

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: Update on Corona Crisis and Resumption of Instruction

Date: **February 1, 2021**
Follow-Up Information: As Required

Dear AIS-Salzburg Community Members;

Here is the latest information on the situation in Salzburg, Austria as it pertains to the resumption of instruction at AIS-Salzburg.

Present Situation: February 1, 2021

Here is an up-to-date overview of selected infection and vaccination data:

7-day incident of positive cases per 100,000 population in Austria:	105.4
7-day incident of positive cases per 100,000 population in Salzburg Province:	174.8
Positive infections, Jan. 31, 2021:	1,190
Average daily positive infections in Austria in the past week:	@ 1,375
Vaccinations given in Austria:	197,179 (2.08%)
Vaccinations in Salzburg Province:	10,396 (1.80%)

Government Announcements and Potential Actions

Today, February 1, 2021, the Austrian government made an announcement regarding the general lockdown situation in Austria as well as particular information on the eventual opening of schools. The present lockdown situation was due to expire on February 7, 2021. Despite not having achieved the desired targets of daily infection numbers under 1,000 and a nationwide incidence rate per 100,000 or less than 50, the Austrian government has decided to loosen some of the lockdown regulations as of Monday, February 8th.

The government announced this evening:

The good news: *The lockdown has worked to an extent; Austria is presently the top third of all EU nations in terms of infections and hospitalizations.*

The bad news: *The Corona virus mutations are on the rise in Austria and throughout most of Europe*

Results: *The number of infections is presently stagnating at around 1000 to 1500 infections daily rather than going down to more acceptable levels.*

Due to this situation, a few restrictions can be eased provided a very close eye is kept on the infection numbers and the potential for a further rise in positive cases due to the mutated viruses and, provided all citizens in Austria do their best to maintain a high level adherence to and cooperation with the restrictions and measures in place. However, the situation also demands that a few preventative measures be expanded:

Schools and Instruction:

- *Schools will open after the public-school semester break (Feb. 8 in Eastern Austria and Feb. 16 in the west) for face-to-face instruction. Normal instruction may take place in elementary schools; shift instruction will be allowed in secondary schools nationwide whereby 50% of the students meet for instruction on Monday and Tuesday, the other 50% on Wednesday and Thursdays: on Fridays, the groups will alternate weekly.*
- *Students in secondary schools will be tested at the start of a two-day shift of instruction (M/T or W/Th) as these quick-tests are valid for 48 hours. Elementary school children will be tested 2x weekly. These tests are mandatory for all students present in all schools in Austria. Parents may refuse to have their children be tested and/or wear FFP2 masks, but this disqualifies participation in face-to-face instruction in schools.*

Commercial Enterprise and Personal Liberties

- *Commercial businesses may open their doors under masking restrictions and strict limits to numbers of customers per square meter in all stores.*
- *Hair salons and other, similar businesses, may open on Feb. 8 to customers with appointments. A negative Covid-19 test less than 48 hours old must be presented at the time of the appointment.*
- *Private citizens from two households may meet together; a maximum 4 adults from two households*
- *Evening curfews from 20:00 to 06:00 remain in place.*
- *Penalties for not wearing masks, etc., will be increased dramatically.*
- *Border controls will be strengthened to ensure that virus mutations are not brought into the country.*
- *On February 15, the government will meet again to review the situation and re-evaluate possible further actions including the possibility that hotels and restaurants may be allowed to open as of March 1st if the infection data justifies this. If the situation deteriorates, then the government will decide on possible further restrictions to be put into place.*

Vaccinations and Perspectives

- *Vaccine distribution has slowed due to delivery difficulties throughout the European Union, therefore, the vaccine plan will be adjusted.*
- *Before Easter—April 4, 2021—2 million vaccinations is the goal (1 million vaccinated). If this goal is met, then this should provide the possibility to reduce the restrictions significantly in Austria.*

Clarification of Government Requirements Applied to AIS-Salzburg

The government has announced that public schools are allowed to engage in shift instruction in order to cut down on the total number of personal interactions which take place at schools. This requires secondary schools to have half of their students participate in instruction for half of the instructional time weekly.

At AIS-Salzburg, the situation is such that the administration has determined that such a scheme is not possible at our school given the nature of our students and their status as boarders (80% of the student body) and day students (20%). All boarders, once they have arrived with a negative Covid-19 test are to be considered a 'household' and such restrictions as would apply at a day school do not apply to them. Our day students, representing a small portion of the student body, cannot be engaged in shifts of instruction in any feasible way without (a) seriously reducing the number of instructional hours for all, and/or (b) significantly increasing the daily instructional hours of the teaching faculty members. Therefore, we believe that teaching all students within our regular schedule on a daily basis is allowable and within the health restrictions and guidelines as interpreted and adjusted for our particular boarding school structure.

It will be essential, however, that everyone at the school takes great care to ensure that everyone, both boarders and day students, faculty and staff, are safe and secure in their health and welfare from the

potential of an infection with the virus or its mutations. Therefore, the following requirements will be in place as of Monday, February 8, 2021 at AIS-Salzburg in compliance with government requirements:

- a. All students and staff will wear **FFP2 masks** while in public areas of the school, including classrooms during the academic day. Boarders are relieved of this requirement when (a) they are in their private residences at the school, or (b) are alone in the school with resident staff members only and no day students or non-resident staff are present. Teachers will provide 'mask breaks' whereby students can go outside and take off their masks for a few minutes as frequently as possible. The instructors will also be ventilating all classrooms to ensure a flow of fresh air reduces the chance of aerosol build-up. Masks need not be worn outdoors provided distancing is maintained.
- b. All students and staff will be **tested regularly** with the 'quick-tests' supplied by the government and as required in all secondary schools. This will be mandatory for all those who wish to participate in instruction at AIS-Salzburg until such restrictions are lifted by the authorities. The test is simple and straightforward and will be undertaken with the support and instructions of the school's health coordinator, Mr. Joseph Suttman. A result of the test is revealed 10 to 15 minutes after taking the test and is self-administered. Further information about this testing will be sent home to all community members in the near future once further details are clarified. Personal data protection measures will be implemented to ensure that only the school health coordinator and the school administration will be aware of any positive test results. Immediate communication will take place between the health coordinator and the parents describing further steps to be undertaken in cooperation with local health officials. Positive test results may affect the provision of instruction for other students depending upon determinations made by local health officials.
- c. **Distancing**, especially between non-residents and residents in our school community will be maintained at 2 meters at all times to the extent possible. Various aspects of the school day will be adjusted to try and ensure this is carried out by all school community members conscientiously and cooperatively.
- d. The staff will be organizing a variety of **events, activities and outings** to try and maintain a healthy balance between indoor, masked instruction time and outdoor, unmasked exercise and movement. The resident staff has been busy putting together a number of such events which will can be put into place immediately upon the reopening of the school for instruction. It also appears that a number of ski areas will remain open during the coming weeks and that we will have the opportunity to offer our ski trips as planned, within safe parameters. Should the numbers nationwide continue to improve, there is also a chance that our Winter Excursion can take place in March if hotels are allowed to reopen as well.
- e. **Other measures** designed to help ensure health safety, including hand washing, the wearing of gloves in the kitchen service area, the disinfecting of desktops, doorknobs, specific cleaning requirements, etc. will continue.

Please note that online instruction will desist as of the start of in-class instruction on February 8, 2021. From that point onward, students who are not present in class will be advised and informed of the material covered during the instructional periods, but such communication will not include online class meetings, prerecorded video lessons, etc., as was common during the online instruction period.

These measures are not expected to be completely agreeable to everyone especially after 12 months of pandemic, but perhaps some comfort can be taken in the fact that we are able to resume classroom instruction which—after two months of online learning—should be a very positive experience and provide a great deal more connectivity with others, which is badly needed. We also hope that as the number of persons in Salzburg and Austria who have been vaccinated increases with time, these restrictions will be eased off and a more normal school day can be experienced as of Easter, 2021.

Lastly, there is no guarantee presently that infection numbers will not increase again to the point that the Austrian government decides to close all schools once again. If this occurs, the school administration will decide on further steps to be taken and announce these in due time.

Travel to AIS-Salzburg from Abroad

The Austrian government's announcement this evening that border controls will be increased to help reduce the possibility that Corona virus mutations are brought into the country, should not directly affect AIS-Salzburg boarding students returning to continue their education. There is no consideration of changing or removing this exception at the present time. However, one can expect boarder guards and officials to be strict in their controlling and the necessary paperwork required to prove that the exception applies should be gathered beforehand for presentation.

AIS-Salzburg students will be required to have the following when they arrive at the Austrian border:

1. a **negative Covid-19 test** that is less than 48 hours old.
2. a **statement from the school confirming enrollment** insurance and registration at the school's address
3. **current student visa and passport**
4. All arrivals are additionally required to submit a **Pre-Travel Clearance Form**. This should be filled out online at the URL listed below. Upon completion and submission a QR code document will be sent which can be presented for scanning electronically or printed out and presented physically to officials. At the top of the PTC Form, a check should be made in the third box under 'Exceptions' as students continuing their education at AIS-Salzburg are excepted/excused from the quarantine requirements according to §5 of the Covid-19 entry requirements.

Pre-Travel Clearance Form: <https://www.formularservice.gv.at/site/fsrv/user/formular.aspx?pid=15dd7f9c98c24952828eb414c8884f1a&pn=Bfd027cf662624276a5ca9a9b970bcdf9&lang=en>

With classes resuming on Monday morning, February 8th at 09:00, it is recommended that students arrive beforehand if possible. Given the sparsity of international flights, however, we will be flexible on this and the teachers will maintain communication with students who are not present until they arrive. We would appreciate it if you would let us know your plans as soon as you are able to finalize these and we will send you the letter of confirmation before your departure. If you have questions, please let us know how we can assist you. Boarding and 5-day boarders may arrive at any time from today forward as our dormitories are currently fully staffed: arrivals need not be on Saturday and Sunday, February 6 & 7 only.

Further Information

Other items of note include the following:

1. The amended school calendar remains amended as previously sent. The Spring Break period will be from Saturday, April 3 until Sunday, April 11, 2021. A copy of the calendar has been attached to this mailing.
2. The school's dress code will be in full effect during academic hours starting on Monday, February 8 at 09:00. Please review the school's academic attire and style requirements [here](#).
3. The present trimester grading period will end on Friday, February 26, 2021. The Spring Trimester begins on the following Monday, March 1st.

4. Students who may have already contracted Covid-19 and/or have received a vaccine are not excused from any of the health protection measures in place and mentioned above. The school health coordinator, however, would need to receive proof of such an infection or vaccination for our records.
5. Parents of day students who would like to consider boarding for their children should contact the school office to gain further information on this possibility.
6. 5-day boarding students will be allowed to return home on weekends provided a negative Covid-19 test taken less than 24 hours before is presented upon return to the school on Sunday evenings.

Concluding Statements

Although the situation remains tentative and although health risks cannot be eliminated completely at this time, the resumption of instruction is possible and can be initiated at AIS-Salzburg provided all school community members understand and agree with the school's and government's restrictions and measures designed to keep everyone safe and healthy. I need not remind everyone of the challenges a positive test result would represent within our halls and residences. We appeal to all members of the school community to help us and cooperate with us in the establishment of a safe environment in which in-class instruction can take place and a partial return to a normal instructional context is possible.

As always, if you have questions or concerns, please contact us at the addresses and contacts listed below.

Yours,

Paul McLean
Headmaster