

2023

Putin's War: Supporting International Students During Global Crises

Abu Arif

Juanita Hennessey

Sonja Knutson

Lynn Walsh

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.shu.edu/cisr>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), [International and Area Studies Commons](#), [International and Comparative Education Commons](#), [International and Intercultural Communication Commons](#), and the [Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Arif, Abu; Hennessey, Juanita; Knutson, Sonja; and Walsh, Lynn (2023) "Putin's War: Supporting International Students During Global Crises," *Critical Internationalization Studies Review*. Vol. 2: Iss. 1, Article 12.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32674/cisr.v2i1.5362>

Available at: <https://scholarship.shu.edu/cisr/vol2/iss1/12>



Putin's War: Supporting International Students During Global Crises

Abu Arif

Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada

Juanita Hennessey

Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada

Dr. Sonja Knutson

Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada

Lynn Walsh

Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada

At a moment when the members of education communities around the world are working to find a way to live with COVID-19, internationalization of higher education (IHE) communities have also been challenged by Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to wage a war against Ukraine. When it is expected from international educators to reimagine international education in a way that is equitable and inclusive (de Wit & Jones, 2018), anti-racist (Buckner et al. 2021), anti-colonial (Beck & Pidgeon, 2020), and sustainable (Shields, 2019), Mr. Putin's war is unnecessarily taking IHE communities away from these critical conversations. This situation forces international educators to think about a) what will be the world order due to this invasion, and b) how IHE communities will adjust to the new global political realities? In Canada, we are also thinking about how we best show up for international students from Ukraine and Russia, and what are the ways we can support refugees who are being deprived of a post-secondary education due to Putin's invasion.

Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) is the most eastern university in Canada with a total population of 4400 international students. The only university in Newfoundland and Labrador, MUN hosts international students from both Ukraine and Russia. Due to the nature of the world, we are not unfamiliar with supporting international students during wars and internal conflicts. We have established protocols to reach out to international students during emergencies/global crises. Almost immediately after the invasion started, we sent two separate emails to Ukrainian and Russian students. From conversations with Ukrainian and Russian students, it is clear that they are worried about whether they will be able to complete their programs due to financial issues and fear for the future of their immigration status. Quite understandably, students are also worried about their families back home, concerned about if/when they will be able to go back to their motherland, and struggling emotionally. This conflict has also illustrated that people impacted by war may not only be those who hold the citizenship of the countries directly involved. In addition to the Ukrainian and Russian immigrant communities, there are many

international students, especially West Africans, with connections to Ukraine. Thus, when MUN gives consideration to who needs support in times of conflict and crisis it may be a larger community than indicated from the lists run through the student database.

Immigration is one of the top concerns for international students from Ukraine and Russia. Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) will issue open work permits to Ukrainian students who are currently in Canada and cannot go home, so they can stay longer if they wish (IRCC, March 2, 2022). IRCC has also committed to waive fees for certain travel, including visitor visas and work and study permits (IRCC, March 2, 2022). The Federal Government has also announced the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel (CUAET) program to help Ukrainians and their family members come to Canada with the ability to work and study while in Canada. One thing to note here, Ukraine refugees will land in Canada as temporary residents, not permanent residents like all other refugees. Temporary residents are not eligible for health care/settlement help/language instruction/student loans. As for the Russian students, many are fearing expulsion from the country and are asking if they will face biases in case they need to extend their permits. They are also concerned that if they return home for the summer holidays, then they may be forced to join the Russian army and/or may face an embargo when returning to Canada to complete their studies.

MUN has emergency funds to assist students in the short-term during crises such as grocery gift cards, tuition bursaries, or repayment plans for tuition. One of the challenges is that, as an institution, MUN is only equipped to help with interim financial aid. If the conflict or economic sanctions continue for an extended period, it will be increasingly more difficult for students, especially at the undergraduate level. In terms of personal support, MUN endeavors to work with students on a case-by-case basis. At a minimum, students should be aware of the types of services available (personal counseling, academic advising, career advising, etc.). Some will avail of services without assistance, but some may want a coordinated care approach. If the latter, then being able to advocate for students, reach out to units to arrange for services, and be the point of contact for both the student and the units providing support is necessary.

MUN is looking for ways we can support Ukrainians entering Canada under the CUAET program to carry on with, or embark on, post-secondary study. Discussions are being held on everything from application fees to scholarships, to documents required for admissions, to how to support this cohort to finance their studies. In addition, universities have the infrastructure - classrooms and housing - which generally have low usage through the summer months. As we have with previous wars, we have been in contact with our local settlement agency to let them know we are willing to share what we can should they be suddenly overwhelmed by an influx of arrivals.

As we try to understand and support our students, we seek insight, advice, and suggestions from our colleagues facing similar situations at their institutions. In your experience, what supports are you able to offer your students on- and off-campus? What are the specific needs of students when it comes to violence experienced at home and how are you dealing with this? How is your institution supporting students from Ukraine who are in financial need? How might your institution be supporting Russian students who are concerned about the personal financial consequences of economic sanctions or the banning of Russia from SWIFT, which poses challenges in transferring funds from students' homes for fee payment? As Ukrainian families flee the country, it will be difficult for families to send money to their students for

tuition. Will you accept deferred fee payments for the current and next semesters? How are you handling housing requests from students? We hope that through continued internal and external dialogue we can learn from each other about how post-secondary institutions are dealing with personal, academic, and financial issues their students are facing.

REFERENCES

- Beck, K., & Pidgeon, M. (2020). Across the Divide: Critical Conversation on Decolonization, Indigenization, and Internationalization. In M. Tamtik, R.D. Trilokekar & G.A. Jones (Eds.). *International Education As Public Policy in Canada* (pp. 384-406). McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Buckner, E., Lumb, P., Jafarova, Z., Kang, P., Marroquin, A., & Zhang, Y. (2021). Diversity without race: How university internationalization strategies discuss international students. *Journal of International Students*, 11(1), 32–49. <https://doi.org/10.32674/JIS.V11I1S1.3842>
- De Wit, H. & Jones, E. (2018). Inclusive Internationalization: Improving Access and Equity. *International Higher Education*, 94(94), 16–18. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2018.0.10561>
- Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (March 02, 2022). *Additional immigration support for Those Affected by the Situation in Ukraine*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/02/additional-immigration-support-for-those-affected-by-the-situation-in-ukraine.html>
- Shields, R. (2019). The sustainability of international higher education: Student mobility and global climate change. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 217, 594–602. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.01.291>

AUTHORS BIOGRAPHY

Abu Arif is a doctoral student of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. He is an international student advisor (immigration and inclusion) and founder of international network of tomorrow's leader of CBIE.

Juanita Hennessey is an international student advisor (outreach) of Memorial University of Newfoundland. She is a recipient of Memorial's President's Distinguished Service Award 2016.

Sonja Knutson, Ph.D., is the director of the internationalization office of Memorial University. She is also an acting director of the writing centre and an adjunct professor of education at Memorial. She is the winner of the CBIE leadership award 2012.

Lynn Walsh is the Manager of the internationalization office of Memorial University. She is the current co-chair of internationalization of student affairs, CACUSS.
