
IMPORTANT: Updates for Sp22 OCS students - Omicron & Boosters

1 message

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Whitman OCS

Dear Sp22 OCS students,

You have no doubt heard in the news about the Omicron variant of COVID 19 that has recently emerged. We write to let you know that Whitman Off-Campus Studies is carefully following developments related to this new variant to assess how it might impact study abroad students. There is not much known yet about the variant, 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 the scientific community knows how effective current vaccines will be against it and the severity of the disease it causes.

Due to concerns about the spread of Omicron, some countries (Morocco, Japan, and Israel) have already closed their borders to international travelers for the next two weeks and others have tightened border restrictions. 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 Spring 2022 OCS students. In the meantime, please follow these recommendations:

- **Communications.** Read email and other communications from your program provider and from Whitman right away.
- **Boosters. We strongly recommend that all Whitman Sp22 OCS students get a COVID booster in the U.S. before departing for study abroad if it has been more than 6 months since you received your second dose of Pfizer or Moderna or your single dose of Johnson and Johnson.** This is because a booster is now a requirement in Italy and France for a valid health pass, needed to enter restaurants, cafes, sports events, museums, and other public venues. And other countries are likely to follow suit. Some countries treat vaccinated individuals who were vaccinated more than 6 months prior just as they treat unvaccinated individuals, which could severely hamper your ability to fully participate in your program. **Note that it may not be possible for you to obtain a booster outside the United States, so you should not count on being able to do that.**
- **Flights.** If you have not yet purchased your flight for study abroad, we suggest you consider waiting until mid-December when there should be more information about the risks associated with the Omicron variant. Also, if your program has suggested you wait to purchase your flight, be sure to follow your program's instructions about when to book.
- **Whitman Course Registration.** To be on the safe side, if you have registered for Sp22 courses, we now recommend that you retain your Whitman Sp22 courses until you arrive in your host country or a few days before Whitman's semester begins (Jan 18) whichever is sooner.
- **AlertTraveler.** Be sure to download the AlertTraveler app and activate the GPS function so that you will get timely updates about health and safety risks in where you are located. This is available to you 30 days prior to your program's start date.
- **COVID Precautions.** Continue to be vigilant about COVID precautions such as mask wearing, avoiding large gatherings, hand washing, social distancing, etc.

Please let me or any member of the OCS team know if you have any questions or concerns as you make your preparations for study abroad in Spring 2022.

Sincerely,
Susan

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