

ISI FLORENCE COVID-19 PROTOCOL

(Last updated September 9, 2022)

All information contained in this document can change at any time. The Institute continuously updates relevant protocols at <https://isiflorence.org/reopening/>. This document is meant to outline a general protocol and situational risk management.

Upholding the highest health and safety standards has remained our top priority since the pandemic began. Summarized here are our current plans for a responsible and safe semester in accordance with the health and safety guidelines defined by the Italian government and its ministries (above all the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Education), advised by the WHO, the European Community, and recommended by the American Association of University Programs in Italy (AACUPI). Our commitment has been to ensure that all necessary health, safety, and preventive measures are firmly in place.

GENERAL BEHAVIOR

To prevent infection and to slow down transmission of COVID-19, The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends you:

- Maintain at least 3 feet distance between you and others, even if they don't appear to be sick.
- Wear a properly fitted mask when physical distancing is not possible or when in poorly ventilated settings. See info below on current mask regulations.
- Choose open, well-ventilated spaces over closed ones. Open a window if indoors.
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or clean them with alcohol-based hand gel.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- If you feel unwell, stay home and self-isolate until you recover.

What are COVID-19 symptoms? The WHO lists the following as the most common Covid-19 symptoms: fever, cough, and fatigue. Other symptoms can include: loss of taste or smell, sore throat, headache, nasal congestion, red eyes, aches and pains, among others. For a complete list of symptoms visit www.who.int. **If you suspect you may have Covid-19 stay home and contact the Institute.** During regular Institute hours call either Institute building. If you develop symptoms outside of Institute hours contact the program emergency phone.

ITALIAN REGULATIONS

Italy has done well in suppressing the virus since the initial outbreak in March 2020. It has done so in part by tightly regulating international travel (mandating quarantines and/or testing requirements specific to individual countries and regions), as well as by requiring strict social distancing and mask-wearing rules.

Respect the following regulations:

- **Face masks:** Until at least September 30th, FFP2/KN95 masks (which cover both nose and mouth) are specifically required while using public transportation (buses, trains, ferries, trams, etc.) and in all healthcare settings.
- **In all other indoor or crowded settings, masks are still strongly recommended.**
- **Hand hygiene:** Frequent hand washing or use of hand sanitizer is expected.
- **Physical distancing:** Recommended especially in crowded, indoor, or poorly ventilated spaces.

NOTE: Failure to comply with any of the above requirements can lead to heavy fines of €600 or more if the infraction is noticed by an Italian official responsible for enforcing covid-related regulations. Should a student receive a fine for violating local anti-covid rules, the Institute can refer them to legal guidance but cannot get them out of paying the fine.

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL

All students are required to complete a weekly **Travel Information Form**, and communicate any travel plans outside the local area prior to departure. This form documents the details of their travel including modes of transportation, lodging, travel companions, and destinations. Our team will monitor travel alerts and review the travel forms to provide updates and guidance on restrictions to ensure that students avoid prohibited destinations and those considered higher risk.

Students may choose to reference the following website for general information on EU health advisories and travel restrictions:

https://infocovid.viaggiasesicuri.it/index_en.html

NOTE: Due to the ongoing and constantly evolving Covid-19 pandemic, new travel restrictions can occur at any time. This applies to travel within Tuscany, throughout Italy, and outside the country. Should you have any questions or concerns the Institute staff are available during normal office hours to assist you with your travel arrangements.

The Institute recognizes that students are adults and will make their own decisions regarding personal health and safety. However, the Institute takes the health and safety of our students, staff, and faculty very seriously. Should the Institute become aware of students traveling to locations listed as unsafe or higher risk by the U.S. Department of State, those students will be contacted to inform them of the risks associated with travel to that location, and highly recommend they make alternate travel arrangements.

POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND PREVENTIVE MEASURES AT THE INSTITUTE

The Institute follows the current health and safety guidelines established by the Italian Ministry of Education, and Institute policies and guidelines are prepared by certified local health and safety consultants. Current measures include:

REGULATION FOR ENTRY

- Restricted access: All Institute facilities have an entry security system.
- Hand sanitizing gel at entrance.
- Touch-less thermometer at entrance.
- Regulations and guidelines poster at entrance.
- Restricted entry for those with symptoms attributable to Covid-19.

INSIDE THE INSTITUTE

- STANDARD RULES:
 - Masks are recommended while indoors.
 - Social distancing encouraged at all times.
 - Frequent sanitizing or washing of hands required.

- Poster and signs of official Covid-19 rules and regulations are placed at the entrance and throughout the Institute.
- Sanitizing gel in all classrooms and common areas of the Institute.
- Signs and floor markings for social distancing.
- Frequent daily cleanings of the common areas and surfaces in the classrooms, restrooms, and high-traffic areas are performed with products that meet Italian and EU anti-covid sanitation recommendations.
- Daily deep cleaning and sanitizing of the entire Institute every evening.

ACADEMIC CONTINUITY WITH REMOTE RESOURCES

In case there is a need to deliver classroom content remotely, Institute professors are now, more than ever, capable users of the online learning platform Moodle (similar to Canvas and Blackboard). Our instructors have long used the online environment as a complement to in-person learning; that preparation has been useful and they will continue to use Moodle in the future. The use of Moodle and carefully-planned content and assignments mean that we are also prepared to continue teaching online in the event a student needs to be quarantined or must return to the United States.

Courses may be delivered remotely in the following scenarios:

- A student is diagnosed with Covid-19 or assumes possible exposure (remote course offered individually until the student is cleared to return to the Institute).
- The course's professor has come in contact with the virus or is exhibiting symptoms (the class will be remote for all students during the isolation period).
- A local or national lockdown requires students and/or their professor(s) to stay home for a short period of time.
- A local or national lockdown is severe and potentially long-lasting, leading staff to be unable to support student needs and causing U.S. institutions to recall their students (a buffer period of 1 to 2 weeks will be offered so that students can return to the U.S. before classes resume remotely).

NOTE: Information provided is subject to change as all measures; particularly those relevant to travel, social distancing, sanitization, and isolation may change in compliance with current Italian and EU laws and guidelines for public health and safety.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES IN APARTMENTS

All Institute apartments have been cleaned and sanitized prior to student arrival. Professional and periodic cleaning and sanitization services will be made available throughout the term (as requested by students and at their expense). Finally, upon arrival in their apartments, students will be provided with a QR Code to access the following online resources:

- Document outlining Covid-19 protocol, preventive measures, and best practices for health and safety.
- The ISI Florence Student Handbook documenting the rules and regulations of the Institute and local laws governing Covid-19.

OUTBREAK SCENARIOS

SCENARIO 1: Suspected or Confirmed Case of Covid-19 among Students

If there is suspicion (but not confirmation) of a Covid-19 positive student, the student will be asked to self-isolate in a dedicated room at the Institute or in a separate room in their apartment. ISI Florence will assist the student with instructions on testing options (PCR and rapid testing).

ISOLATION REQUIREMENTS

In the event a student tests positive (either asymptomatic or symptomatic), the Institute will provide detailed guidance on the procedures to follow, according to the Italian Health Dept. regulations. Currently, a positive individual who is up-to-date on their Covid-19 vaccinations must isolate for a minimum of 5 days and until an official negative test is confirmed. In order to ensure correct isolation, the Institute will arrange for the positive student to temporarily move to separate housing. Depending on availability, this may be at a "Covid Hotel" or alternate housing. In the Covid hotel, a medical team will monitor the student's symptoms regularly, and provide them with all necessary medication, as well as daily meals. It is the students' responsibility to ensure the costs for isolation facilities are covered by their international health insurance plan.

Regardless of their symptomology, students who have tested positive must receive a negative Covid test in order to end their isolation.

In the event a student comes into contact with a Covid positive person, current guidelines state that they are not required to quarantine (as long as they are asymptomatic), but they are required to wear an FFP2 type mask (KN95) in all in-door settings (including crowded outdoor areas) for ten days and self-monitor their symptoms for five days. In the event they develop Covid-like symptoms, they must immediately receive a rapid or PCR test. If the test is negative and the symptoms persist, the test must be repeated again on the 5th day after the last close contact with the positive individual.

We place heavy emphasis on personal responsibility and community accountability; reminding students that their actions place them at risk of infection and isolation.

NOTE: While isolating, students will be required to obey Italian decrees that govern isolation. This means that students in isolation will not be allowed to exit their isolation location for any reason (bar an emergency such as a fire or earthquake). Food or medication will be brought to their isolation location through contactless delivery.

IF A STUDENT VIOLATES ISOLATION GUIDELINES

Italian authorities are authorized to conduct unannounced visits at the apartments of people placed in isolation. Should authorities find that a student has violated those requirements, they will be subjected to the same consequences as Italian citizens. Consequences can be fines ranging from 400 to 3,000 Euros or (in the case of a repeat offender) result in jail time. Neither the Institute nor the U.S. Consulate can intervene on a student's behalf.

MEDICAL CARE AND HOSPITALIZATION

In the event a student requires medical care or hospitalization, the Institute personnel, the student, and the appropriate personnel from the student's home university/program will work together to address this issue. Students sign a waiver at the start of the semester that authorizes the Institute to report incidents to their home institution that relate to the student's health, safety, general well-being, or academic performance.

The Institute suggests that students contact their family regarding any medical care or hospitalization to keep them informed. Should the student's care become serious or critical, the Institute will inform the student's emergency contacts of the situation directly.

COURSEWORK

As described in this document, under Academic Continuity with Remote Resources, students will be able to continue their coursework while in isolation. Should a student become too ill to engage with their studies remotely, the Institute has adjusted its attendance policy to allow for extensions. Specific extension periods will be the results of an evaluation of each individual student's needs, as discussed among the Academic Director, relevant faculty, and the student.

SCENARIO 2: Suspected or Confirmed Case of Covid-19 among Faculty

If a faculty or staff member develops symptoms or is suspected to be infected with Covid-19, they will be obligated to follow national isolation requirements. The Institute will follow the advice of local health authorities to determine isolation or quarantine requirements of the professor's class or any students with whom staff may have interacted. Precise recommendations will depend on various factors of exposure in line with Italian health guidelines and will be communicated to impacted students in a timely manner. The impacted course may need to be offered by the students' professor remotely until the required days have passed since the event of possible exposure and/or until the professor receives a negative covid test result. Should students be required to self-monitor their symptoms following exposure, they can review the requirements in Scenario 1 for precise instructions.

SCENARIO 3: Local Lockdown Implemented

If the city or local region becomes enough of a risk, students will be required to adhere to the local health and safety regulations, including shelter-at-home orders. Classes would take place remotely until restrictions have been lifted. If the crisis is severe or long-lasting, students may be asked to return to the United States either by their home institution or by the Institute. The reason for this is that if lockdown restrictions are in place, staff may be legally obligated to stay home and can therefore not offer the usual support services, even those relative to health and safety. Should the on-site program need to close, staff would work closely with students, ISI Florence's US Office, and university partners to support student departures. A one- to two-week buffer period would be established to allow students to arrange their flights and settle in back home without facing academic deadlines. Institute faculty is trained in the use of online learning platforms and can allow students to continue their coursework remotely once the buffer period ends. More precise details can be found under Academic Continuity with Remote Resources of this document.

REFUNDS

Students are encouraged to consult their college or university's study abroad office regarding their refund policy for the coming semesters.

SCENARIO 4: National Lockdown Implemented

If a national lockdown is implemented, students will be asked to return to the United States as soon as it is possible and safe to do so. It is believed that should a future lockdown be implemented, it may go into effect much more quickly than the lockdown in March of 2020. Therefore, while Institute staff will do everything in its power to assist students in booking flights, arranging transportation to the airport, etc. these services may be limited and offered only remotely, depending on the lockdown requirements imposed by the Italian government. In the event of a national lockdown and cancellation of on-site programming, the Institute will provide refunds as outlined in Scenario 3.

APPENDIX

SELECTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS IN DOMICILIARY ISOLATION - BY THE ITALIAN SUPERIOR INSTITUTE OF HEALTH

1. The person suspected or confirmed to be infected with Covid-19 must remain far from other family members if possible, in a single room that is well ventilated. They may not receive guests.
2. Anyone who assists the aforementioned individual must be in good health and not have pre-existing conditions that place them at risk of contagion.
3. Family members (or housemates) must stay in other rooms and, if not possible, maintain a distance of at least 1 meter from the infected individual. They must sleep in separate beds.
4. Anyone who assists an ill person must wear a surgical mask that is properly positioned on their face when entering the same room. If the mask becomes dirty or wet it is necessary to change it immediately and to wash one's hands immediately after removing it.
5. Hands must be attentively washed with soap and water or with hand sanitizer after every contact made with the ill individual or with their environment (room), before and after preparing food, before eating, after using the bathroom, and after any instance when something dirty or at risk of being infected is touched.
6. Hands must be dried using paper towels dispensed by machine or, if that is not possible, by using designated wash clothes that are substituted once they're wet.
7. Whoever assists an ill individual must cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze using a single-use tissue or elbow. They must then wash their hands.
8. Avoid direct contact with bodily fluids, particularly oral or respiratory secretions.
9. When isolating at home, recycling collection must not be done in order to avoid the accumulation of potentially dangerous materials. Instead, everything should be placed in the indifferenziata or black bin using two garbage bags.
10. Avoid sharing toothbrushes (or paste), cigarettes, kitchen utensils, towels, sheets, etc. with a sick person.
11. Clean and disinfect all surfaces daily, including those in common spaces (ex. kitchen counters, bathroom surfaces, tables, laundry machine, etc.) with normal household disinfectants or with bleach-based products with a concentration of 0.5% or that are 70% alcohol. Use gloves and proper protective equipment.
12. Use gloves and a mask when changing the sheets of an infected individual.
13. Wash the clothes, sheets, towels, etc. of any sick individual in the washing machine at 60-90 degrees, using normal detergent, or by hand using normal detergent and water. Dry them well.
14. If a member of the household shows the first symptoms of an acute respiratory infection (fever, cough, sore throat, difficulty breathing), contact the appropriate medical authorities immediately.
15. Avoid public transport when going to the designated health clinic or hospital; either call an ambulance or transport the individual in a private vehicle, ideally with the windows open.
16. When visiting medical facilities, the sick individual must wear a surgical mask and maintain a distance of at least 1 meter (3.2 feet) from everyone.

