Exceptional policy on Covid-19 (Limited) remote study

Quality Manual text - Pre-November 2021

Overview

This policy does not apply to degree programmes marketed as distance learning and is only applicable to Covid-19 related remote study during the 2021-22 academic year.

The policy is applicable to new and returning students at the University of Nottingham in the UK, but not the overseas campuses.

The process for approval of remote study for taught programmes refers to undergraduate, postgraduate taught masters, and research masters students. Postgraduate research (PGR) students are directed to a different process, as outlined below.

This policy provides the process and guidance to be used to decide whether, due to exceptional circumstances, a student request to study remotely as a consequence of Covid-19, should be approved.

This policy is set in the context of existing regulations for Voluntary Interruption of Studies (VIS), as well as existing routes for short term sickness reporting. The policy is based upon the premise that very few students are expected to study remotely outside of those degree courses designed exclusively for distance learning.

The policy has been reviewed and amended from the previous version. The policy has been extended and only applies for one academic year (2021/22). Applications to study remotely will only be approved on a semester-by-semester basis. The policy will be reviewed by the Deputy Registrar before the close of the 2021/22 academic year, should the course of the pandemic require this.

Conditions of the policy

- Where a student is domiciled overseas or is temporarily overseas and studying remotely would not impact on the opportunity to achieve the learning outcomes, we would permit remote study on a semester-by-semester basis. This would only be on those programmes approved by the School or Department (Engineering).

- The maximum period of remote study will be one year and will not, unless the University decides otherwise, extend beyond the end of academic year 2021/22.

- In order to be eligible for acceptance, any request for remote study must be made on one or more of the following grounds which have to be directly related to Covid-19:

    a) restrictions on travel - including no transport links and the risk to health posed by travel where a student has a condition that defines them, according to the UK's National Health Service, as being clinically extremely vulnerable for Covid-19 purposes – prevent a student from travelling to the UK campus;

    b) legal restrictions barring entry or departure (other than the requirement to self-isolate or quarantine upon arrival or departure);

    c) financial - significant, unexpected and temporary personal finance barriers (see detail below); and/or

    d) late marks for those students, whose required results for entry are delayed, and after the Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) issuance date of the 15th of September 2021.

Remote study

Remote study of a programme designed to be undertaken in person will mean that students will not have the opportunity to engage in face-to-face contact with their peers and tutors or physically access resources such as the library. While the University will, wherever possible, provide suitable alternatives, some students may, in such circumstances, find it harder to remain engaged. In addition, depending on a course and its requirements, some forms of assessment may not be capable of being conducted remotely (for example, group presentations or lab work).

It is important students carefully think through all issues related to remote study. For example, they may find they remain liable for contracts they have signed (such as landlord accommodation). The option to study remotely should not be considered lightly. Students should explore what measures, if any, can be put in place to ensure they can meet the learning outcomes. In the rare cases where remote study is agreed, it will be on a semester-by-semester basis, up to a maximum of one year.

To apply for remote study students should complete an online form as soon as they become aware of the need to study remotely. Admissions and Student Services will advise if the programme is eligible for remote study and will confirm any agreement in writing to the student. If required, and in exceptional circumstances only, Student Services or Admissions will share the request with the relevant Programme Director or a nominee in the School. The Programme Director or their nominee will discuss options with the student, confirming any agreement in writing to the student and Student Services.

Other options for longer term absence (beyond 21 days)

- Voluntary Interruption of Studies - this is through the normal route, using the normal guidance. For more information, please consult the following Student Services page:

  [Transfer, interrupt or withdraw from your studies](#)

- Other adjustments to study unrelated to disability might be possible. The Programme Director may be able to identify some simple changes that enable a student to still attend. Adjustments for disability should be considered in the normal way, outside the scope of this policy.

Reasons for agreeing to requests to study remotely

There are four specific grounds to study remotely in relation to Covid-19:

1. The student has a medical condition that defines them, according to the UK's National Health Service, as being clinically extremely vulnerable for Covid-19 purposes which prevents them from travelling to the UK campus.

2. Strict legal travel restrictions (for the avoidance of doubt this excludes any form of quarantine) imposed by the UK government or in the case of students from outside the UK, a student's home government, that prevent a student from returning to campus during the semester[1].

3. Unexpected, significant, and temporary financial impact on the student that is directly related to COVID-19. This would be where the funding body or person paying living costs and fees is unable to cover living costs or tuition. It would not relate to increases in air travel cost as delayed arrival could be a solution. In ongoing financial hardship cases the University will normally ask a student to interrupt their studies and to return at a later date when financially able to meet their living costs.

4. Late marks for those students, whose required results for entry are delayed, and after the CAS issuance date of the 15th of September 2021. It may also be possible to apply for remote study on approved programmes only.

[1] The impact of changes to immigration requirements or where there are delays in receiving a visa owing to Covid-19 or limits in available flights are an acceptable basis for a short period of remote study. In these cases, agreement might be given for a delay to arrival of up to 4 weeks whilst those issues are addressed, but remote study for longer is not normally permitted on these grounds. See Late Arrival below.

Process to study remotely (taught programmes)

- A student applies for remote study by completing an online form. There are two forms, one for new students and the other for returning students. The deadline for submissions to be received is Wednesday 6 October 2021.

- Admissions and Student Services receive requests and will provide a response to the student for programmes which have been classified as either available or unavailable for remote study by Schools or Departments, if the request meets the criteria set out in the policy.

- If required, and in exceptional circumstances only, Admissions and Student Services will forward requests on to Programme Directors for consideration.

- Programme Directors will consider these exceptional cases, liaising with students as appropriate.

- Decisions will be communicated to students by email.

For postgraduate research students

For research degree programmes, the supervisors and the PGR Director should discuss the options with the PGR student, confirming any agreement in writing to the PGR student and Student Services.

Where a PGR student has no current requirement for physical access to on-campus research facilities and the supervisors and School PGR Director are satisfied that satisfactory remote supervisory and other arrangements are, or can be put, in place to ensure the PGR student's progress and enable them to engage in relevant training and research activities (e.g., seminars, workshops), remote study can be facilitated.

General points (including finance)

- Activities are scheduled for UK time and, whilst the University will endeavour to support students studying within different time zones, there is no expectation that any staff members would provide support outside of normal UK hours of work (that is, the timetabled teaching times).

- Full tuition fees will be payable regardless of any period of remote study and students are responsible for any costs they incur as a result of the University enabling their request to study remotely.

- Studying remotely may also have an impact on any applicable Student Loan Company (SLC) (or other provider) funding. Students are responsible for exploring and subsuming any reduction in funding that might occur as a result of studying remotely.

- The student would remain liable for any contractual obligations they hold, and it is important to note that arriving in January for the start of semester two may restrict their accommodation options and/or increase their costs. Students should consider the financial aspects of remote study carefully.

- For students who are subject to immigration control, visa requirements will still need to be met even if a student is studying remotely; there is a possibility that, in such circumstances, the University would have to cancel the visa sponsorship and in turn require a student to reapply at their own cost for a new visa when returning to campus-based study. There is no guarantee that a subsequent visa would be issued by the UK government.

- Studying remotely will not in and of itself constitute grounds for academic appeal.

- A School will nominate a co-ordinator to help the consideration of requests and may also nominate alternates to the Programme Director or Senior Tutor as appropriate.

- Already having an agreement in place for remote study does not constitute grounds to have it extended beyond the 2021/22 academic year. Unless the policy is extended to cover the 2022/23 academic year and a student's application for further remote study is accepted, students will be required to return to campus-based study when their period of remote study ends, unless they seek and are granted a period of voluntary interruption.

- In all cases, the approach is to ensure students attend in person as soon as possible so that they can benefit from the full richness of an in-person experience at the University of Nottingham.

Late arrival

The University will allow Late Arrival, which will support those students with short term financial issues or experiencing short term visa or travel restrictions.

Late arrival will be automatic for most students up to a specified point which is defined as the first 4 weeks of the semester and the University will not require evidence or proof. However, a student must be registered by Monday 11th October 2021 and have arrived on campus by Sunday 17th October 2021[2].

Some programmes are unable to facilitate Late Arrival due to course content; in particular, those within the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. Students are recommended to check with the Programme Director.

[2]Unless on a non-standard start date, students should check individual programme start dates.