
PLEASE READ - Update about Omicron Variant for Fall 2021 OCS Students

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Whitman OCS

Dear Fall 21 OCS students,

As you come into the home stretch of your semester away, we write to let you know that Whitman College and Whitman Off-Campus Studies is carefully following developments related to the Omicron variant of COVID that was recently discovered. You may have heard from media reports that there is not much known about the variant yet, including its transmissibility and the efficacy of available vaccines against it. Experts advise that it will take a couple of weeks of studying this new strain before we will know how effective current vaccines will be against it and the severity of disease it causes.

Due to concerns about the spread of Omicron, some countries (Morocco, Japan and Israel) have already closed their borders to international travellers and others have tightened border restrictions by, for example, adding COVID testing requirements for entering the country. More countries may follow suit in the coming days and months, which could impact international flight availability in the coming weeks.

We will keep you apprised of any developments that we think will impact Fall 2021 OCS students. In the meantime, please follow these recommendations:

- Read email and other communications from your program provider and from Whitman carefully and follow safety precautions.
- Do not leave your host country for independent travel outside of your host country. This is to reduce the chance of getting stuck outside your host country or being required to quarantine if the border of your host country suddenly becomes more restrictive.
- Continue to be vigilant about COVID precautions such as avoiding large gatherings, mask wearing, hand washing, social distancing, etc.
- Keep abreast of the news related to Omicron through The New York Times, WHO, CDC, and local news sources in your OCS location.
- Let your program staff or Whitman OCS at offcampusstudies@whitman.edu know if you have any questions or concerns.

Please know that we are here to support you if you have any questions or concerns prior to returning home and we hope that you enjoy the last weeks of your program.

Sincerely,
Susan

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