

SIT HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

How does SIT decide when it is safe for a program to take place during a period where there is heightened risk?

SIT uses a variety of monitoring sources and relies on a risk committee, chaired by the director of security, to comprehensively evaluate risk. Key resources for monitoring risk include daily Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) news summaries, International SOS risk alerts, global and local news sources, local health ministries and other government agencies, and the U.S. Department of State travel warnings.

During a public health emergency such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, SIT also relies on guidance from the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) and the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).

In addition, during periods of heightened health risks, SIT closely monitors actions taken by the governments in the countries where our programs operate, such as movement restrictions or quarantine requirements that would potentially impact the program.

Finally, SIT leverages the expertise and knowledge of our host-national staff teams, who provide us with updates about issues of concern and potential impact to our students and centers. Our local staff have extensive networks that include local authorities, U.S. embassy services, and informal sources—all of which help to inform our decisions about programs.

Collectively, these resources support our senior leaders in making the best decisions possible about whether it is safe to run a program. It is important to note that the conditions related to the current COVID-19 pandemic continue to evolve and change rapidly. Key COVID-19 indicators that we track on an ongoing basis include: 1) number of new daily cases, 2) number of new cases per 100,000 participants, 3) mortality rate, 4) testing positivity rate, 5) WHO transmission classification, 6) International SOS COVID-19 impact rating, 6) DOS travel advisory level, and 7) CDC health advisory level. SIT recognizes that guidance from professionals and governments dealing directly with the crisis is going to shift based on developments on the ground. Case numbers may decrease, and restrictions loosen in one location, while the opposite trend may occur in another location. We continue to monitor the latest developments worldwide to make informed decisions about programming with the safety, security, and well-being of students, program participants, faculty, and staff as our top priority.

What steps will SIT take to mitigate exposure risk for students while traveling to and from program locations?

Through our years of experience in global education, we know that preparation, prevention, and communication are key to keeping students healthy and safe, including during travel to and from program locations. As outlined above, SIT utilizes international, national, regional, and local resources to help guide our decisions about when it is safe to travel. We also look to our experts on staff and in-country partners to inform the guidance we give to students before they travel to program locations.

Prior to departure, SIT requires that students participate in an orientation with SIT health, safety & wellbeing staff, admissions staff, and the Academic Director for the program. During these sessions, students are provided with the latest medical recommendations for reducing risk during travel, as well as country-specific health guidelines, including required and recommended immunizations.

What actions will SIT take to ensure the health and safety of students, faculty, staff, and local communities after arriving in country for a program?

Under any circumstances and in any environment, SIT's approach to risk management starts with our responsibility to conduct thorough risk assessments and establish clear crisis management protocols and detailed safety policies, which are captured in an Emergency Action Plan tailored to each program and country context.

In addition, we develop program-specific Contingency Plans in advance of each program start date to account for current and potential risks. These plans detail how SIT would adjust programs in locations where there are heightened health and safety risks. While it is impossible to address every possible scenario, SIT knows from experience that contingency planning is critical to being able to respond quickly and appropriately when there is an emergency.

Both the Emergency Action Plans and Contingency Plans are reviewed and updated regularly by our Health and Safety teams.

SIT also recognizes that COVID-19 presents unique challenges that require additional layers in our emergency and contingency planning. In light of the pandemic, SIT now requires all programs to have in place a robust COVID-19 specific Risk Management Plan with protocols for addressing important issues, such as:

- Specific training for faculty and staff on COVID-19;
- Pre-departure and in-country orientations for students that address COVID-19 specific risks and mitigation measures;
- Adequate supplies such as masks, sanitizers, and washing stations available at all program centers to mitigate the spread of COVID-19;
- A communication plan for providing COVID-19 related updates to students, faculty, and staff including regular reminders and signage reinforcing preventative measures and standards;
- Ongoing communication and coordination with homestay families and other community partners on preventative measures and requirements;
- A reporting mechanism for anyone exhibiting symptoms and a plan for testing and treatment if required; and
- Quarantine requirements and spaces, if necessary.

SIT is prepared to adapt as necessary, particularly considering the impact of COVID-19. For example, depending on the program and the situation in-country, some programs may need to change excursions or locations if conditions warrant. Likewise, students may be placed in accommodations other than traditional homestays in order to minimize the risk of COVID-19 exposure. Whatever the circumstances, SIT has decades of experience implementing flexible approaches that allow us to ensure safety while also maintaining the integrity of the overall program experience.

Each country specific COVID-19 Risk Management Plan will be shared with students prior to departure and will be updated as necessary throughout the program.