



Frequently Asked Questions for WMA Families

Updated July 16, 2020

1. Are student visas still renewable even though students were not physically on campus for five months?

Students will continue to use their current I-20 as they normally would. There is no need to worry about the five-month rule. As long as they have "attended" classes during WMA's ODL session, they have remained in "active status" wherever they are. If a student needs to update their I-20, they should email Ms. Chan (jchan@wma.us). She is in constant contact with SEVP, the government agency which oversees WMA's handling of visas and issuance of I-20s.

2. What if the travel restrictions are not lifted and students cannot get a visa appointment?

If students are unable to return to campus due to immigration controls or travel restrictions, they will be able to fully participate in online classes until such a time when they are able to come to campus.

3. Will the school provide documentation of process for quarantine/testing to assist with U.S. Customs questions?

We suggest all students travel with a folder that contains a copy of their important documents (I-20, passport, health forms). We will also be providing a letter to include in this folder that details the Academy's plan for quarantine and testing. This letter will also have the Administrator on Duty (AOD) phone number, so in the event your child has questions or issues when traveling, they can call the AOD.

4. Currently there are limited flight schedules to the United States. Will the school provide pick up in Boston as necessary?

We are working on our shuttle plans for students returning to campus that is safe for the students and our faculty/staff driver. If a student needs transportation from the airport to campus, please contact Mike Mannix at mmannix@wma.us.

5. Will there be regular testing on campus and how will that be performed? Will boarding students need to be quarantined for 14 days on arrival in the U.S.?

- All students, faculty and staff will be tested regularly for COVID-19. WMA's Health Services team will administer the collection of shallow swab nasal samples for analysis. The two methods for testing include:

- Antigen testing: Samples will be analyzed using two on-campus Quidel Sofia2 machines.
- PCR testing and samples will be analyzed through the Broad Institute at MIT.
- When a boarding student arrives on campus, they will take a test. If a boarding student tests negative, they will enter quarantine. After receiving negative results for three tests on consecutive days in quarantine, they will be released from quarantine. If the student tests positive at any time, they will be isolated on campus and cared for by our Health Services team.

6. How will WMA manage day students?

Day students will be tested at the same frequency as our boarding students. Additionally, we will have spaces on campus for our day students to use during their free period. We ask that day students continue to follow the “Safer at Home” guidelines when they are not on campus. Day students will not be permitted to enter the dorm. If a day student needs to consistently arrive early or be picked up late from school, we ask that they talk with Ms. Squindo, if they are in the Upper School, or Mr. Whitcomb if they are in the Middle School.

7. What procedures will be in place to keep students and faculty safe?

- Regular and Frequent Testing
- Quarantine when necessary
- Air purification
- Mask-wearing
- Social distancing

8. How does my student’s insurance work?

Their coverage begins on August 15. If your student arrives on campus early, they will have insurance. United Healthcare also covers COVID-19 treatment, so if your child needs medical attention off campus, it will be covered. For more questions on health insurance, please contact Rose Power, Director of Health Services, at rpower@wma.us.

9. How will boarding students interact in the dormitory?

Dorms will be treated as “family units” or cohorts. The number of students in the dorm will determine the formation of the units/cohorts. Dorms have been organized by grade level because most students take the same classes with students in their grade. By housing these students together who take similar classes, the goal is to reduce the number of interactions they have with other students. Students will be limited in terms of dorm visitation, and students will be assigned bathrooms to use to enhance the effectiveness of cohorting. Students will be able to take their masks off in their dorm rooms. Use of common spaces will be limited at the beginning of the year.

10. What is the process for meals?

We are utilizing three spaces for meals this year: Lak Dining Hall, the Campus Center (Spa) and the Chapel. We have divided meals into seatings. This will allow proper distancing in dining spaces and adequate cleaning time between each seating. The round tables will have a plexiglass divider that sections the table into four spaces, so students can sit in groups of four.

The priority for breakfast and dinner meals must be given to the Boarding students since on-campus dining is their only meal option. We are exploring using the Chapel for a grab-and-go breakfast option for those Day students who arrive to campus early.

11. What are the changes to the academic year calendar?

The first day of school remains the same, August 31. International boarding students may begin to arrive on August 17. We plan to convert to full Online Distance Learning for the three weeks between Fall and Winter vacations. This means that we will end in-person classes at the beginning of Fall Vacation (Nov. 20) and switch to full Online Distance Learning from Dec. 1 through the start of Winter Vacation on Dec. 18. All students will return to campus at the conclusion of Winter Vacation to resume in-person programming on Jan. 5, 2021. This will reduce the risk of viral spread resulting from travel and vacation activities, and it will provide an added layer of protection for students, families and staff. This precautionary tactic is being utilized by a large and growing number of reputable private schools and post-secondary institutions.

12. What are the changes to the daily and weekly schedule?

We have changed the daily/weekly schedule from a yearlong trimester schedule to a semester modular schedule this year.

Students will be permitted to stay on campus all year if they cannot and don't want to go home during breaks. The dorms and dining hall will be open, and we will have some activities planned. Students interested in staying on campus should contact Mr. Mannix, Dean of Residential Life, at mmannix@wma.us.

13. Will the Middle School students follow the same schedule as the Upper School students?

Yes, the Middle School will follow the same schedule as the Upper School, but will utilize the time a little differently. We are excited to be able to offer our same rich curriculum while limiting the number of courses a MS student must track on a given day. As this means longer class periods, students will also have a five-minute break built in so they may see one another, similar to how it works with passing time between classes (an important social touchpoint in MS). It will also allow for the release of energy ... a Middle School imperative. From a teaching standpoint, this is also a good way to help students hit the reset button before tackling the remainder of class.

Students can also anticipate one semester with a built-in study hall/activities block so they will have opportunities to explore an affinity group or to participate in activities like student government, yearbook, chess, bike repair or knitting, to name a few.

14. Will there be Online Distance Learning for students if, for some reason, they are not comfortable being on campus or need to quarantine?

Any student may participate fully in online classes if they choose. There will be no difference in the content for an online student or an in person student. They will progress through the material at the same pace.

15. If classes are online, how will the grades be determined?

This past spring trimester, we used the “pass/fail” grading system because we were in an emergency online learning situation. This summer, our faculty are receiving extensive training on hybrid learning and assessment, and therefore we will be able to utilize our traditional grading and GPA system for the 2020-2021 academic year.

16. Will students in different time zones be required to be present in live classes?

Students will not be required to be present in live classes. Our academic program will be structured in a manner that will allow students to access the course content at a time that is convenient for their current time zone.

17. Will there be after-school sports and activities?

As of July 14, we are planning for a full afternoon program and schedule in the fall. We also have a wide variety of plans in place should circumstances change.

18. What about off-campus trips and weekend activities?

Travel off-campus will be restricted at the beginning of the year. Mrs. Dziura, our On-Campus Events and Activities Coordinator, is planning a full range of socially distanced, on-campus activities for those students who are living on campus. Additionally, she is working on online programming for all students to participate in. If students need necessities, they should contact their advisor or the Deans Office, and we will work to get the student the items they need.

19. How will this impact the college process for juniors and seniors during the fall semester?

We anticipate that most college and university admission offices will not be offering information sessions or campus tours in the fall. However, should conditions allow, members of the Class of 2021 will have opportunities to visit

schools later in the year. In lieu of campus visits, most admission offices have bolstered the virtual components of their websites to include campus tours, live and recorded information sessions, interviews with faculty, administrators and student leaders, and videos covering a range of extracurricular experiences.

Most admission offices have also cancelled fall travel, including high school visits for their admission representatives. Synchronous information sessions with admission representatives from more than 80 institutions will be scheduled throughout the fall.

As noted in the Class of 2021 March and June communications, the impact of COVID-19 on standardized testing has been far-reaching. Cancellation of the March, May and June SAT, the April ACT and limited access to the June and July ACT has left rising seniors with limited opportunities for testing and test prep. As a result, most colleges and universities have implemented test-optional policies for the upcoming admission cycle. This allows students to decide whether they want to submit scores; non-submitters will not be penalized in any way. In order to compensate for the noted cancellations, additional SAT and ACT test dates have also been added to the fall schedule.

If there are any specific questions or concerns with regard to college counseling or the impact of the coronavirus, please do not hesitate to contact the College Counseling office.

20. What about the Opening of School?

At this point, it is not safe to have our typical Opening of School events with large gatherings, community meals and ceremonies with more than 400 people attending. We are looking to still provide an informative and welcoming environment for our students and families to start the school year. We will be providing online programming for families to meet faculty and staff who are integral to their child's WMA experience.

For the dorm move-in process, we need to keep the dorms as clean as possible for the students and faculty living there. Therefore, parents are not allowed in dorms during move in. We ask that everyone practice the "Safer at Home" guidelines leading up to the start of school to reduce opportunities of getting sick, and when people are traveling to campus, we ask that they practice good health hygiene (masking wearing, social distancing and hand washing for 20 seconds or more).

Lastly, it is imperative that your child's forms are submitted to the Academy by August 1. Our Health Services team needs to have the students' information organized before they begin testing.