

The pandemic has changed the teaching process in all countries in the world. Many students cannot continue studying at universities due to closed borders. Students from Central Asia who study in Russia have encountered this situation, too.

Follow us on [LinkedIn](#)



Photo courtesy of Zhanagul Razakova

A student of technological university, **Zhanagul Razakova**, cannot get back to study in Moscow from Kazakhstan. She was told that study was not a reason for entry at the Russian border.

We took a bus to leave the country and were sure we could come back in September. Many students left their personal belongings at rented apartments that are now vacant. We left our personal belongings such as laptops, books that we need now for study. Some of my friends who live in villages in Kazakhstan have no internet access for online study.

According to the Russian ministry of education, almost 298 thousand students from abroad had studied in Russia before the pandemic. In late July, Rospotrebnadzor reported: foreign students will be allowed for study, but they will have to self-isolate for two weeks upon entry to the country and take a PCR test for COVID-19 on day 10-12.

We continue to pay tuition and accommodation fees, but get no knowledge instead.

However, in practice, foreign students are not allowed to enter the country, and they have no access to online study.

“We agree to self-isolate for two weeks and can even take a test twice. Not all universities agree to provide online training. We have only two foreigners in our group and it’s obvious no one would teach them online. My sister is a medical student and she should have had practical training. We continue to pay tuition and accommodation fees, but get no knowledge instead,” said a student of the Russian state university from Kyrgyzstan, **Eldar Tokobaev**.

“When we had distance study, I would receive a notification on e-mail saying that I have an assignment. Then I enter the Module platform and perform all tasks. So far, I have no messages. I check the platform from time to time, but it has no messages,” a student of Omsk State University, **Valeria Mikheikina**, said.

In Kyrgyzstan, 484 students studying at Russian universities signed a petition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asking to help them enter Russia. According to Kubatbek Boronov, prime minister of Kyrgyzstan, who held briefing on September 8, the negotiations were in progress.

In Kazakhstan, students wrote a petition to the Russian government directly asking them to enter study as a reason for entering the country during the pandemic. Nearly a thousand people signed the petition. Parents of students are upset that universities do not care about their children.

“My son was about to graduate in six months and he had only one semester left. Now he has to write a research paper and attend practical training. To do that, he has to be in Moscow and attend library every day, as we do not have such books in Kyzylorda, or even in Kazakhstan. It’s more likely he would not get his diploma this year,” a Kazakhstani student’s mother, **Gulzhazira Zhalgasova**, said.

“Do not panic”

The first Covid-19 case in Russia was reported in early March 2020, after which the disease was spread across all regions. One of the first measures to control coronavirus was the closure of international borders.

In September, Russia opened borders with seven countries. It opened air flights to Turkey, Tanzania, United Kingdom, Abkhazia, Egypt, UAE and Maldives. Students based in these countries can now enter Russia and continue study.

The minister of science and higher education of Russia, Valery Falkov, said the majority of students who want to go back to Russia are from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The embassy of Kazakhstan to Russia post such messages every week:

“Currently, the embassy is waiting for the Russian government’s decision regarding the entry of students from the Republic of Kazakhstan for study at Russian universities. Please take this force majeure situation with understanding, do not panic and keep calm.”

Students in social media groups write they are planning to protest at borders if they are not allowed to universities in the nearest time and continue to pay rental fees for empty apartments.

But some parents think that online study is cheaper and safer amid predictions of the second wave of pandemic.



Alma Kusainova. Photo: CABAR.asia

“My only son is a student in Russia. Now he takes online classes. Of course, it is incomparable to offline study. But now we know at least that our son is healthy and by our side. Moreover, the border will be opened in any case. We live in a village and we don’t have internet, only near a school pillar. So, we sent him to my sister living in a town. He studies there. He found a job there and now wants to buy winter clothes. I don’t think it’s bad,” **Alma Kusainova**, a resident of Shet district of Karaganda region of Kazakhstan, said.

92 per cent of universities in Russia started studies on September 1. The main requirement is to follow anti-epidemic measures and to measure body temperature. Officials are confident that all universities can hold online classes.

“I can say for sure that every student is allowed to study online. If there are any problems, they can file a complaint. We do not differentiate between students as there are unified rules for all countries. Both ballet and cultural studies can be taught online. No one will be left without a room in a dormitory. Almost 70 thousand students study in Russian branches based in Kazakhstan. I think anyone who wants to undertake internship can attend these branches,” **Grigory Petushkov**, the chair of the national board of youth and children’s associations of Russia, said.

According to the State Duma of Russia, there is an order on online submission of documents. Students who have already been admitted to universities may take classes in the branches of Russian universities based in Central Asia.

At the end of August, deputy chair of the State Duma Committee for Education and Science Maksim Zaitsev referred a petition to the head of the ministry of education and science asking him to let foreign students enter Russia.

On September 9, foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said the time for the return of foreign students to Russia would be approved soon. According to him, the respective decision has already been made and one of the tasks is to ensure gradual return of foreign citizens. The diplomat added that this question would be solved within a month.

This article was prepared under the IWPR Giving Voice, Driving Change — from the Borderland to the Steppes Project.



If you have found a spelling error, please, notify us by selecting that text and pressing *Ctrl+Enter*.