

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE
REQUEST FOR DECISION

PRESENTED BY: Terry Wotherspoon, chair, Academic Programs Committee

DATE OF MEETING: October 19, 2017

SUBJECT: **Changes to Admissions Templates – Visiting Research Students**

DECISION REQUESTED:

It is recommended:

That Council approve the change to the definition of the Visiting Research Student Mobility Category to extend the maximum time at the University of Saskatchewan to a period not exceeding twelve months per 18-month period, effective January 1, 2018.

PURPOSE:

Admissions templates for mobility categories have been developed to ensure standard admissions requirements are outlined for students who come to the University of Saskatchewan for the purposes of short-term study, and who are not currently enrolled in a degree program at our university.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND:

In June 2016, Council approved admissions templates for student mobility categories for visiting students, inbound exchange students, and visiting research students.

The Visiting Research Student Category (VRS) was established in 2015 at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) in response to changes to Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (IRCC) regulations. Students previously invited to Canadian universities as Visiting Scholars were no longer able to access that route and the notion of Visiting Scholar was discontinued. Alternative pathways that clearly distinguished between students, visiting faculty, and employees were established by universities.

When initially approved by Council in June 2016, the maximum allowable study time frame was six months in a twelve-month period. The College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS) proposes to extend the maximum allowable study time to 12 months in an 18-month period for reasons articulated in the attached document.

IMPLICATIONS:

Extending the maximum allowable study time will facilitate the recruitment of student who hold scholarships with the China Scholarship Council and will support international

collaboration. The length of time within the maximum guidelines outlined in the admissions template still remain the control of the U of S, through the faculty supervisor.

CONSULTATION:

The extension to the maximum length of allowable study time for the VRS category was discussed and the Executive Committee of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies on January 17, 2017 and at Graduate Faculty Council on May 9, 2017. The Academic Programs Committee reviewed the request at its October 4, 2017 meeting and is recommending that Council approve the change.

FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED:

University Senate will be asked to confirm this decision at its October 2017 meeting.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Admission Template – Visiting Research Students
2. Proposal for Change to Maximum Length of Allowable Study Time

Visiting Research Student Category Change to Maximum Length of Allowable Study Time

Submitted by: Trever Crowe, Acting Dean, College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
and Alison Pickrell, Assistant Vice-Provost, Strategic Enrolment Management

Recommendation: *To increase the Visiting Research Student category maximum allowable study time frame for both undergraduate and graduate students from 6 months per twelve-month period to 12 months per eighteen-month period, beginning January 1, 2018.*

Rationale for the Recommendation

The Visiting Research Student Category (VRS) was established in 2015 at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) in response to changes to Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (IRCC) regulations. Students previously invited to Canadian universities as Visiting Scholars were no longer able to access that route and the notion of Visiting Scholar was discontinued. Alternative pathways that clearly distinguished between students, visiting faculty, and employees were established by universities.

Approximately 300 students have applied for admission within the VRS category since its inception, and 235 students have been registered at the U of S. Approximately 1/3 of registered VRS are undergraduate students, while the remaining are graduate students. The average length of study under this category for undergraduate students has been slightly less than 3 months, and on average, graduate students stay 3.5 months. Approximately 1/2 of the students have come with some type of external funding support. Key components of the VRS category are:

- Students have a U of S faculty supervisor, and they are admitted on the basis of a research plan that has been approved by the faculty supervisor, the department, and the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS).
- The student may not pursue any credit coursework at the U of S while in this category, and may only undertake supervised research. VRS who wish to take coursework must meet admission requirements, and are moved to a different admission category.
- As students are not required to submit transcripts or proof of English proficiency, the faculty supervisor assumes the due diligence to ensure the student is academically qualified and able to function adequately and safely in English.

An extension to the study time for VRS students is being recommended. The discussion initially began at the Equity and International Committee of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in the context of doctoral students. Their recommendation to extend the study time for doctoral VRS from 6 to either 12 or 18 months was subsequently discussed in a broader context at the Executive Committee of CGPS (January 17, 2017) and Graduate Faculty Council (May 09, 2017). There is support for moving forward to Academic Programs Committee with an extension of allowed study time to a maximum of 12 months per eighteen-month period under this category for all graduate (PhD and Masters) and undergraduate students.

The rationale for this change is:

- It is difficult for doctoral students in some departments to make sufficient progress in research in less than 6 months
- This admission category could facilitate the recruitment of students who hold a scholarship from the China Scholarship Council (CSC). Specifically, students holding a CSC Visiting Doctoral

Student scholarship must be here for greater than 6 months and less than 2 years. It is beneficial for the U of S to host fully funded CSC students for numerous reasons.

- Faculty members see value in the VRS category as it supports international collaboration.
- The existing Visiting Student and Joint Student categories have been administratively restrictive for faculty, particularly the language proficiency requirement. This admission category supports mutually beneficial relationships, *for students pursuing research only*, and helps to increase the international profile of the university.
- It is hoped that undergraduate students who conduct research at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) under this category may consider the U of S for their graduate studies
- Other U15 universities are providing similar categories that have study lengths of one year
- Length of study time (within the maximum guidelines) still remains in the control of the department and college through the approval of the U of S faculty supervisor.
- Given the average length of stay is under 3 months for undergraduate students and approximately 3.5 for graduate students, it is not anticipated at this point that there will be large numbers of situations where a 12-month study time is being accessed; however, the proposed change does provide the flexibility required to attract high-quality students with specific sources of funding that have time restrictions (such as CSC scholars).

Future Consideration

The VRS does not pay an application fee, s/he is not assessed tuition and s/he is charged only the minimal off-campus student fees. This decision was made in 2015 to facilitate a smoother transition from the Visiting Scholar category to the new VRS category. Now that an extension to study time is being recommended, the Institutional Planning and Assessment Office was consulted about potential financial implications for the institution. Other universities have recognized the administrative oversight and support needs of VRS and have implemented administrative fees. The recommendation is that we proceed with the recommended change, but over the next academic year we do a more in-depth analysis of fees charged to students in this category. Any recommended changes to fees for this category will be vetted by appropriate approval channels.

Visiting Research Student Category Statistics

Use of Category

Approximately 300 students have applied for admission in this category since its inception, and 235 students have been registered at the U of S. Approximately 1/3 of registered VRS are undergraduate students and 2/3 are graduate students.

# of Applicants	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018*	Overall
UG	18	31	41	90
GS	55	100	55	210
Total	73	131	96	300

# of Cancellations	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018*	Overall
UG	0	4	1	5
GS	2	11	0	13
Total	2	15	1	18

# of Arrivals	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018*	Overall
UG	18	27	34	79
GS	53	89	14	156
Total	71	116	48	235

*The 2017-18 Academic Year is currently in progress. Additional VRS are expected to arrive before the end of 2017-18.

VRS Average Stay Duration in Months

VRS may stay up to a maximum of 6 months in a one-year period. The average stay duration for undergraduate students is 2.77 months, and the average stay for graduate students is slightly higher at 3.5 months.

	UG	GS
2015-2016	3.22	4.06
2016-2017	2.80	3.58
2017-2018*	2.29	3.09

*The 2017-18 Academic Year is currently in progress. Additional VRS are expected to arrive before the end of 2017-18.

VRS Students with Funding

While we do not have funding details for all students we know that approximately ½ of the students come with external funding

	UG	GS	Total
Internal	22	21	43
External	39	97	136
None	11	33	44

VRS Category Usage by College

The VRS category is primarily used by the following colleges/schools.

	UG	GS	Total
Engineering	31	59	90
Arts & Science	29	53	82
Agriculture and Bioresources	11	38	49
WCVM	7	18	25
SENS	5	5	10
Education	2	7	9
JSGS	2	4	6
Health Sciences	2	5	7
Medicine	1	2	3

VRS Category Student by Country

VRS students are primarily from the following countries:

Country	Number of Students		
	UG	GS	Total
India	27	15	42
China	10	28	38
Brazil	5	28	33
Germany	9	13	22
Mexico	11	10	21
Iran	0	21	21
France	7	6	13
Canada	3	3	6
United States	2	5	7
Spain	0	6	6
Colombia	2	4	6
Australia	2	2	4
Netherlands	2	2	4
Hong Kong	2	2	4
Bangladesh	0	3	3

2018-19 Admission Requirements

College: College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS)

Program(s): Visiting Research Student Program

Definition:

A program of study whereby an undergraduate or graduate student is admitted to the University of Saskatchewan for the purpose of engaging in an approved plan of research with a faculty supervisor. Visiting research students are not assessed tuition, and are registered at the university for a period not exceeding **twelve months per 18-month period**.

Admission Qualifications:

- Sufficient postsecondary education and English proficiency to engage effectively in undergraduate-level or graduate-level research, as determined by the faculty supervisor.

Selection Criteria:

- Submission of a Visiting Research Student (VRS) application.
- A research plan including research objectives, research activities, and expected learning outcomes.
- Approval of an identified U of S faculty supervisor.
- Review and approval of application, research plan, and supervisor by the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

General Information:

- A VRS may pursue supervised research only, and may not enroll in any credit coursework at the University.
- Students will be registered by CGPS in a zero credit unit research course, which denotes that student is engaged in full-time academic research.
- VRS students will not be assessed tuition and will be assessed off-campus student fees providing access to limited U of S student services. Students may elect to enroll in the Health, Dental and U-Pass plans.
- Students will be assigned a CR (Completed Requirement) for satisfactory completion of the research objectives or an F (Fail) for unsatisfactory completion. An official transcript of the visiting research studies may be ordered.
- Students who wish to register in credit coursework, or who wish to stay longer **than 12-months in a 18-month period**, must pursue other admission options such as admission as a non-degree student, a visiting student, or a joint student.
- International visiting research students are encouraged to obtain a study permit although it is not required by IRCC for periods of study six months or less. Where faculty intend to remunerate research activity, the student must obtain a study permit and apply for a SIN on arrival in Canada.

2018-19 Admission Requirements

College: All U of S Colleges and Schools

Program(s): Visiting Student Program

Definition:

A program of study either formally established through an agreement or through a letter of permission, enabling a student to attend the University of Saskatchewan, with credit transferred back to their home institution. Tuition is paid to the University of Saskatchewan.

Admission Qualifications:

- Proof of sufficient postsecondary education and English language proficiency to engage effectively in undergraduate-level or graduate-level studies. This proof comes from the home institution, generally in the form of a Letter of Permission, transcripts, or a selection process that is outlined in a current mobility agreement.

Selection Criteria:

- Submission of an application for admission.
- Review and approval by College (direct-entry delegated to Admissions & Transfer Credit Office).