

EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED!!!

The world in September 2020 will be very different to the world we knew in September 2019!!

The main difference from our perspective is Social Distancing. This is likely to be with us for a long time and this will define how we meet and interact with each other

Schools will therefore also be different. We do not yet know all of the details but this is how we think it will impact on our students in schools in Ireland and the UK

FIRST All of the available evidence suggests that schoolchildren are not super-spreaders of the coronavirus. The evidence is based on small limited surveys but points to this as a reasonable conclusion

However there are vulnerable people in every age group and it is most important that we are aware of any vulnerabilities among the participants of our high school programmes in Ireland.

It is therefore essential that the medical information which forms part of our application systems is completed in its entirety with up-to-date information

Arrivals Ireland: At the moment travellers arriving into Ireland are required to be in quarantine for two weeks

While we do not expect that this will still be the case at the end of August, we have to plan as if it will still be the case. Where possible we will place students in host families willing to accommodate them. Some of our boarding schools are also willing to allow quarantine. For other students AGPI members are planning to arrange for quarantine in residential centres in Ireland where students can be accommodated in single or double en-suite rooms with catering to each room

If this should prove necessary, it will be scheduled for the last week of August and the first week of September to allow all students to go from quarantine to school.

Will there be a cost for this? Yes there will be a cost for this centralised quarantine. However as scheduled, AGPI members who would normally pay accommodation for the first week in September will instead put the accommodation cost towards the cost of quarantine, thus reducing the cost to the student

Programme Start Dates At the moment, schools are expected to start as normal with no change to regular calendars

There may in some instances be a staggered start date in some schools so that all students do not arrive at the same time on the same day. We will advise those involved if or when this may happen

If there are problems with access to Ireland we will accommodate late arrivals

School Schedules We do not yet know what the shape of the school day will be but it seems clear that schools in every country will need to change to accommodate social distancing. This may involve some or all of the following:

- Staggered Class times
- Staggered break times
- Face-to-face classes mixed with Google Classroom

There may be other measures that we are currently unaware of

UPDATE: June 2020: It now appears that Irish schools and the Irish Department of Education are working towards full opening of schools in September 2020. This would mean that classes would primarily be school based and not online. There will be some new measures introduced to ensure that school common areas will allow social distancing (through one way systems, for example) and a rigorous hygiene system in all schools

As plans for the re-opening of schools are announced in the next few weeks we will update our advice accordingly

FAQs 2020/2021 School Year

What happens if I am not permitted to travel from my own country and/or travel to my programme in Ireland or the UK?

In this case we are happy to allow you to defer your arrival until such time as you can travel. This can be either a late arrival, a January start or defer to the following year. If none of these suit, we will refund the programme fees less any direct costs that we can not recover. This will only apply when travel is officially not permitted by your government or the Irish government

What happens if there is another outbreak of Covid-19?

Of course we hope that this will not be the case but.... Once you have been in Ireland for a minimum of 14 days, you are regarded as part of the Irish population and you are not expected to travel home. You are entitled to all of the public health services in Ireland if you are a national of another EU State. If not, you should ensure that you have adequate health insurance

What happens if I have to quarantine and I am in a Boarding School? If you are in a boarding school the school may be in a position to allow you to self-isolate in the school. Otherwise we will place you in a host family where you can self-isolate

Will this involve any extra cost? It is possible and likely that there will be an extra cost for quarantine in a host family

What happens if I have to quarantine in my host family? When we place you in a host family for the 2020/2021 school programme we advise the family that this may happen and if they can accommodate you they will. If not we have a number of host families who can accommodate and we will move you to one of these host families

If there is another outbreak and schools have to close, can I withdraw from the programme and return home and will I be refunded? With the experience that governments have gained of the pandemic we do not expect there to be anything like the outbreak we all experienced in March/April 2020. If schools close and move to online classes we expect it to be very temporary. You may of course return home but you will not be entitled to any refund of fees. If you do return home you will of course be welcome to continue with online classes and come back to your programme once schools restart

If some of my classes are taught online and I do not want online classes, can I cancel my programme and get a refund? We expect that almost every school system worldwide will have changed by September 2020 and will include new ways of delivering classes and learning, including some online modules. So while you may withdraw from the programme you will not be entitled to any refund.

What else might change in schools in Ireland?

Contact Sports: it is unlikely that contact sports will be available in the schools at least in the early part of the year. Schools will continue to offer other options (non-contact sports) and will continue to offer many other extra-curricular activities

Excursions and School Trips It is likely that schools will not offer excursions and trips during the early part of the school year unless they can guarantee social distancing. This may impact on some of the traditional aspects of Transition Year

State Examinations (Leaving & Junior Certificate, IB etc) While these exams were cancelled in 2020 and replaced with predicted marks, it is expected that they will be scheduled and held in 2021 as normal

What else might change?

Guardianship normally involves face-to-face meetings with every student once per month and visits to host families once per month. This may change to become Zoom or other online meetings during the early stages of the 2020/2021 programme to ensure the safety of students, families and guardianship staff. Please be assured that you will always have 24 hr access to your local guardian and that your safety will be our primary concern

Travel home for mid-term breaks will not be encouraged