

## Corona Update: Actions Given Likely Scenarios

Date: February 17, 2021

Dear AIS-Salzburg Community Members;

Firstly, I would like to thank everyone for their patience and communication these past three months. We are, of course, very pleased to be able to teach all students in our classrooms and have them in our dormitories once again. The main effort now will be to keep everyone in the community as safe and secure as possible while we await an eventual relaxing of restrictions and requirements related to the Corona pandemic. This update is to inform you of how these efforts are proceeding and to present a few tentative plans for the spring that require some preliminary planning as well as a general update of the health-risk situation in Austria.

### 1. Current Situation

Generally, we remain in a holding pattern with the numbers of daily infections going down slightly, but remaining at a level that is worrisome.

Number of pos. infections nationwide in the past 7 days:	1,424 ave per day
Nationwide incidence rate per 100,000 over 7 days:	108.6

Number of infections, Salzburg (province) in past 7 days:	110 ave. per day
Incidence rate for Salzburg (province) per 100,000 over 7 days:	131.8

Incidence rate for Salzburg (city) per 100,000 over 7 days:	123.2
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Vaccination doses received in Austria:	449,875
Registered vaccinations in Austria (total)	402,986
Registered double vaccinations for immunization	152,822
Total vaccine-eligible population (over 16)	7,757,564
Percentage of total vaccine-eligible population vaccinated	5.2%

Registered vaccinations in Salzburg (province)	12,334 (2.21%)
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When all those over 80 years of age will be vaccinated in Salzburg (province)	March 31, 2021
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When all those over 80 years of age, those at risk and health professionals will be vaccinated in Salzburg (province)	April 30, 2021
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### *Present Restrictions and Health-Safety Measures in Effect:*

- The border between Tirol and other Austrian provinces is presently passable only with a negative Covid test less than 48 hours old. Bavaria/Germany have closed the border with Tirol presently; only goods transports and essential personnel may enter Germany from Tirol. Salzburg Province shares a boundary with Tirol Province.
- FFP2 masks required whenever 2 meter distancing is not possible (indoor or outdoor) and in all indoor spaces where others are present including public transport and enclosed ski lifts.

- 2 meter distancing indoors and outdoors except for those living together in a single household
- Restricted departures from one's home between 20:00 and 06:00 daily.
- A maximum of four adults and six children from two households are allowed to meet indoors.
- All stores can be open from 06:00 to 19:00 including hair salons with one customer per 20 square meters.
- All restaurants, cafes and other forms of gastronomy remain closed except for delivery and pick-up.
- All schools in Austria are back in session, but under restrictions. In Austrian public secondary schools, the students are divided into two groups and each group has two days of instruction per week and online instruction on the remaining three days. Elementary schools may offer instruction five days per week. All Austrian public schools are required to test their students and instructors once weekly and report any positive tests immediately.
- Ski areas that have not voluntarily closed remain open presently. Tirol is inaccessible for skiing presently.

*Commentary:*

On February 15 (Monday), the Austrian government announced that due to the threat of the South African (B.1.351) and the UK mutations (B.1.1.7), there would be no further lessening of present restrictions or health-threat protection measures. The South African mutation has infected up to 300 persons in Tirol (thus the harder lockdown there) and small numbers of cases have been located in other provinces of Austria. The British mutation seems to be more threatening in Eastern Austria and across the border in the Czech Republic where infection numbers are much higher. Hotels, restaurants, theaters, and other locales that are presently closed have been told that they will not be able to open until after Easter (April 4, 2021).

Although the numbers of positive infections remains higher than desired in Austria, many experts believe that this may be a reflection of the numbers of tests being given weekly (double the number of tests per 1,000 persons in Germany presently). Antigen tests are now completely free and available throughout Austria at many test stations and pharmacies. Over 450,000 school pupils are being tested weekly as well. As of March, the government will allow individuals to collect five free antigen tests from their local pharmacy.

## **2. Quick-Testing at AIS-Salzburg**

All full- and five-day boarding students at AIS-Salzburg arrived with a negative Covid test. All day students were tested on the first day of classes last Monday and again on Thursday (February 8 and 12). As of yesterday, February 16, our full testing plan went into effect with all boarders and day students being tested as well as all staff members. On Thursdays, all day students and non-resident staff will be tested again as per our testing plan and in accordance with government guidelines.

The quick-tests have been proven easy and straightforward to use and we are pleased to report that no positive results have been identified. There is a higher chance of a false negative result from these quick-tests and all community members should be aware of our procedures in such a case (please see <https://www.ais-salzburg.at/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Corona-Update2021Scenarios.pdf>).

Please remember that these Covid-19 antigen quick-tests are not to be considered first-line verifications of positive infection, but are to be utilized as a kind of 'pre-test' to determine what individuals may need to be tested with a PCR Covid-19 test by health officials.

### **3. *Travel to AIS-Salzburg***

We are also pleased to report that all of our full-boarders were able to travel back to Salzburg with minimum difficulties. The authorities were generally quite cooperative once they were aware of the students' status at the school as well as proof of visa, etc. As of last week, however, it was clear that the border officials were told to tighten up their checks and several of our students were informed—despite the exception status of students returning to school—that they would need to quarantine for five days and then test themselves free. In response to this, we informed the authorities of this situation and we were told that these students needed to remain on campus until being taken to a test center. Today, the last students on quarantine will be tested.

We are not aware of any further restrictions to travel that are in effect or being considered. We will keep you informed of any new developments in this area.

### **4. *Excursions, Ski Trips and Calendaring***

As you are all aware, the outbreak of infections in October made it impossible for us to realize our Fall Excursions to Athens and Venice at that time. With the government's announcements today concerning hotels not opening until Easter at the earliest, our plans for the Winter Ski Excursion to Lungau have also been scratched.

Presently, we are setting up a re-scheduling of the Fall Excursion (Athens and Venice) to April 21-25, 2021 and are in the process of requesting confirmation of participation in one or the other of these trips. Of course, there are scenarios that would make these trips impossible as well, but we're hoping that the overall situation will be improved by that time, allowing us to enjoy not only two beautiful cities, but a little spring sunshine as well.

At present, we have no substitution plans for the Winter Excursion but are working on alternatives. As soon as the administration has information available, it will be passed on to the community. If the Winter Excursion is ultimately cancelled, a refund will be returned at the end of the school year.

Weekend ski trips are, however, possible and we have enjoyed two trips to local ski areas to date and are planning a day trip on each of the coming weekends. Full-boarders, 5-day boarders and day students are invited to join us in what has become one of the few activities available at this time.

As a reminder, we will be holding our spring break for one week from April 3 (Saturday) through the 11th (Sunday). Students may depart for this break after classes on Friday at 15:40. The situation with flights and travel in our out of Austria and to a wide variety of destinations around the world is unpredictable and we are not certain that this will improve by the time the break comes around. It is the administration's belief that there may be students who will need to remain in the school during the break and we are presently trying to organize the necessary supervision, provision of meals, etc. to accommodate these students.

All other dates on the calendar through the end of the school year remain in place at present. Any further changes will be forwarded to all as soon as possible.

## 5. *The Next 40 Days*

Basically, the situation is that—by hook or by crook—we need to get through the next 40 days unscathed. To do this, we need to (a) have a very good idea, based upon facts, of where the threats lie, (b) establish effective countermeasures to these threats, and (c) remain as vigilant as possible as an entire community.

### A. *Threats*

1. The mixture in our halls and classrooms of resident and non-resident students and staff
2. Lack of proper personal conscientiousness regarding masking
3. Lack of proper personal conscientious with regard to required distancing
4. Aerosol spread in enclosed areas
5. Contact with non-community members of the public
6. Disregard or weariness with regard to maintaining a vigilant attitude on a daily basis.

### B. *Countermeasures*

1. Wherever necessary or required, non-resident staff and students are separated and distanced from resident staff and students. Non-residents dine in separate rooms and are seated at the front of all classrooms and must depart out campus as soon as their instructional commitments are ended in the afternoon. Non-resident students and staff are tested twice weekly.
2. All students and staff are masked whenever on the first floor of the main building or within any other buildings during the academic day, Monday through Friday. After 19:00 in the evening, resident students may be unmasked on the dormitory floors and on weekends when no non-residents are present on campus. If proper distancing is maintained, students do not have to wear masks outside. All teachers are scheduling 'mask-breaks' during the class periods. Masks as well as plastic gloves are required at all times in the kitchen buffet line; masks may be removed for dining in designated dining areas only.
3. Distancing is required (2 meters minimum) between all resident and non-resident students and staff members. Boarding students must understand that although they are residents, they still need to practice proper distancing during the academic days and up to 19:00. The staff, faculty and Student Council are frequently reminding the students of these requirements which, out of habit, are easily forgotten.
4. Studies have indicated that proper ventilation of indoor areas has proven very effective against the spread of the virus. Aside from hourly ventilation of all classrooms and other public areas, the house staff ventilates the dormitory rooms sufficiently while the students are in classes. In addition, a number of air purifiers with HEPA filters have been installed in the larger classrooms and second dining room.
5. Resident students are presently restricted from movement off campus whereby contact with others might lead to a higher risk. However, students may depart campus to specific, close-by locations at the discretion of the resident staff during the free hours between classes and dinner and during a few hours on the weekends. Preference is given to students who would like to go for a run or walk for exercise. The resident staff maintains a schedule of off-campus activities on the weekends that are under supervision as well. No resident students are allowed to use public or private transport at any time and are properly masked during transport with school vehicles. The greatest level of threat in this area denies our ability to establish countermeasures: non-resident staff and students and their potential contact with others outside the community when away from the school. We therefore can only appeal to our day students, their families, and our non-resident staff members to be as safe and careful as possible so that no infection is allowed to be brought into the school on site.

### C. *Vigilance*

40 days, for an adolescent, can be a long time. The restrictions and measures in place are not comfortable. But, youth is adaptable and is willing if appealed to in nearly all cases. What everyone needs to realize is

that the situation can and will improve as more and more vaccinations are given and that there is a good chance that a return to near-normal circumstances will be realized later this spring. We just need to get there safely.

For the time being, all community members need to focus on the positive fact that we are back in session on campus and that distance learning has been put behind us for now. In exchange for this, we need to continue to maintain some uncomfortable but necessary standards of behavior that will help give everyone a fair chance to continue their education this year and not face the uncertainty and potential harm a Covid infection would bring with it to oneself and the school community.

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We hope that all of you share both our concern as well as our hope that the next 40 days will bring relief as well as a much brighter spring this year. We appreciate your continued support and assistance during this difficult time and hope you will all support each other in the attempt to maintain proper and reasonable regard for the present situation and threat.

I thank you for your attention once again.

Yours,



Paul McLean  
Headmaster  
AIS-Salzburg