

Subject: September Update for Spring 2021 OCS Students and Applicants

Dear Spring 21 OCS students and applicants,

To help you with your planning for next semester, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate and elaborate on a few things that we conveyed to you in our email of August 14 about spring 2021 OCS. We know it is not easy to have so much uncertainty about OCS and will do our best to keep you informed about the college's timeline and criteria for decision making. Please be assured that student safety and well-being are top priorities at Whitman and we continue to monitor conditions in OCS destinations.

Whitman plans to make a decision no later than early November about whether the college will affirm or cancel spring 2021 OCS approval.

The college's decision about affirming or cancelling OCS approvals will rest primarily on the following factors:

- Barriers due to your ability to obtain a passport or visa, travel restrictions, and/or mandatory quarantines upon arrival.
- Government guidance on health and safety related to travel and conditions in host countries from the US Department of State, Centers for Disease Control, and other sources. Important Note: Destinations with a US Department of State Travel Advisory at Level 4 will not be approved. Destinations with at Department of State Level 3 may or may not be approved on a case-by-case basis depending on the other factors. To check the status of your destination please see the following websites:
 - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>
 - <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/>
- The status of the OCS program itself and the mode of teaching offered.
- The quality of the OCS experience overall in the face of COVID19 precautions in that destination.
- The quality of medical resources and medical infrastructure in the host country.

Special Note for International Students

US Homeland Security is still limiting entry into the US of individuals arriving from certain countries to US citizens and permanent residents only. Please check the Homeland Security information at this [link](#) to make sure you will be able to re-enter the US from your study abroad host country. Contact Greg Lecki or your OCS Adviser if you have questions about this.

Spring 21 OCS Expenses

We continue to urge you not to purchase airline tickets or incur any other expenses (such as enrollment deposits*) that you are not willing to lose.

* If your OCS program is still operating in Spring 2021 but Whitman cancels your approval for safety or other reasons, Whitman will reimburse you for the enrollment deposit that you have paid unless the program itself offers a refund.

Deferring to Senior Year

We encourage spring 2021 OCS students to consider the possibility of deferring studying abroad in your senior year, which is possible in some majors. If this is of interest to you, please contact your major adviser soon to discuss how you might complete your senior capstone requirements and study away in the fall or spring of your senior year.

Plan B

While Spring 2021 OCS is not yet cancelled, we urge you to plan for that possibility. All Spring 2021 OCS students should register for Spring 2021 courses at Whitman (registration begins Oct 29). You can easily "unregister" for Whitman courses later if you are indeed able to study away. You should also contact Residence Life about on-campus housing or look into off-campus rentals to identify housing options in Walla Walla for spring 2021.

Open Forum Thurs Sept 24 – Mark your calendar

Barbara Hoffman and I will be holding an Open Forum for Spring 2021 OCS students on Thurs Sept 24 at 4pm to address questions you may have about study away next semester. We will send you a separate Zoom invite soon for access options. We hope you will join us!

Zoom link for Open Forum:

<https://whitman.zoom.us/j/98294621237>

In the meantime, please reach out to me or Barbara if you have any concerns. Even though we are not in Memorial Hall these days, OCS staff are working full time (Mon-Fri 8am - 5pm) and we are here to support you.

Thank you and take care.

Sincerely,
Susan Holme
Director of Off-Campus Studies