

# Learning Abroad Center at the University of Minnesota COVID-19 Social Distancing Plan

The Learning Abroad Center created a COVID-19 Social Distancing Plan for our centers abroad. We started with Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recommendations, followed by guidance from Center for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO). We utilized MDH/CDC guidelines for the initial two-week transition period if they are more restrictive or prescriptive than local guidelines. The following guidelines below are broken down into specific actions that we will take.

## Housing

- Double rooms are allowed; if single rooms are not the program default, we will provide reasonable accommodation for single rooms per student request.
- Program participants may not enter each other's rooms; outside program guests cannot enter the housing.
- We will remind students to avoid public spaces when possible (e.g., hotel lobbies, gyms, pools, business centers) in all housing options.

## Quarantining

- We will implement quarantining at the beginning of the program based on local government guidelines.
- We will provide or advise on accommodation if a student must isolate during or after the program.

## Cleaning

- We will share a cleaning schedule that includes daily or multiple daily cleanings of student spaces.
- We will ensure that shared bathrooms are cleaned at least twice per day, per [CDC congregate housing guidelines](#).
- We will make available cleaning products to students for additional surface cleaning.
- If the room is not professionally cleaned, we will provide clear rules and guidelines about students cleaning spaces ([CDC guidelines on cleaning facilities](#)).

## On-Site Orientation

- Local rules, regulations, and cultural norms will be covered during orientation.
- Portions of orientation will take place virtually and/or outside, where possible, and chairs will be spaced at least 2 meters apart.
- External speakers will be minimal and join virtually, where possible.
- Any in-person orientation (city tours, etc.) will occur after the quarantine period.

## Classroom Space & Facilities

- Seats will be at least 2 meters apart and desks will face the same direction.
- We will ensure that ventilation systems in our facilities operate properly.
- We will increase circulation of outdoor air by opening windows and doors and using fans.
- We will not open windows or doors if they pose a safety or health risk for current or subsequent occupants (e.g., allowing outdoor environmental contaminants like carbon monoxide, molds, or pollens into the building).
- We will opt for outdoor classes, where possible.
- We will identify work and common areas where students could come within 2 meters of each other (e.g., classrooms, study spaces, cafeterias, libraries, check-in areas, waiting areas, routes of entry and exit).
- We will shutter communal spaces such as dining halls and study spaces if possible; otherwise, we will stagger use and clean and disinfect between use (per CDC).

## Site Visits

- Everyone must wear face masks correctly; the speaker may wear a face shield if preferred.
- We will use headsets and microphone for visits as needed to allow for social distancing and less voice projecting.
- We will provide hand sanitizer, disinfecting spray/wipes, tissues, and receptacles to dispose of tissue, and point out hand-washing facilities.
- Students will take temperature before visits if the local government or organizations visiting require it.
- We will break large groups into smaller groups.
- When possible, we will execute the tour or activity indoors, then conduct the lecture or debrief outdoors or in a larger space to support distancing.
- We will open windows (if possible and not more harmful) to increase air circulation.
- We will eliminate food being served, if possible, or ensure it is in individual pre-packaged boxes or bags.

## Internships

- The internship site will communicate its health and safety regulations and protocols with the student.
- We will provide an alternate option in case the site has to close (virtual/remote work, alternate internship placement, etc.).
- Patient-facing health internship placements are currently suspended; health internships without patient interaction (e.g., education, advocacy, and administration) are allowed.
- Where rural placements are an option, we will consider:
  - Strong communication and relationship with the organization must already be established
  - The community must be willing to welcome an outsider
  - Health care facilities and COVID testing must be available

## Transportation

- Flights are limited to round-trip international flights; layovers will be avoided or minimized.
- We will limit capacity on private transport for the first two weeks, then move to the local standard (if less restrictive). We will increase spacing of passengers, close every other row of seats, and use only the bus rear door, if feasible, [per CDC](#). Also, we will consider assigned seating and/or requiring roommate(s) to sit together.
- We will request detailed protocols from providers on bus cleaning procedures (e.g., before first use, daily cleaning). If possible, we will secure dedicated bus(es) for the program or per city and secure one driver (within safety regulations on hours worked).

## Use of Public Transit

- We will follow protocols and rules of the country/location visited.
- If there are limits on public transit, we will not use it for required group transport.
- If students are using public transit during free time, we will remind them of cleaning, hand-washing, and distancing recommendations.

## Personal Travel

- Personal travel must be within the host-country only (a UofM rule; exceptions may apply) and is subject to local and country travel restrictions. Only private accommodations (no hostels) are allowed.
- Students must follow published guidelines, including (where applicable) social distancing, wearing a face covering, traveling only if feeling well, and avoiding crowds.

## Cleaning & Good Hygiene

- Staff and students must wash their hands often and before meals, with soap and water or hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol), for at least 20 seconds.
- Staff and students must wear a cloth mask over their nose and mouth in public places.

## LEARNING ABROAD CENTER

230 Heller Hall, 271 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455

612.626.9000 | 612.626.8009 (fax) | [UMabroad@umn.edu](mailto:UMabroad@umn.edu) | [UMabroad.umn.edu](http://UMabroad.umn.edu)