



COVID-19 FAQs for international students and graduates

Australian High Commission, Colombo – 22 June 2020

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic the Australian Government has introduced travel restrictions. Temporary visa holders, including students and bridging visa holders cannot travel to Australia at this time.

The Department of Home Affairs Office in Colombo is temporarily closed and student visa applications are not being processed. Once we recommence operations we will contact you if we require any further information from you. You do not need to contact us.

The Department of Home Affairs acknowledges the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on international students. For your information, we have prepared answers to frequently asked questions.

Can students still lodge a student visa application, and how long will it take to process at this time?

Yes. Please note, though, that applications can't be assessed at this time, and are not valid unless accompanied by a valid Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE). Also, we are reliant on several service providers that are either closed or operating at reduced capacity. These services include:

- English language testing centres;
- VFS biometric collection centre; and

Do students need to send updated or new Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) to the Department?

Student visa holders do not need to update the Department. Student visa applicants do. You must attach the CoE to your online application through ImmiAccount.

I have been asked to visit the VFS visa application centre to provide biometric information within 14 days. The centre is closed and I can't make an appointment. Will the Department refuse my visa application?

All visa applicants will be given a reasonable time to provide biometrics once the centre re-opens. Upon application assessment we will send another request letter if required, regardless of the time that has elapsed since the initial request was made.

Will the Department refund the visa application charge to students impacted by COVID-19?

No. The Migration Regulations prescribe limited circumstances in which the visa application charge may be refunded. The refund provisions do not apply in these circumstances.

Will time spent studying online (either in Australia or outside Australia) count towards the 92 weeks of study students must successfully complete to be eligible for the Temporary Graduate (subclass 485) visa?

COVID-19 FAQs for international students and graduates cont.

A number of visas, including the Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485), require the applicant to meet the Australian Study Requirement (ASR). The ASR requires that:

- the applicant has completed a qualification or qualifications requiring at least 2 academic years study (or 92 weeks of registered study);
- the applicant must complete at least 16 months of that study in Australia; and
- the course must be a CRICOS registered course.

An applicant for the Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485) must have completed their study in the six months before lodging their application. An applicant can meet the ASR if their course included study overseas, provided they complete at least 2 academic years study in no less than 16 months in Australia.

- For example - if a student is studying a three year course and completes the first eight months overseas online and then studies in Australia for the next 16 months/92 weeks, they would meet the ASR.

Recognised prior learning (RPL) undertaken overseas does not contribute to the ASR, nor does it contribute to the 2 academic year study.

A range of measures are being considered to ensure international students are not disadvantaged as a result of COVID-19, including how online study may be treated in these circumstances. Please continue to monitor the Department of Home Affairs website for further updates.

Will the Department accept at home or online English Language Tests for visa application purposes?

The Department of Home Affairs has not made a decision to allow online or at home English Language testing options for applicants seeking an Australian visa.

There are currently five approved English language tests approved for delivery in testing centres: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/help-support/meeting-our-requirements/english-language>.

Will the Department cancel a student visa if the student's study has been impacted due to COVID-19?

The Government will be flexible in cases where COVID-19 has prevented international students meeting their visa conditions (such as not being able attend classes)

When will the travel restrictions be lifted?

This decision will be taken by the Australian Government at the appropriate time. The Department will provide advice and guidance on our website once the restrictions are eased.

What are the quarantine arrangements for passenger arrivals to Australia?

Biosecurity measures and travel restrictions are in place to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

COVID-19 FAQs for international students and graduates cont.

All passengers arriving in Australia will be subject to the Australian Government's mandatory quarantine period of 14 days at their first Australian destination.

Australian Government Department of Health and State Governments manage the mandatory quarantine period for all arrivals to Australia. Please refer to their website for the most up to date information

- <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-travellers#travel-to-australia>

Where can I find further information?

- The Department of Home Affairs website:
<https://covid19.homeaffairs.gov.au/>
- The Department of Health provides factsheets on Overseas Student Health Cover:
<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-privatehealth-consumers-deed.htm>
- Information on the Australian Study Requirement:
<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/temporary-graduate-485/australian-study-requirement>
- The Department of Agriculture, Water and Resources provides biosecurity advice for returning travellers:
<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/travelling/to-australia/advice-to-travellers/human-health/coronavirus>
- The Smart Traveller website provides information on returning to Australia and general arrangements for the quarantine period:
<https://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/while-youre-away/returning-australia>.