

My name is Iman Salamatian. I was awarded a highly-competitive PhD Scholarship from the ANU University, which was scheduled to commence in the early 2022. I submitted my visa application on 23 Feb 2022, with reference number “EGOS81CTU6”. I am a young academic with a successful and known international background in producing science to help all the people in the world. I just wish to pursue my studies while serving the science and society in Australia and have applied for a visa. I planned and quitted my job. But, my visa process seems never-ending.

This letter aims to highlight a serious problem in processing temporary student visas (subclass 500-postgraduate research sector). This problem is significant processing time (sometimes more than two years), and it was recently highlighted by Dr Clément Canonne and an article published in Australia Financial Review and was greatly received on Twitter:

<https://tinyurl.com/2p8etn2k>

After the global pandemic, Australia entered a period of considerable changes to achieve the priorities of the new government. In light of the government's decision to develop "the revitalised priorities and science statements", international students from the postgraduate research sector can make positive contributions. Moreover, they can complement employment, education, and training opportunities for the existing Australian students and labour force. These researchers can be key players in addressing challenges such as the aging population, decline in population growth ratio, waning productivity, climate change, public health, and emerging technology.

However, the extraordinary visa processing time for this visa subclass has significantly undermined Australia's education and research recovery. While some recent applications are being finalised in short times, many Iranian applications lodged very long ago (even more than one year ago) remain unfinalised, especially those lodged before reopening the borders. It seems lodge dates are not particular indicators of assessment priority. Nevertheless, based on our statistics, only a few visas for Iranian students have been granted with a lodgment date of 2019-2021 in 2022! As far as I know, this long processing time is caused by character assessments undertaken by agencies such as ASIO, which have no deadlines. This assessment is often accompanied by "request for more information" forms (80 and 1221) under no clear criterion. While the UK and the USA finalise their applications within a year of the submission, the current Australian regulations impose no hard deadline on these checks, and it is possible that some applications remain unfinalised after two years or more.

While I do not aim to question the necessity of these character assessments for a temporary visa for projects which have been carefully reviewed and accepted by the scientific community, their duration has caused significant problems in my life. Among the problems I face is the fear of losing my scholarship and admission, which gradually turns into stress and stress-related diseases. In addition, there is no clear indication for me to know that my application is going through these assessments. Therefore, I have been checking

my email and application every day for the outcome. This system is ineffective for student visas and drives applicants from Australian universities.

Please consider clear measurements for Australia's migration system that avoids the reoccurrence of such problems in the future. Moreover, I ask you to help me and other applicants like me get their visas. We are on the verge of losing our scholarships, and this condition undermines our capabilities to carry out research.

Best regards,

Iman Salamatian