



Corona Update
for the
2021-2022 School Year

January 31, 2022

Dear AIS-Salzburg Community Members;

Here is the latest update from Salzburg. The news is a bit different this time around as we are presently in the midst of an unusual situation: while the numbers of those infected continues to rise, the government is taking steps toward lessening a number of restrictions and health-risk measures across the country. What might, at first glance, seem contradictory is due to the confirmed knowledge that the Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus is highly contagious, but the health consequences for those infected (and vaccinated) are much less serious than those associated with previous mutations. Here's a look at the present situation in Austria and in Salzburg:

1. Present situation in Austria and Salzburg

1. 7-Day incidence rate nationwide (incidents of infections over seven days per 100,000 pop.)

Sunday, January 30, 2022:	2,540.3
Saturday, January 29, 2022:	2,504.4
Friday, January 28, 2022:	2,484.1
Thursday, January 27, 2022:	2,409.3
Wednesday, January 26, 2022:	2,315.1

2. 7-Day incidence rate in Salzburg Province

Sunday, January 30, 2022:	2,945.1
Saturday, January 29, 2022:	2,834.1
Friday, January 28, 2022:	2,828.9
Thursday, January 27, 2022:	2,760.1
Wednesday, January 26, 2022:	2,783.8

3. Hospitalizations nationwide

ICU Patients hospitalized with Covid-19	176 (8% of available beds)
ICU Patients hospitalized without Covid-19	1,141 (54% of available beds)

4. Hospitalizations in Salzburg Province

ICU Patients hospitalized with Covid-19	11 (8% of available beds)
ICU Patients hospitalized without Covid-19	79 (59% of available beds)

From these numbers, two important trends can be noted: (a) the numbers of infections continue to rise, but at a slower rate both nationwide and in Salzburg Province, and (b) the number of those patients with a Covid-19 infection who presently hospitalized, continues to decline. Due to this, the Austrian national government has come under some pressure to begin adjusting the present health-risk measures and start loosening some restrictions.

I. Austrian Government Reactions

On January 29th, following consultation with the national Corona task force, the national government announced a number of adjustments to the present restrictions:

1. Today, January 31, 2022, the lockdown for non-vaccinated persons in Austria ends.
2. As of February 5, 2022 (Saturday), restaurants will be allowed to stay open until 24:00 instead of the present 22:00. The number of people who can gather in one indoor space without assigned seating is raised from 25 to 50, and at larger events, the 2G rule (vaccinated or recovered) plus FFP-2 masking will be required instead of 2G+ (vaccinated with booster and tested).
3. As of February 12, 2022 (Saturday), the 2G (vaccinated or recovered) rule in all retail stores will end. Only FFP-2 masking will be required of customers.
4. As of February 19, 2022 (Saturday again), the 2G rule for restaurants will be expanded to 3G (vaccinated, recovered, or PCR tested). The validity for PCR tests will be reduced to 48 hours for entrance to restaurants, otherwise, PCR tests will remain valid for 72 hours for all other uses. If PCR testing is not available, antigen tests will suffice for a period of 24 hours. At larger events, 3G will be instituted for entrance and replace the 2G requirement of two weeks before.

Most importantly, tomorrow, February 1, 2022, the mandatory Covid vaccination law will go into effect. Although enforcement will be minimal for the following 6 weeks, the government has established a plan whereby the pressure to get vaccinated will increase before the summer months. Additionally, the waiting period to receive the third, 'booster' vaccination will be reduced from 120 to 90 days as of February 1 as well.

To date, no changes have been made to the various restrictions and health-safety measures required in Austrian schools. There is some indication that the Education Ministry may loosen some measures next week, but these seem to be primarily associated with masking and physical education. It appears that the testing schedule and masking in schools will continue for the time being.

There are presently no plans to change any travel restrictions or entry requirements that are presently in place.

Finally, given the fact that a number of Western European nations have decided to drop most health-safety requirements in recent days (e.g., Ireland, Denmark, the UK), there has been some speculative discussion here in Austria about when this present wave might reach its peak and break, yielding lowering numbers of infections and 7-day incidence rates. Guesses range far and wide presently with some experts claiming that we are at the peak presently; others suggest that we will not reach the climax for another two or three weeks. Predictions about post-apex infection numbers vary widely as well, from a dramatic decline to a slow and steady reduction over several weeks or months.

III. The Situation at AIS-Salzburg Presently

The situation here at AIS-Salzburg is presently very positive and we're hoping it stays this way. Last week at this time, we had two faculty members, three boarding students and two day students absent from classes due to quarantine requirements following positive infections. Today, we have only one resident student who is in quarantine and will be released later this afternoon; all others have been released from this restriction and are back in their classes. We are also very pleased to report that all those within our community who were infected experienced relatively mild symptoms with no serious complications or the need for professional medical assistance.

As of last Saturday, January 23rd, we have not had any positive antigen or PCR tests reported. We continue, however, to test on a daily basis. Although it might be tempting to state that the wave has now passed over us, this may not be the case and there remains the need to be very careful and prudent in our actions and behaviors for the time being.

IV. AIS-Salzburg Planning

Tomorrow, the AIS-Salzburg Corona Crisis Team will meet to review all present requirements as well as the health-safety measures we have implemented independently given our unique context as an international boarding school. A few things are clear from the outset; others will await decisions by the government and local officials and, of course, the trend of infections in the coming weeks.

Officially, we remain bound to the following restrictions and health-safety measures:

1. masking throughout the school in all classrooms and public places except during mask breaks outdoors and during meals
2. PCR testing once, and eventually, twice weekly.
3. ventilation and hygiene requirements throughout the school, especially in the kitchen buffet line.
4. testing and the 2G rule for all third-party visitors to the school
5. hybrid instruction in all classrooms for students whose parents choose not to have their children participate physically in the instructional setting as well as reduced assessment expectations.

Independently, we have instituted a number of health-safety measures that go beyond the mandatory requirements of the government officials in the Education Ministry of Austria. These presently include:

1. daily testing (antigen) of all students and staff
2. off-campus quarantine quarters for all resident students and staff members for the required period
3. limited individual free movement off campus
4. non-use of public transport, taxis, etc.
5. restriction of physical education and sports practices given risk assessment outcomes applied to off-campus venues
6. refunds of boarding tuition (reduction to day student rate) for all full- and five-day boarders who choose not to attend classes physically on a weekly basis
7. separation of dining facilities between those who are resident and non-residents
8. reduction of free-time engagement on campus during non-academic hours by non-resident students
9. scheduling activities on weekends that are generally outdoors and involve physical exercise.

The Covid Crisis Team will review each of these independent measures tomorrow to consider their continued appropriateness or any adjustments that may be warranted by the present situation. National requirements will continue to be implemented at the school until changes are announced.

Some adjustments have already taken place. These include a return to the Rif Sports Center for physical education classes whereby our students and staff members are isolated from all third-parties during the time the various venues there are in use. Also, we have initiated regular ski trips each weekend to areas that have few enclosed gondola lifts and are dominated by open chair and poma lift equipment. Additionally, we are presently planning to hold our Winter Excursion as planned from February 24 to 27, 2022, although we have adjusted the location to a youth sports resort near Zell am See where all students, both skiers and non-skiers will have plenty of opportunity for winter activity and action while staying alone in a hotel that includes indoor sand volleyball courts, basketball gym, climbing wall and other features tailored to the needs of adolescents.

Although discussion is still to take place, it appears presently that we will extend the refund for resident students who are presently at home through this week and terminate this as of next Sunday, February 6th. Nearly all boarding students will have returned by that date.

Any and all decisions made concerning possible changes or adjustments to present requirements and restrictions will be communicated to the community immediately as will any necessary adjustments to our excursion planning as well.

IV. Planning - Calendar (revised)

Please be aware of the following calendar elements:

Weekend Day Ski/Snowboarding Trips, Jan. 30; Feb. 5 or 6; Feb. 19 or 20; March 5 or 6; March 13

Weekend Overnight Trip (at nominal cost TBA), February 11-13, 2022
Skiing/Snowboarding in Innsbruck

Winter Excursion, February 24-27, 2022:
Skiing/Snowboarding/Winter sports in Zell am See, Austria

Jamboree Basketball Tournament at AIS-Salzburg, March 11-12, 2022
Held at the Rif Sports Center, involving both the boys' and girls' basketball teams and other DVAC schools

Winter Trimester Awards Dinner, March 3, 2022
Sternbräu Restaurant, Salzburg Altstadt (tentative depending upon regulations)

Weekend Overnight Trip (at nominal cost TBA), March 18-19, 2022
Munich or Nürnberg, Germany

Fall Excursion Make-Up, March 23-27, 2022:
Athens, Greece or Prague, Czech Republic

Spring Break, April 9-24, 2022:
All student depart dormitories for a two-week break

Junior Community Service Trip, April 29-May 1, 2022:
Location and details to follow

Advanced Placement Examinations, May 2-13, 2022:
For all registered students. Held at AIS-Salzburg.

Possible changes in the above will be communicated to you as quickly as possible.

Thank you again for your kind support and your attention. Please let me know if you have any further questions at any time.

Yours,

Paul McLean
Headmaster