

## Issues relating to new international students in current context

This information is current as of June 2, 2020. For latest details please always visit <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/covid-19> and <https://students.ubc.ca/covid19>

### Steps for international students to start at UBC in Canada:

1. Student gains acceptance from university
2. Student applies online for study permit
  - a) must provide proof of financial support for first year (tuition plus \$10,000 CAD)
  - b) must meet eligibility requirements (e.g. no criminal record)
  - c) must be in good health
  - d) may have to meet other requirements such as medical exam and police certificate
3. Except for US nationals, a study permit applicant requires **biometrics** (fingerprints, photo). This requires an in-person visit to a visa application centre (VAC) after applying for the study permit and receiving a biometric instruction letter (BIL). Processing the study permit application occurs after the results are submitted.
4. Study permit application is processed.
5. If successful, student receives a **letter of introduction** (LoI)
6. Depending on country, students may require Temporary Resident Visa (TRV) or Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA)
7. At Canadian border, student presents letter of introduction (with other relevant documents); officer will decide if requirements for admission still met. If successful, a **study permit** is issued.



Impact of COVID-19 on each step:

Step	Description - normal circumstances	Impact of COVID-19	Mitigation	Program/supervisor notes
Biometrics submission	This is a requirement for all applicants except US nationals. Fingerprints, photo must be provided in person in visa application centres (VACs) responsible for the country or region.	<b>Delay.</b> Most VACs have been closed. Some countries (China) have started limited biometrics services.	Deadlines to submit biometrics have been extended to allow for sites to re-open.	
Study permit application processing	Assessment of applications. If successful, letter of introduction issued.	<b>Delay.</b> Processing times have been delayed. Backlog and processing times of up to 2 months or more, depending on the country, in addition to biometrics submission time.	Reduction in bureaucratic back/forth. Until further notice, IRCC offices will not refuse an application for non-compliance (missing documents) and will keep the applications open until documents are received.	
Plans for 14-day self- isolation in Canada		<b>Self-isolation.</b> Current regulations require a 14-day self-isolation period upon arrival, and a specific plan must be presented at the border. Entrance may be denied without it.	UBC will have a small number of isolation units available and otherwise refer students to approved hotel providers. Students have to bear the costs. Documentation on food delivery options etc. will be made available.	Consider how/if program or research group might be able to assist.  Especially consider implications for families with small children for this requirement, and how a realistic isolation protocol could be organized if still required in August.
Travel to Canada (and issuance of study permit at border)		<b>Canadian government restrictions</b> are in place currently. International students with a study permit or LOI dated on or before March 18, 2020 may be allowed in. Under current conditions, students with LOIs dated after March 18 would not be allowed in; they will have been informed by IRCC that they cannot travel to	Students can take online courses from outside of Canada <b>without a study permit or LOI</b> . It may, however, affect their post-graduation work permit eligibility (see below).	The state of travel restrictions in August is unknown.  Students without LOIs before March 18 can start with courses online, and wait to come to campus until they receive the LOI if not yet received, and/or until travel restrictions lifted.



Step	Description - normal circumstances	Impact of COVID-19	Mitigation	Program/supervisor notes
		<p>Canada until restrictions have been lifted.</p> <p>Any foreign national showing symptoms of COVID-19 will not be allowed in.</p> <p><b>Flight restrictions or uncertainty.</b> Some countries have closed airports.</p>		
Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP)	<p>Eligibility: a minimum of 8 months of study at a Canadian institution with a minimum of 50% of the program completed in Canada. Students must maintain full time status in each term. Working under the PGWP helps graduates qualify for permanent residence.</p> <p>Length of permit: length of program or 3 years if study &gt; 2 years. Time to complete online courses outside of Canada is normally excluded from time accumulated toward the length of the permit.</p> <p>Under normal circumstances, students need to have a valid study permit at the start of their studies to qualify for a PGWP. To obtain the study permit they must arrive in Canada.</p>	<p>For students wishing to remain in Canada to work after graduation, beginning their studies from outside of Canada without a study permit or letter of introduction might impact their eligibility for and/or length of a PGWP. This might deter them from accepting an offer.</p>	<p>IRCC has made it possible for students to qualify for the PGWP <b>if they are starting with a Letter of Introduction</b> outside Canada (i.e., they are not required to have a study permit), but they are still required to complete &gt;50% of studies in Canada, and the courses completed without a LOI or study permit will <b>not</b> count towards the PGWP. If they do have a LOI or study permit, their online studies outside Canada will not be deducted in the calculation of the length of their PGWP; i.e., the period of studying online outside Canada will count for the length of their permit, provided they complete more than 50% of program in Canada.</p>	<p>We anticipate this will primarily impact those in shorter (e.g. 1-2 year) programs.</p>
Course Registration	<p>Registration normally opens the first week of June.</p>	<p>Students face significant uncertainty affecting their decision to enrol.</p>	<p>Registration was pushed back to June 15, and programs were asked to clarify their delivery modes by that date.</p>	<p>Despite the uncertainty, if students intend to come in September, they should plan accordingly.</p>



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		Students may have difficulty obtaining official documents.	Restrictions regarding conditions on offers and document requirements were lifted so that admitted students who accepted their offer can register.	Remind students that dropping courses without implications (fees or similar) can be completed until September 22.
iMed Fees	iMed is automatically assessed when students register with an assumed arrival in August. New international students physically in Canada must be covered by iMED for the 3-month waiting period prior to coverage by BC MSP. For newly admitted students starting in September, iMED coverage starts from Aug. 1.	Some students will start their programs outside of Canada. Since the student system only assigns iMed coverage for 3 months, this means that they would not be covered once they physically arrive in Canada.		If students arrive in Canada after August, they will need to request an adjusted iMed start date.
Paying students outside the country as employees (e.g. TAs, AAs, and hourly RAs) or award/bursary/fellowship (RA stipend) holders	For employees, SIN numbers are required and Canadian bank accounts are normally required for payment. Employee relationships are governed by collective agreements and covered by WorkSafeBC.	New students who do not enter Canada cannot receive SIN numbers and can't normally apply for Canadian bank accounts.  Worker compensation requirements, union agreements and taxation issues pose challenges in paying employees who are physically outside of Canada. There are fewer issues for award holders.	UBC is investigating these issues on all levels as a priority to find solutions. This work is ongoing with a number of potential options being pursued.	The issues are very complex and there is a good chance that resolutions may not be found in time, at least for new international TAs who remain outside Canada. Contingency plans should be developed.

