

MEMO: COVID-19 Impact on Interrupted or Cancelled Programs

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To: VT Global Education Office <vtabroad@vt.edu>

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Impact of COVID-19 virus on Interrupted or Cancelled Study Abroad Travel

March 26, 2020

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff,

Virginia Tech continues to focus significant effort to mitigate public health issues, minimize individual impacts, and sustain our academic mission in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our primary objective is limiting the financial impact on students due to the cancellation of study abroad programs. Student relief for study abroad travel that was cancelled due to COVID-19 is described below.

Incremental Travel Costs for Interrupted Programs

For Virginia Tech students participating in programs/courses being taught at international locations during the spring semester who are returning to the U.S. as a result of university guidance (by deadline indicated) or host country requirements, the university will provide support for incremental transportation costs above and beyond the original planned itinerary such as flight changes, train, and bus tickets. The Global Education Office will connect student travelers with the Office of Risk Management so that claims can be submitted to COVIDtravel@vt.edu.

Closing out Interrupted and Cancelled Programs

Interrupted spring semester programs: Partial refunds of non-travel costs for interrupted spring programs will be reviewed on a program-by-program basis in consultation with the Global Education Office and will follow the normal process for program close-out.

Cancelled spring and summer semester programs: Virginia Tech cancelled some spring and all summer (May – August 2020) international credit-bearing programs and co-curricular and experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. As a result, University departments will credit the student account for all program fees charged to the student account or collected directly from students. Departments must work with the Bursar's Office to process these credits by March 31. Program fee refunds will be taken from the same source to which fees were deposited.

Program financial closeout procedures: Departments should work with vendors to cancel reservations and orders in effort to seek refunds where deposits or prepayments were made. Where applicable, faculty leaders will be reimbursed for group travel expenses prepaid out of pocket. If departments have entered into contracts or group purchase agreements for study abroad activities, they should work with legal counsel to pursue remedies to cancel contracts and obtain refunds of any payments already made. Refunds of prepaid reservations and orders must be deposited to the same source as the cost was incurred.

If, after cancelling all orders, student refunds create a deficit in the program fund, the college may apply through the Office of Risk Management (claims@vt.edu) for relief of that deficit. It is generally expected that the deficit would reflect the inability to receive a refund for program deposits or prepayments in the local fund accounting of the study abroad program.

Prepaid out of pocket travel expenses: For summer 2020 Virginia Tech study abroad activities where individual students have already incurred a personal cost for travel (such as an airline ticket), students should seek refunds or credits from the providers of those services and/or any travel insurance. The university has recommended that individuals obtain travel protection insurance for personal travel costs. If a personal cost remains after seeking a vendor refund and/or submitting claims to any trip protection insurance or flight insurance vendors, the student may apply through the Office of Risk Management (COVIDtravel@vt.edu) to request relief of the remaining deficit.

Faculty and staff members leading and supporting study abroad programs should see the university guidance <Impact of COVID-19 virus on Employee Travel>.

Other Individuals Studying Abroad through the Global Education Office

There may be other cases in which students are not enrolled in a Virginia Tech program but have incurred a cost for an international program that has been cancelled or in which continued participation is no longer possible as a result of Virginia Tech or the host university's guidance. Those cases where enrollment and/or payment was directly arranged with a third party will be dealt with on an individual basis. Students in these situations should submit documentation supporting study interruption and expenses incurred to the Global Education Office with details regarding their individual circumstances.

The university is working to keep our community informed. Please continue to visit the university's COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) web page for the latest university information and updates.

For clarification and assistance please contact Global Education Office or the Office of Risk Management.

Sincerely,

Ken Miller, Interim Vice President for Finance

Guru Ghosh, Vice President for Outreach and International Affairs