**Graduate School COVID-19 Guidelines 2020/2021**

**Introduction**

Especially in times of a pandemic, it is essential to prevent or minimize the spread of infection, to protect others and ourselves. In particular, it is crucial to keep rates low enough that infections can be contained by contact tracing. Throughout the pandemic, IST Austria has had almost no cases of COVID-19 on campus and we all want to keep it that way. At the same time, the education and research system must still function even under difficult conditions. This document outlines procedures to ensure a safe learning and research environment for students of the IST Austria Graduate School.

These guidelines are valid from Sept. 1, 2020, but may be updated if the pandemic situation changes significantly.

**Teaching**

Classes may be handled in one of the following modes:

1. entirely online;
2. in a mixed-mode, with some components online and others in-person
3. in-person lectures and recitations.

The Graduate School recommends no more than 10 people in class, larger classes being held online.

All in-person classes should provide an option for remote participation, both to reduce density on campus, and so that students who feel slightly unwell or are in quarantine can still participate.

Course instructors should maintain attendance lists for in-person classes, in case we need to trace contacts at short notice.

**Rotations**

Students rotating with research groups must follow all group and IST rules.

The Graduate School encourages remote rotation work when possible, but recognizes that rotations should include some in-person interaction with the supervisor and the host group.

**Exams**

Qualifying Exams and PhD Thesis Defenses may be held either entirely online or with student and Exam/Thesis Committee and Chair present in person.

The Exam/defense protocol would normally be physically signed and sent to GSO; if some committee members participate remotely, electronic signatures are accepted.

**Events**

The Graduate School will organize most of its events online (meetings with groups of students, faculty working groups, Open Day etc.). The decision on Student Visit Day (admissions interviews) will depend on the development of the pandemic.

Where in-person group work is necessary, the Graduate School may organize small meetings, with not more than 10 people present.
Working remotely

Working flexibly from home is supported (with approval from supervisors) to reduce numbers on campus, to allow the slightly sick to work (if they choose to) without coming to campus, and at least until November 2020, to help parents with care-taking duties.

Presence on campus should in general be limited to work purposes, except for those living on campus.

Travel

Travel restrictions apply according to the Austrian foreign ministry. Students should avoid unnecessary travel, whether for business or private reasons.

General recommendations

Avoid close personal contact outside a very small regular circle (housemates, family, etc.)

Wear a face mask in any social situation (be it indoors or outdoors) whenever appropriate. Wearing face masks is recommended, especially when in common areas, or meeting in offices that are not your usual workplace. Wherever social distancing (>1m) is not feasible, face masks are absolutely mandatory.

Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly.

Stay at home at the slightest indication of feeling unwell, call the Austrian national health hotline at 1450 for a test, inform EHS at ehs@lists.ist.ac.at, and immediately notify your research group leader or, in case of unaffiliated students, your rotation advisor and Vlad Cozac.

In case of a (potential) COVID-infection

Environment, Health and Safety (EHS, from inside IST: ext. 1087 or 2244, from outside IST: +43 2243 9000 1087 or +43 2243 9000 2244 or EHS@lists.ist.ac.at) has to be informed immediately in the following cases:

- A student feels sick with respiratory symptoms or fever, either on or off campus.
- A student has been in contact with a person who is infected or potentially infected, i.e. is waiting for test results.
- A student has tested positive for COVID-19.

In most cases it will be necessary to inform the national health service (24h hotline) for further instructions (call 1450, omitting any area code). English speaking operators are available.

In case a student is being tested and/or subject to quarantine (currently 10 days) they must inform EHS who will then inform the Graduate School.

If a student is being tested and/or tested positive, EHS will initiate contact tracing on campus, which might lead to preventive quarantine for others who were in direct contact (defined as contact with the infected person for > 15 min. at < 2m distance).
Risk groups

Adults with certain underlying health conditions have a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Students who might belong to the risk group should contact their doctor and inform EHS accordingly. Specific measures to protect the student’s health (e.g. increased home office) might be implemented.

Communication to students

- “Corona Update” emails
- EHS-Wiki: https://ehs.pages.ist.ac.at/corona-virus-information/