

## AIS-Salzburg and the Corona Pandemic

### *Important Information for Applicants and Their Families*

Anyone considering the American International School-Salzburg as an appropriate program for their children, needs to be as informed as possible about the real and potential effects of the pandemic upon the school's programming. Despite future conditions being notoriously difficult to predict, we think it important that you are aware of the following aspects of attending AIS-Salzburg while this pandemic continues to create situations that require flexibility and adjustment.

#### ***I. Communication and Updating:***

The AIS-Salzburg administration prioritizes communication with all members of the community on a regular basis, throughout the school year. This is especially important when regulations, requirements and health measures implemented by the Austrian national or provincial governments mandate alterations, postponements or adjustments in our programming. We therefore, send out frequent **Corona Updates** to all community members as often as needed. In the past 18 months, we have sent out approximately one **Corona Update** every 10 days or so—less during the summer months when the infection rates have been very low. These **Corona Updates** are also presented in our weekly newsletters to all those who subscribe to these and are sent to all students as well. Copies of recent **Corona Updates** can be reviewed [here](#).

#### ***II. Online, Hybrid or Face-to-Face Instruction***

After over 18 months of running a full-boarding program during the Corona pandemic, the AIS-Salzburg administration, faculty and staff have experienced a wide variety of programmatic adjustments: some of these were mandated; others were implemented in our school following discussion and decisions made by the administration along with the Corona Crisis Team at the school.

##### ***Online Instruction*** (school closure):

Online instruction is implemented immediately whenever the school is subject to suspension of direct instructional activity in the classroom by the local and national authorities. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, we have experienced two periods of pure online instruction, from March 9 to May 28, 2020 and again from November 14, 2020 until January 29, 2021. In these two cases, all boarders were sent home and academic instruction was carried out online. Boarding activities, excursions, outings and sports were postponed, of course, until allowed by the government. Both of these online lockdown periods were implemented before vaccinations became available to our community.

##### ***Hybrid Instruction***

Hybrid instruction is a concurrent instructional methodology which provides direct, personal instruction to students who are in the classroom as well as technology-assisted engagement with students who are at home and participate online. From November 21 until December 5, 2021, the Austrian government allowed schools to remain open during

the most-recent lockdown, but also allowed parents to keep their children at home if desired.

### ***Face-to-Face Instruction***

After experiencing both online and hybrid instructional periods during the past 18 months, we are convinced that nothing can replace the value of the direct, personal interaction between the student and their teachers, the students and their fellow students, and between the students and community in which they live, thrive and grow.

### ***III. Austrian Government Health Requirements and Vaccination Law***

The government of Austria is a federal system whereby the national government maintains the highest level of control and legal authority; the nine provinces sharing some powers and authority as well. All schools in Austria are under the authority of both the national government as well as the government of the Province of Salzburg. ***AIS-Salzburg is completely responsible for complying with both national and provincial regulations at all times and must implement these as stipulated by the authorities.***

As of February 1, 2021, the Austrian national government implemented a **mandatory vaccination law throughout Austria**. This law includes all those resident in Austria who are minimally 14 years of age, are not pregnant or have a medical condition—confirmed by a physician—that would disallow receiving the vaccination. Additionally, an exception is made for 180 days after a positive Covid-19 infection. Further, this mandatory vaccination law defines adherence to the law after three (original two-part vaccination plus booster) vaccine shots have been received and recorded officially. Vaccines approved by the law include:

Comirnaty (BioNTech/Pfizer)

Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca)

Janssen

Moderna (Moderna Spikevax)

Other vaccines to be approved by the European and Austrian medical authorities

In accordance with this law, **AIS-Salzburg can only accept students for enrollment as full- and five-day boarders who are fully vaccinated** with one of the above-mentioned vaccines. If this is not possible in the country of residence before the start of enrollment, the parents or guardians must agree formally (through confirmation and signature) that AIS-Salzburg is authorized to have them vaccinated locally in accordance with the law and for the duration of enrollment. Refusal to be vaccinated disqualifies a student from enrollment in our school.

All schools in Austria are required to adhere to guidelines above and beyond the national and provincial laws which have been established by the Austrian Education Ministry. These guidelines include (a) regular Covid-19 testing in all schools, (b) reporting of positive infections and carrying out all measures required by the authorities following notification, (c) masking, distancing and hygienic requirements throughout the school, and (d) the establishment of actions, internal measures and planning designed to maintain an infection-free environment to the greatest extent possible. **Therefore, all AIS-Salzburg programming must be compliant with any of the laws and measures put into place by the authorities with which we must comply at all times.**

The school administration receives direct communication from these various Austrian authorities on a regular basis and generally communicates these to the community immediately thereafter through the **Corona Updates**.

#### ***IV. The AIS-Salzburg Experience with the Corona Pandemic***

As a boarding school with around 85% of our students living on campus each year, we enjoy a rather privileged status among the various Austrian schools. This is due to the fact that our students and resident staff members are already at 'home' whenever a lockdown is required. As such, they may continue to attend classes provided the non-resident faculty members are able to arrive at school on a daily basis.

During the winter/spring of this past year, we were able to maintain face-to-face instruction in our classrooms with all of our boarders and many of our day students became 5-day boarders and moved in temporarily. This provided us with a great advantage over Austrian day schools which were closed down and conducting purely online instruction to their students. During the latest lockdown, from November 21 to December 5, 2021, schools were allowed to remain open although students could depart if the parents desired. Hybrid learning was established in all courses in which the eight students who departed were enrolled. This experience went smoothly and without significant difficulties or problems.

With further viral variants capturing the attention of health and government officials presently which will likely influence the future programming of education in schools during the continuing pandemic, AIS-Salzburg's administration, staff and community need to remain flexible and capable of accommodating further adjustments in programming. We feel competent and capable of making these adjustments—both long- and short-term—without significant difficulties. As long as our communication remains timely and the compliance of our community reliable, we feel confident that we can adjust to whatever may come, reasonably and thoughtfully.

#### ***V. Scenarios for the Future***

##### ***A. Lockdown with School Closures Mandated***

Should the Austrian authorities require the closure of all educational institutions accompanied by the requirement that teachers not be allowed to be present in schools, the school will:

1. immediately inform the community of this actuality with any details necessary.
2. provide organization and assistance in preparing for boarding student departures, if mandated.
3. Assist students with transfers to airports and other transport terminals.
4. Establish online instruction for all students immediately with appropriate instructions and guidelines communicated.
5. Information on partial refunds on tuition paid due to the school closure will be communicated to parents and guardians. Requests for withdrawal from the school due to the lockdown will be refunded fully.

##### ***B. Lockdown Without School Closures Mandated***

Should the Austrian officials require a lockdown in Salzburg Province without mandating the closing of educational institutions, the school will:

1. immediately inform the community of this actuality with any details necessary.

2. adjust all programming that is affected by the lockdown (excursions, sports, etc.) and communicate these adjustments to the community immediately.
3. allow those students who choose not to attend classes to do so, without penalty.
4. immediately implement hybrid instruction in all classes in which it is required.
5. continue to offer academic instruction on a daily basis.
6. comply, through the adjustment of expectations and free-time or non-academic programming, with national lockdown requirements mandated.

#### *C. Adjustments to the Mandatory Vaccination Law in Austria*

It is likely that at some point in the future, the Austrian government will need to adjust the parameters and requirements of the mandatory vaccination law. When this occurs, the school will:

1. communicate these adjustments immediately to the community
2. organize and carry out actions intended to meet the new requirements for the entire community (e.g., organize further vaccinations for students and staff members, providing transport and supervision throughout).
3. maintain accurate and comprehensive records on such compliance within the guidelines of the Data Protection Requirements in place throughout the European Union.

#### *D. Various Other Actions Taken by the Austrian Authorities*

It is likely that the Austrian authorities will respond to increases in positive infections in Salzburg and Austria generally by implementing any of a number of measures which may include, for example, disallowing sports practices and competitions, limit free time movement, etc. In such cases the school will:

1. immediately inform the school community.
2. implement such measures and adjust school programming as required.
3. communicate any aspects of these adjustments that may require partial tuition refunding.

### ***V. AIS-Salzburg Tuition Refunding Policy Adjustments due to the Corona Pandemic***

The AIS-Salzburg administration will refund the costs of any activities, excursions or other programming included in the payment of tuition that is cancelled due to external requirements or health-risk measures put into place by the authorities. Refunds can be expected for the following programming which is included in tuition:

- fall and/or winter excursions
- winter ski trips
- residency on campus including room and board

At the start of the school year, all parents and guardians will have submitted an addendum to the enrollment agreement that specifies the amount refunded for programming that is cancelled due to government mandates. These refunds of tuition will be paid out at the end of the school year.

Any student accepted or returning to AIS-Salzburg for the 2022-2023 school year for which tuition has been paid (partially or fully) and does not then enroll at the school in September, will receive a full refund of tuition paid minus any administrative costs incurred.

Any student accepted to the AIS-Salzburg Summer Language Program in 2022 and has paid tuition but does not then arrive and participate, can also expect a full refund of tuition paid minus

any administrative costs incurred. Any summer program activities, excursions, instruction or other aspects of programming that are cancelled due to government mandates will also be refunded at the end of the session for which the student is enrolled. A refund policy which pertains to the Summer Language Program will be sent to all those who register before the start of the program in July or August.

## VI. Further Questions and Suggestions

The AIS-Salzburg refund policy is, in part, designed to take the risk out of considering enrollment at the school for either the 2022 Summer Language Program or the 2022-2023 school year. We understand that the situation undermines the predictability that most desire when considering an educational environment for their children. Therefore, we would be more than pleased to offer further assistance and information at any time concerning any aspects of the application procedure, school programming and possible Corona-influenced adjustments that may be necessary as well as their consequences for everyone.

Our recommendations for those considering applying and enrolling in our school as full- or five-day boarders are the following:

- A. Feel free to engage in the application process at any time. AIS-Salzburg does not have any other deadline for receiving applications other than when the dormitories are full. This usually does not occur until the end of June or early July. Given our refund policy, you can complete the application process without fear of financial loss right up to the start of the school year or the start of the Summer Language Program.
- B. Plan on the Corona pandemic negatively influencing the 2022 Summer Language Program and the 2022-2023 school year. These negative affects may include any of those scenarios mentioned above in section IV of this document. Trust, however, that the school administration will honor its commitment to both protect the health and welfare of our community as well as maintain all aspects of our programming possible. Realize that as a boarding school with around 85% of our students resident, we do have certain advantages over day schools in Austria and these may assist in mitigating some negative effects on the education of your child.
- C. Talk with us. Communicate your fears and express your anxieties, whatever these may be. Our administration and staff is dedicated in its honest and accurate service to you in providing and explaining the latest information and possible eventualities. You can trust us to tell you the truth and put your interests above any other concerns.

*Please feel free to contact the school administration at any time at the following contacts:*

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Thank you for your attention.



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