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Instruction FAQ

How will classes be conducted?

Both on- and off-campus learners enrolled in the same course section will meet for synchronous instruction (referred to as “hybrid instruction” throughout this document). This will be accomplished using technology to help “embed” distance learning students in the live classroom setting so that all students are engaged in the class meeting simultaneously.

During in-person learning, will students and teachers be able to move around?

Classrooms will be set up in accordance with CDC and IDPH guidelines to ensure the safety and health of students and teachers. This will require that desks and students remain socially distanced, and that the teacher has a clearly marked space for instruction that is socially distanced from the students.

How will students get into and out of classrooms?

Classroom doors will be locked until students are let into the space by the faculty member, facilities personnel, or Principal’s Office designee. Students will be asked to come into the room while maintaining social distancing. At the end of class periods, faculty will dismiss students in a fashion suitable for the room to allow proper social distancing upon exit, such as dismissing students by rows.

Why will students have assigned seating during in-person instruction?

Faculty will have assigned seating during in-person instruction to ensure social distancing, as well as an orderly flow of students into and out of the classroom space.

What if a student has to get up during a class period for any reason (restroom break, etc.)?

Students will need to be excused by the faculty member and will have to exit while maintaining social distancing. While outside the classroom, all safety guidelines must be followed (social distancing, etc.) and IMSA staff will be monitoring halls to redirect students back to class when necessary.

Why is IMSA continuing to use the distance learning class schedule when classes meet on campus?

Since all classes will be taught in a simultaneous hybrid format, including students on- and off-campus, maintaining the distance learning schedule is the most equitable and efficient means of accommodating the needs of both groups.

Why is the IRC accessible by appointment only?

The IRC is a large space, but in order to ensure proper social distancing, the number of people using it must be carefully restricted. It is also a “high-touch” environment, meaning that there are many surfaces -- tables, chairs, and shelves -- that will need to be carefully sanitized after any handling. Finally, appointment-making will allow the Academy to gather the data necessary for contact tracing, in the event of a COVID-19 exposure.

Why aren't more study spaces and non-academic rooms open for student use?

Just as access to the IRC is being limited due to social distancing, cleaning protocols, and contact tracing protocols, open study and social spaces must be kept closed for the duration of this repopulation plan.

What will happen in courses scheduled to meet on campus if the assigned instructor is ill?

In the event of a teacher's illness, affected courses will move to distance instruction, with any on-campus students attending the course via Zoom and Canvas from their residence hall.

Is there a fully distance learning option still available?

Yes. During this repopulation process, IMSA students can continue to attend their classes in a fully distance learning environment if they and their families wish to do so.

If a student returns to campus, can the student decide to leave and return to remote learning?

Yes, if the student or parents/guardians decide to leave campus, the student will be provided the opportunity to continue learning remotely. If a student returns and leaves early, the student will not be allowed to return to campus at a later time.

When students are on campus, will there be health screenings before classes?

Students attending classes in-person will have to adhere to all appropriate health screenings as requested by IMSA, including temperature checks. Students should allow for extra time when entering the main building so they are not late for any classes.

Will students require any new or different technology in order to learn in-person or at a distance during repopulation?

No. Students will already have any necessary technology from what was used during remote learning during Fall 2020. The technology needed for the hybrid instruction is for the faculty to broadcast the instruction, meaning students will not require anything different from what they have been using.

Will Wellness classes require many students to exercise in close proximity?

Like all courses, the Wellness Classes will limit the number of students who can in the “classroom” at any given time. There are plans for how to socially distance during the Wellness classes, and equipment will be reorganized to limit access to only the necessary items that can be used safely under supervision.

How will students print and make copies?

Students will have access to printers in their Residence Halls. Printers will also be available in the IRC, but all IRC equipment will only be available during scheduled and confirmed appointments to visit the IRC in-person. A printer is also available in the Writing Center, but is only for Writing Center purposes during scheduled student academic support meetings.

Why aren't more study spaces and non-academic rooms open for student use?

Just as access to the IRC is being limited due to social distancing, cleaning protocols, and contact tracing protocols, open study and social spaces must be kept closed for the duration of this repopulation plan.

How will students receive academic support and tutoring in this model?

Students will continue to have full access to all of IMSA's academic supports remotely. While students are on campus, they will also have structured opportunities to meet with academic supports in-person throughout the week.

How will the on-site students' schedule differ from the students still doing distance learning?

Students in both in-person and distance learning environments will continue to take classes using the Spring 2021 mod schedule. On campus students will be part of lunch cohorts of 50 students or fewer in order to ensure appropriate social distance and equal access to IMSA's dining services, and so their midday break period will include a specific time window in which they are to eat, unlike students in remote learning.

How will classrooms follow safety guidelines and be socially distanced?

Classroom tables and desks will be set up to adhere to CDC and IDPH guidelines. Teachers will operate from a “front of the room” model, moving in spaces designated for them by floor taping and guide arrows, rather than circulating freely throughout the room. Students and their teachers will wear masks, and the classroom's touch surfaces (tables, desks, chairs) will be sanitized in between class meetings.

Will students, staff, and faculty be required to wear masks?

All students, staff, and faculty will wear masks in the classroom as well as in the Academy's common areas, bathrooms, hallways, offices, IRC, and meeting spaces, unless a medical exemption request approved by the Health Office permits them to use a face shield instead.

Faculty and staff may remove their masks only if they are in their office alone with the door closed, and must put the mask back on in the presence of others. Students may remove their masks only if they are in their residence hall room with the door closed, and must put the mask back on in the presence of others.

What can families expect for the class size to be in the classroom?

Class sizes will vary depending on the course and classroom space, with all decisions adhering to CDC and IDPH guidelines.

If we choose to send our student back onsite, how will the staff and faculty work together to make it a smooth transition and ensure my students' learning and instruction needs are met?

Faculty and staff are aware of the challenges students have faced during remote learning. We expect that the return to campus will present new challenges to students and their success in the classroom. By adapting assignments so they are suitable for effective collaboration with both distance learning and on campus peers; encouraging communication between students, parents, and teachers; updating Canvas frequently with clear, useful information; scaffolding assessments and projects to accommodate changes in how students access research resources on campus; and encouraging multi-modal methods of student engagement and learning, IMSA's faculty and staff will work to create a functional, flexible educational experience for students that is responsive to their changing circumstances.

What will grading look like during repopulation?

Faculty will assess carefully what instructional modes are most effective and equitable for students in remote and on campus learning environments, adapting their assessment practices to reasonably address their needs. Faculty members strive to provide timely and meaningful feedback that will help students assess their own learning and advocate for their needs with the support of their teachers and learning support staff.

How will you work to ensure students both online and in-person are engaged in the classroom?

Simultaneous teaching of students online and onsite will require faculty to explore classroom engagement through a variety of modalities, including but not limited to: breakout rooms, polls, chats, discussion fora, wikis, collaborative annotation software, and message boards. Just as students are adapting to this shift in learning environment, faculty are adjusting and learning, too, and will embrace IMSA's learning laboratory origins in order to identify and utilize the best-fit resources for their students and themselves.

What level of engagement will students remaining in distance learning have with their teacher? What level of engagement will students remaining in-person have with their teacher?

Students working both from a distance model and on site will have access to office hours meetings with their teacher and the ability to ask questions and communicate using Canvas, email, and whatever other technologies their teachers make available to them (Google Hangouts, Google Chat, Remind.com messaging, etc.). In the classroom environment, IMSA faculty strive to answer questions from and offer support to all students, whether they are learning online or on site.

How will the socio-emotional health of my student be addressed by the Principal's Office and faculty?

The faculty and the Principal's Office are best empowered to support students' socio-emotional health through robust communication. Faculty who are concerned about students reach out to them individually, ask for their family's input, communicate with RCs, and contact counselors in an effort to better understand and respond to emerging needs. Students experiencing mental health crises can receive accommodations ranging from counselor excused absences from class meetings to changes in assessment due dates or assessment structures. Please remember that IMSA values the health and well-being of its students, and its teachers want to know when students need help and support. Parents and students should not hesitate to reach out with questions or concerns.