- Transferring their study abroad participation & paid fees paid to a Spring 2022 international program
- Cancelling from their program and requesting a refund of paid program fees, excluding the $100 application fee

IP would also work with main campus partners to avoid impeding your Fall 2021 academic progress by allowing students to take main campus courses or International Programs courses delivered remotely by faculty abroad, according to student preference. IP would advise out-of-state FYA participants on any adjusted requirements for earning the out-of-state tuition waiver in this situation.

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 from your study center prior to your program’s end date 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, under any circumstances, in instances of 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.

Last updated 2/17/2021