
Whitman OCS (IMPORTANT): Fall OCS Predeparture Updates

1 message

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Whitman OCS

Dear Fall 2022 OCS students,

As the Fall semester approaches, I wanted to share some important updates related to travel and COVID precautions. Make sure to visit your myOCS portal for 2 new COVID-19-related requirements to read and sign-off.

1. **Flights.** As you have probably heard in media reports, many airlines have canceled many flights or experienced flight delays due to staff shortages. Lost luggage has been increasingly common as well. For that reason, we recommend that you take the following steps:
 - **Pack any essential items (including semester supply of medications, essential toiletries, money, change of clothes, glasses/contacts, laptop, power cords, plug converters) for the first few weeks with you in your carry-on.** That way you will have what you need if your checked baggage is delayed. This is important because it can sometimes take weeks for lost luggage to be delivered.
 - **Make sure you have your program's contact information on your phone or in your carry-on** if you need to inform them of a change in your arrival time.
 - **Check to see if your international medical insurance includes trip interruption/delay insurance.** If not, you may wish to purchase such insurance through your airline or travel agent to help cover trip delay-related expenses. Be sure to keep all receipts from expenses incurred due to travel delays (such as meal receipts, and hotel receipts) for reimbursement from your insurance policy.
2. **COVID Vaccinations/Booster.** Whitman OCS students are required to be up to date on their COVID-19 vaccinations and booster just as they are on campus. Many OCS programs also require proof of vaccination--**it is your responsibility to upload your proof of vaccination to your OCS program** according to their instructions, as Whitman doesn't share medical information.
3. **Masking.** Now that most airlines no longer require masking, there have been more reports of people contracting COVID during long flights, even individuals who are fully vaccinated and boosted. We know you don't want to get COVID right as your program begins--therefore, **we highly recommend that you 1) take precautions to limit COVID exposure prior to departure and 2) wear an N95 or K95 during all of your flights to your program.**
4. **COVID Protocols.** Be prepared for COVID precautions and protocols to be different from those on the Whitman campus and understand that local conditions often dictate COVID rules. This may be uncomfortable for you, but we encourage students to be flexible.
 - Some countries/programs may have stricter requirements (such as a mandatory quarantine upon arrival or requiring a certain type of mask). While other OCS programs and host countries may have much looser requirements with no baseline testing and no contact tracing and no mask-wearing requirements. Remember you always have the option of taking extra precautions for yourself, such as masking when it is not required if you feel more comfortable

doing so.

5. **COVID Testing.** Most study abroad programs (and many US colleges and universities) put the responsibility of COVID testing on the student, including the cost of purchasing tests. It will likely be your responsibility to purchase COVID tests while abroad, so please budget your personal expenses accordingly. For convenience, we recommend that you pack 4-8 home antigen tests to take with you abroad. **Note that US households can order a third round of 8 free COVID home tests at the following link: <https://www.covid.gov/tests>**

Questions? Please contact your OCS program directly or Whitman OCS at offcampusstudies@whitman.edu or tel 509.527.4992.

All the best with your pre-departure prep and keep us posted as you settle into your program. We are here to help!

Sincerely,
Susan

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