



UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

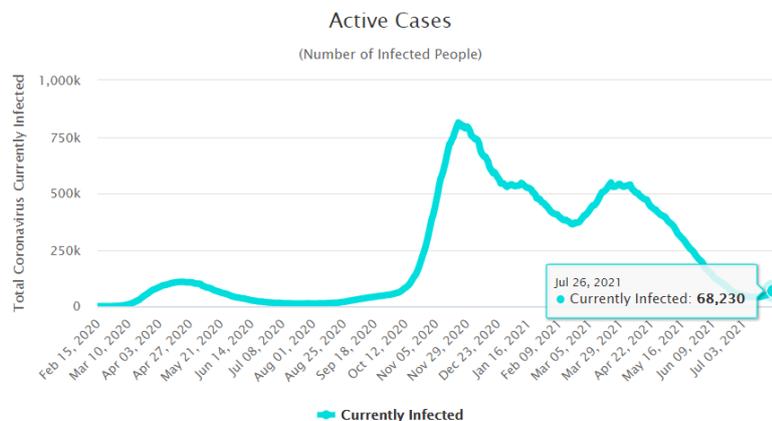
July 29, 2021

Dear Prospective Students and Families of the Fall 2021 Rome semester,

I write you with important news about the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy, notably a recent rise in positive cases (linked to the delta variant) as well as some recent government steps to contain this negative trend. The news is so central to our plans for the fall 2021 semester that I cannot wait until our upcoming townhall meeting to share it with you. The townhall meeting is still scheduled for Friday, August 6, 2021 at 12:00pm (CST) and will cover important information and advice that is not included in this letter (see the meeting link here: <https://zoom.us/j/99701963065>). The purpose of this letter is no less important and yet more limited in scope. Practically speaking, we are reaching out to you for the purpose of relaying the increasing challenges that unvaccinated students will face when attending the fall 2021 semester.

CURRENT COVID-19 NUMBERS IN ITALY

As you can see from the graph below the number of active COVID-19 cases in Italy is slowly on the rise again:



After hitting a low of approximately 40,000 total active cases in mid-July, the number of active cases has risen to nearly 68,000 as of today, representing a 70% increase in about two weeks. The silver lining in this otherwise darkening cloud is that hospitalizations and deaths have remained mercifully low so far. The highest rates of hospitalization, measured as the number of patients per beds available, reached levels of 50% or more during the worst moments of the pandemic, whereas currently the national average is thankfully about 2%. Nearly one thousand fatalities were registered on some of the worst days of the pandemic historically, whereas today the numbers are fairly steady at 10-20 fatalities per day.

NEW ITALIAN COVID-19 LAW OF JULY 22, 2021

By issuing its [National Decree of July 23, 2021](#) the Italian government has offered a prompt and decisive response to these recent developments in the pandemic. This law reflects widely-shared worries within both government and the population at large about a possible worsening of the pandemic in the coming weeks and months, but it also acknowledges that the public health impact of this outbreak is less severe and more manageable than that of previous outbreaks because of the fairly limited demographic of new

positive cases. Unvaccinated individuals and especially the young, make up the vast majority of new positive cases, and fewer people are getting gravely sick so far. Accordingly, the principal thrust of the law is to limit the access of unvaccinated individuals to a range of public activities and services for their own and others' protection, while leaving vaccinated individuals with free access.

News organizations, such as the [BBC](#), have already begun to report some aspects of Italy's new legislation. However, a more complete list of its provisions are as follows:

- The national state of emergency put into effect on March 25, 2021 will be extended through December 31, 2021.
- The so-called Green Pass consists of:
 - a certificate issued by the government after the first dose of an approved vaccine, valid for fifteen (15) days;
 - a certificate issued by the government after the second dose of an approved vaccine, valid for nine (9) months;
 - proof of full recovery from COVID-19, valid for (six) 6 months;
 - proof of a negative molecular or antigen test, valid for forty-eight (48) hours.
- This "Green Pass" will be required for access to a range of activities, services, and institutions, including restaurants and bars lacking outdoor service space; concerts, theater and sporting competitions; museums and exhibition halls; gyms, swimming pools, health clubs, and certain types of hotels; festivals, conferences, and political gatherings; betting establishments; and testing centers.
- Categories of risk will follow the current "white" (safe), "yellow" (moderate risk), "orange" (high risk) and "red" (highest risk) system, and travel within and between states and regions will be granted in accordance with this system. Predictably, places with low risk will enjoy greater liberties while those with higher risk will face restrictions. This system is consistent with the anti-COVID regime in place for over a year now. However, the parameters for determining risk will no longer be associated with infection rates but rather be determined by levels of hospitalization and rates of ICU occupancy.

The likelihood of the government retracting any of these measures before the opening day of the semester or indeed over the course of the fall is highly unlikely given the fact that Italy's current prime minister, Mario Draghi, is a highly respected figure working within a reasonably stable governmental coalition. More worrisome is the prospect of Draghi introducing even more severe measures in the coming weeks, including limited access to public transportation for Green-Pass individuals only, a measure that was discussed in anticipation of this decree but rejected last minute.

Even as it stands, however, the National Decree of July 23 will impact our fall 2021 planning to a significant degree. To cite just one example, unvaccinated students will not be able to enter museums unless they take a COVID-19 test no less than two days leading up to the visit. As long as that is the case, our educational trips to Rome, throughout Italy, and probably even to Greece will not be able to take place without a constant regime of testing. Such logistical hurdles will certainly be expensive for unvaccinated students and may even present significant logistical obstacles to our planned trips. Moreover, once unvaccinated students leave Italy on their independent travels, they are likely to meet with similar provisions in other countries. For instance, both France and Denmark have recently introduced a ["health pass"](#) that operates in a similar way to Italy's Green Pass. At this time there is no clarity on what documentation would be acceptable for proof of recovery from COVID-19. Even if that is clarified going forward, Green passes based on proof of recovery within the last six months may lose their validity when the window following recovery exceeds six months.

AMENDED VACCINATION ADVICE FOR FALL 2021 SEMESTER STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

In my letter to you of July 2, I said the following about UD Rome's vaccination policy:

I would encourage all Rome Program participants who are not already COVID-19 immune to seek an approved anti-COVID vaccination prior to attending the fall semester as your single best defense against getting sick, getting someone else sick, suffering financial loss due to sickness and extra-testing, and/or facing obstacles to your ability to travel freely for lack of proof of immunity. Note that the above guidance does not constitute a vaccine mandate by the University of Dallas and its Rome Program. Rather, I am sharing guidance that I believe will provide the best possibility for a successful fall Rome semester.

Although the above advice still stands, it must be qualified in two ways. First, instead of merely encouraging students to obtain vaccination I would now strongly encourage and indeed appeal to them to do so. And second, instead of just "facing obstacles to your ability to travel freely," this new version of the Green Pass has effectively made those obstacles more onerous, logistically challenging, and expensive. A conservative estimate of the added expense to unvaccinated students is \$450 for the semester, equivalent to fifteen (15) additional antigen tests at \$30 each to qualify for participation in our fieldtrips. If public transport is restricted to Green-Pass holders only, students will obviously face additional expenses as well given that they will need to take taxis, not buses and subways, to get around.

NEXT STEPS FOR NON-VACCINATED STUDENTS

I have already heard from students and parents who are hesitant about or indeed opposed to COVID-19 vaccines. If you are one of them, I regret that the contents and advice of this letter may not be welcome news for you. For parents and families who until now had no intention of meeting the new vaccination requirement, one of three options lie before you at this point.

- obtain the required vaccines in time for your departure for Rome;
- continue with plans to attend the fall 2021 semester and anticipate additional testing costs and possible setbacks to an unvaccinated student's experience; or
- withdraw from the program under the conditions outlined in the next section of this document, titled "Amended Withdrawal Policy."

AMENDED WITHDRAWAL POLICY

The "Risk and Contingency Plans" and "Reimbursement Policy" described in my July 2, 2021 letter remain unchanged. In other words, students and their families are advised that there are continuing health risks to attending the Rome Program during this COVID-19 pandemic. That the Rome Program reserves the right to change our activity programming at any time for the purpose of safeguarding student and staff health, and that the University will only consider reimbursements for room, board, and fees only in the event of the unlikely termination of the semester owing to an extended COVID-19 outbreak.

In addition to the above existing policies, but more specifically relating to issues surrounding vaccinations and the new Green pass that have already been discussed in this letter, students and parents are advised of the following Amended Withdrawal Policy:

- Requests for withdrawal from the fall 2021 Rome semester are irrevocable and must be received in writing by the Rome Office (email: udrome@udallas.edu) no later than 5:00pm on Friday, August 6.

The University of Dallas – Eugene Constantin Rome Campus

- All deposits and payments toward Rome room, board, and other fees will be reimbursed at 100% (minus \$75 for visa fee) for successfully withdrawn students or credited to a student's account for use in the fall 2021 semester on the Irving Campus.
- All deposits and payments for airline travel will not be reimbursed.
- All deposits and payments toward tuition will be credited for use in the fall 2021 semester on the Irving Campus.
- The University will make every reasonable effort, to the extent possible, to enroll students in their preferred Irving classes and fulfill their room and board requirements.
- The University cannot guarantee but will make every reasonable effort to make space for participation in the Rome Program in the future, be it spring 2022, summer 2022, or a later semester.

The prospect of students withdrawing from the fall 2021 Rome semester is of course a huge disappointment for us and may represent a disheartening setback for currently registered students and their families as well. Once again, we regret that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented us with such meagre options. If you are torn about your choices, reach out to us at your earliest convenience for a chat.

If you have questions about any aspect of this letter, want to discuss your options further, or have more general questions about the fall 2021 semester, please contact Rebecca Davies, the Director of the Rome Office in Irving by phone at 972-721-5206 or email us at bdavies@udallas.edu. If you prefer to contact me on the Rome Campus, I will respond promptly to email delivered at pbatlie@udallas.edu and will be happy to follow up with a call too.

Sincerely Yours,



Peter Hatlie, Dean, Director, VP, Prof. of Classics