



Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

Deputy Minister

Sous-ministre

Ottawa K1A 1L1

F-1159644

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MEMORANDUM TO THE MINISTER

DISCONTINUATION OF TWO-STAGE PROCESSING OF STUDY PERMIT APPLICATIONS FOR THE WINTER 2021 COHORT

FOR APPROVAL

SUMMARY

- The purpose of this memorandum is to seek your approval to discontinue the two-stage study permit process, which was re-implemented on December 21, 2020 to facilitate the winter 2021 cohort of international students.
- The Department has been prioritizing two-stage processing of study permit applications (those who are missing biometrics and medicals) over the permits that are ready for finalization. This has led to an increase in overall processing times for study permits and a reduction in output of final decisions.
- As visa application centres (VACs) have re-opened in key markets, client frustration is mounting due to longer processing times for the growing number of study permit applications that are complete and ready to be finalized.
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BACKGROUND:

- Two-stage application processing allows international students to receive an initial eligibility decision on their study permit application until they are able to provide the missing documents required to make a final decision. Applicants will only receive a study permit once they have met all eligibility and admissibility requirements, including submitting biometrics and necessary documents such as an immigration medical exam and a police certificate. Until recently, these documents were difficult for most clients to obtain due to COVID-19.
- On December 21, 2020, you signed a memo (see Annex) directing the Department to shift resources from finalizing complete study permit applications to completing two-stage processing on approximately 34k applications (or 27 percent of the total inventory at the

time) for applicants studying in the winter semester and whose application could not be finalized as they were pending biometrics, medicals, or security.

- From December 8, 2020, to January 18, 2021, the Department finalized 41k study permit applications, of which approximately 24k (60%) were part of the winter 2021 cohort.

CURRENT STATUS:

- Applications eligible for two-stage processing are being prioritized over completed study permit applications. As a result, inventories of completed study permit applications are growing. Stakeholders have expressed their concern to the Department that complete study permit applications are not being finalized expeditiously.
- As of January 18, 2021, there are approximately 113k study permit applications in the Department's inventory.
 - Of the total study permit applications in inventory, over 54k are part of the winter semester cohort. Of the 54k, there are 10k applications pending biometrics, and an additional 21k study permit applications whose biometrics are complete or exempt, but are awaiting medicals. It is anticipated that the remaining 23k of the winter cohort applications will be processed within five weeks of the memo being signed.
 - Of the total study permit applications in the inventory, approximately 59k are for non-winter semester cohorts. Of those, 16k are pending biometrics, 21k have biometrics complete, but are pending medicals, and approximately 22k are complete applications ready to be finalized.
- Issues that previously prevented clients from submitting complete applications, such as the availability of biometrics collection, continue to be resolved in key markets including India. Every study permit applicant who requested a biometrics appointment at a VAC in India has received an appointment to provide their biometrics by the end of January. Of the approximately 113k study permit applications in inventory, there are 26k applications that are still pending biometrics, of which 15k of which are from applicants in India.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- By prioritizing the processing of complete study permit applications for students who are able to travel, the Department will reduce the current inventory of study permits. The duplicate reviews required by the two-stage process will no longer be required, thus reducing downstream resource requirements. It is anticipated that as a result, processing times for complete study permits will improve.

COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS:

- While two-stage processing for study permit applicants garnered significant attention when initially put in place for the fall 2020 semester, there has been little public comment and few social media inquiries about two-stage processing for the winter 2021 semester. The Department's website will be updated as appropriate.

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RECOMMENDATION:

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NEXT STEP:

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Caroline Xavier
Associate Deputy Minister

e-approved January 31, 2021
Catrina Tapley
Deputy Minister

I concur

I do not concur

The Hon. Marco E.L. Mendicino, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Annex: F-1151178: Previous Decision Memo to Minister – Two Stage Processing