

Submitted on behalf of Scott Hinch, Associate Dean, Students

Dear Colleagues

I hope you are all doing well. As you prepare for and embark on teaching this term, I wanted to update you on a large and unprecedented issue involving international undergraduate students at UBC. As a result of world conflicts and pandemic-related issues, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada has been extremely slow in processing study-permits which has resulted in hundreds of UBC international students being unable to arrive in BC and start classes next week. This delay is impacting numerous international students at many other universities as well. Unfortunately, UBC has no means to accelerate the permitting process. Fortunately, there is only a small number of students impacted by this in our undergraduate programs. Nevertheless, these affected forestry students are extremely concerned and stressed by this situation. Further, some recent 'lockdowns' in large Chinese cities has also prevented some students from returning to UBC. While we can't predict when these students will be able to arrive at UBC, it is likely to range from 2 to 6 weeks for student visa issues. For these students, they could still take fully on-line courses but there are few at UBC that would be appropriate for their programs. They can also take on-line courses from other institutions which may provide some relevant course options (e.g. Thompson Rivers University).

One other option is to allow the students to continue to be registered in your courses, even if they are not yet at UBC, and we do our best to provide on-line materials, lecture recordings, etc. so that these students do not fall behind during their hopefully brief absence. For courses with in-person labs and other experiential components, appropriate accommodations may require some unique solutions. Instructors are not obligated to help the students in this way, but hopefully it would not be too onerous given this is probably only an issue for a small number of our courses, and for only a couple students per course. I have reached out to our Program Directors, and some instructors, to explore ways we may be able to help these students. And, I am encouraging the students to reach out to their instructors to see what might be possible.

I am not suggesting instructors create an online or hybrid section of your course to accommodate students, but rather you try to keep the students up to speed in your course, as much as possible. Tests and assignments may require some thought as to how to administer. I appreciate that some instructors have already agreed to some form of this approach, at least through September. By early October instructors of these courses will need to decide if they can continue to help students in this way, or if it is not possible, at this point I would have to withdraw students from these courses.

There are other non-forestry international students in some of your courses who will be in a similar boat. I don't have a handle on how many or which courses as its not possible for me to track that. You may be contacted by those students asking for similar concessions/accommodations.

If you need assistance with CANVAS so that you can more easily assist these students, please contact Michelle Zeng (michelle.zeng@ubc.ca).

Forestry instructors are well-known at UBC for their compassionate approach to dealing with these sorts of student issues and I appreciate any support you can offer to these international students. If you would like to discuss this further, or have any concerns about particular types of accommodations, please contact me (scott.hinch@ubc.ca).