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## **Guideline for enrolment of international PhD students who are overseas owing to COVID-19 border restrictions**

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### **1. Purpose**

Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington (‘the University’) does not normally allow international doctoral students to complete enrolment before they physically arrive in Te Whanganui-a-Tara – Wellington.

The purpose of this Guideline is to provide special conditions of enrolment for international PhD students who have been unable to apply for a student visa and/or travel to Aotearoa New Zealand due to the present border restrictions associated with COVID-19.

### **2. Application of Guideline**

This Guideline applies exclusively to international PhD students that are affected by the present border restrictions set in place as a response to the ongoing global pandemic.

## **Guideline Content**

### **3. Assessment of Applications**

- 3.1 Applications to enrol as a distance international PhD student are considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 3.2 The University may decide not to approve an application where it reaches the conclusion that the applicant’s research would not be suitable to be carried out from offshore for a substantial period of time.
- 3.3 The availability of quality supervision at a distance also constitutes an essential part of the assessment process.
- 3.4 Applications to study by distance must include a work plan prepared using the *International PhD students distance study due to COVID-19 form*. This form must expressly confirm that the applicant’s research can be undertaken off campus and be signed by the student, primary supervisor, Head of School (or their delegate), and the Dean of the Wellington Faculty of Graduate School.

*Note: Students or supervisors can request this form by emailing [fgr-postgrads@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:fgr-postgrads@vuw.ac.nz)*

### **4. Applicants with an Offer of Place**

- 4.1 International PhD applicants who have received an Offer of Place from the University but are unable to travel to Aotearoa New Zealand for the above-stated reasons must fully meet the conditions set out in their offer letter before they can complete enrolment from distance.
- 4.2 As a general rule, the University requires sighting of original documents before sending an Offer of Place to its applicants. It may, however, also accept electronic versions for the provisional enrolment process to proceed from distance. The University shall verify the authenticity of the documents used in the application when the student arrives in Te Whanganui-a-Tara – Wellington to formally register on campus.

- 4.3 All requirements set out in the [Confirmation of PhD Provisional Registration](#) form must be completed within the initial month (full time equivalent) of enrolment.
- 4.4 As stated in the University's Doctoral Regulations, completing a PhD will normally take at least 36 months full-time (or equivalent) study with a period of provisional registration during the first 12 months.
- 4.5 New Zealand-based international PhD students can enrol on a full-time basis only. International PhD students who are currently residing overseas are given the additional option of enrolling on a part-time basis (and charged half the domestic tuition fee) if they are not able to work full-time on their research. Part-time enrolment counts as 0.5 month of full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolment for each calendar month registered.
- 4.6 International PhD students registered as part-time while overseas are required to shift to full-time registration and pay any adjusted fees from the first day of the month in which they arrive in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## 5. General Requirements and Supervision Arrangements

- 5.1 Students must ensure that their internet connection is of good enough quality to support video conferencing with their supervisors, and that their connection enables access to the material they need for their research using the University's library and other online resources.
- 5.2 Supervisors shall commit to being the main point of contact for both academic and pastoral care of the students. They shall also commit to regular (at least fortnightly) online meetings with students via platforms approved by the University.
- 5.3 The student and supervisor must keep a record that documents research progress and highlights any current or future concerns. These records must be made available on request to the Head of School or their delegate, the Associate Dean (PGR), and the Dean of the Wellington Faculty of Graduate Research.
- 5.4 As with students enrolled on site, the requirement is that the student will achieve full registration status before the end of 12 months (FTE) registration. The supervisor and school shall make their best efforts to guide the student through the provisional to full registration process.
- 5.5 Supervisors, research groups and schools shall develop ways to incorporate overseas students into the academic life of the University and work to form peer-to-peer support where possible.
- 5.6 Students enrolled overseas have access to a range of [support services](#) provided by the University.

## 6. Visa and Travel Matters

- 6.1 For international PhD candidates who are currently unable apply for a New Zealand student visa, the enrolment takes place on the condition that they pledge to apply for a visa when Immigration New Zealand (INZ) starts accepting applications again.
- 6.2 Setting the criteria for and making decisions over visa applications is in the discretion of INZ.  
*Note: An Offer of Place from the University does not guarantee a student visa.*
- 6.3 The University expects students to travel to Aotearoa New Zealand as soon as reasonably practical once they have received their visa.  
*Note: The current University regulations do not allow students to complete their PhD entirely from overseas.*
- 6.4 Students must pay for their [visa application fees](#) and cover the cost of travelling to Aotearoa New Zealand. This includes flights and [managed isolation and quarantine \(MIQ\) charges](#).

- 6.5 In cases where INZ declines an application for a visa to study in Aotearoa New Zealand, the student and the University shall decide whether the student should move to paying international fees (see “Fee Payments” section) or whether the student’s enrolment should end.
- 6.6 The University strongly encourages full vaccination against COVID-19.

## 7. Fee Payments

- 7.1 As per the decision of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), international PhD students who commence their study overseas will be charged tuition fees at a domestic rate.
- 7.2 The University reserves the right to change the fee rate to the higher international rate under the following conditions:
- (a) If a student chooses not to travel to New Zealand as soon as reasonably practical
  - (b) If TEC changes its current rules about overseas students.

*Note: The latest information about [tuition fees and compulsory levies](#) can be accessed from the University’s website.*

- 7.3 All international PhD students applying to study by distance are required to pay their tuition fees and compulsory levies. These students are expected to financially support themselves through their course of chosen study. The University’s Hardship Fund is not able to provide ongoing support to students who are based overseas.

## 8. Wellington Doctoral Scholarship Recipients

- 8.1 All offers of [Wellington Doctoral Scholarships](#) consist of a monthly stipend plus domestic tuition fees for up to three years.
- 8.2 Wellington Doctoral Scholarship will cover the tuition fees (at a domestic rate) of those who commence their studies from overseas\*.
- 8.3 The University commits to paying scholarships for 36 months or until the student submits their thesis, whichever occurs sooner. In the case of students who remain outside New Zealand for more than 12 months, the first 12 months of stipend will be withheld and paid out under the conditions in 8.4. The remaining 24 months of stipend will be available only to students who have travelled to New Zealand.
- 8.4 The University will withhold monthly stipends (accruing up to a maximum of 12 months\*\*) until the awardee reaches the milestones listed below.
- (a) When the student moves from provisional to full registration (3 months of funding as lump sum);
  - (b) When the student obtains a visa for travel to New Zealand (6 months of funding as lump sum or balance of accrued stipend if less than 6 months to support travel and MIQ costs);
  - (c) When the student arrives in New Zealand (the balance of the accrued stipend, if any).

\* *Student levies that are due for payment will be deducted from the accrued stipend.*

\*\* *The maximum of 12 months accrual includes the payments under 8.4(a) and 8.4(b).*

### 8.4 Recipients of Externally Funded Scholarships

Other scholarships will have different rules about fees and/or stipend payments for students who reside overseas. Students must check with their funding providers regarding these arrangements.

## Related Documents and Information

### 9. Related Documents

[Doctoral Regulations: for PhD and other Doctorates with Theses](#)

[Fees Policy](#)

[Scholarships Policy – Externally Funded](#)

[Scholarships Policy – Internally Funded](#)

[Student Service Levy Policy](#)

### 10. Document Management and Control

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