

Exceptional Covid-19 extension to period of registered study: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and MPhil

These regulations should be read in conjunction with all existing continuing regulations, including the Exceptional Regulations on Extenuating Circumstances (ECs) and the Exceptional Guidance to Extenuating Circumstances Panels attached to the Policy on Circumstances Affecting Students' Ability to Study and Complete Assessments.

These regulations apply to full time and part time doctoral and MPhil¹ postgraduate researchers (PGR) registered prior to 1 March 2020, and for full time PGRs, those with current completion dates between 2 October 2021 and 30 September 2023, whose progress has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020.

PHDMP1. PGRs should continue to work towards completion of their degree by their current final submission date wherever possible.

PHDMP2. An exceptional Covid-19-related extension to the period of registered study is available following confirmation of need for PGRs registered between the above dates, and subject to the following condition:

The postgraduate research student must have experienced impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic that have not been possible to mitigate in order to allow adequate progression to meet doctoral outcomes. The need for an extension must be confirmed by the supervisors.

PHDMP3. Extensions under this regulation will only be justified on the basis of Covid-related circumstances affecting the period of registered study. For other non-Covid-related circumstances requiring an [extension to registered period of study](#), the usual process should be followed at final annual review.

PHDMP4. The need for an exceptional Covid-19 extension should be assessed as part of the student's final annual progress review meeting, in the final year of registered study. If an exceptional Covid-19 extension is needed, this should be confirmed using the [appropriate form](#).

PHDMP5. If a PGR has had to take a voluntary interruption of study (VIS) **for Covid-related reasons** (e.g. PGRs who have been unable to continue study, for example due to travel restrictions to the UK to resume study, or due to severe problems with childcare) and their original end date was between 2 October 2021 and 30 September 2023, the supervisors should append a statement giving the reasons why the PGR should be awarded the extension despite the change in end date.

PHDMP6. Other than in exceptional circumstances, the confirmation of need for the exceptional Covid-19 extension should be received by a Student Service Centre as close to the date of the final annual review as possible, and where possible, **no less** than 3 months in advance of the end of the original period of registered study.

PHDMP7. Where applied to the student record, exceptional Covid-19 extensions to periods of registered study of up to a maximum of 6 months will be on the basis of zero fee payable by the PGR.

PHDMP8. In cases where a PGR has already been granted a **funded-Covid extension** of less than 6 months (with a corresponding extension of their period of registered study), this

¹ Only those originally registered and intending to submit for the MPhil; this does not apply to those originally registered for PhD who have converted to MPhil. The regulation does not apply to MRes students.

process can only be used to request that the duration of the fee-free extension to registered period of study extends this to the maximum 6 months.

PHDMP9. During an exceptional Covid-19 extension to period of registered study, PGRs are entitled to the same access to research facilities and supervisors as under normal circumstances.

PHDMP10. During an exceptional Covid-19 extension to period of registered study normal monitoring and progression requirements apply with respect to supervisory meetings, engagement and progress.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Circumstances for Exceptional Covid-19 Extension to Period of Registered Study:

The following circumstances are allowable reasons for the confirmation of need for an exceptional Covid-19 extension to period of registered study:

- Covid-19-related impacts that cannot be mitigated and that have prevented adjustment to the original research plan to enable completion by the original planned date (such as, but not limited to, research plans requiring access to human participants, postponement of critical activities e.g. due to severe restrictions in access to research facilities where alternatives were not available, original study designs that can no longer be done under Covid-secure conditions with no alternatives available in the time or in the area of supervisory expertise, dependence on time of year e.g. working with specific crops, or seasonal animal behaviour, or specific annual events).
- personal circumstances that have meant that adjustments to research plans have been limited or impossible (e.g. additional caring responsibilities, illness or hospitalisation at critical times (see above), long-term illness, disability, neurodiversity, additional caring responsibilities, financial hardship, death of a close relative or partner, illness of a close relative or partner where the student is the carer)
- Covid-19 impact on the supervisory team affecting supervision and research progress
- Impacts related to any protected characteristics
- Other considerations that can be specifically evidenced and directly attributed to Covid-19 (e.g. requirement to undertake military service (other than those already accommodated under existing policies and processes)).

The following are examples of circumstances which would not normally warrant a Covid-19 extension to the period of registered study:

- Taking up employment during the period of registered study
- Voluntary service overseas.
- [Maternity leave](#) (covered by policy elsewhere)
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- Taking a placement that is part of the programme requirements (e.g. PIPS) and/or which is **not** an essential part of the doctoral research;

- Volunteering activity or paid secondment for which a voluntary interruption of studies was taken.
- The Covid-19 University closure in and of itself, without any evidence of mitigation attempts or of impact
- Where the impact recorded in the student monitoring record does not affect the ability to demonstrate the achievement of the [Doctoral Outcomes](#).

Procedure for confirmation of need for an exceptional Covid-19 extensions to period of registered study.

At each annual progression meeting between the Covid-19 pandemic progress towards doctoral outcomes should be monitored and recorded as usual.

All attempts to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic should be discussed and recorded during monitoring meetings. Any reasons why adjustments or mitigation attempts may have been unsuccessful should be recorded during normal progression monitoring, and specifically in the final annual review documentation.

A [Covid Impact Statement](#) can be used to record adjustments and mitigations, and their effects on research progress, and kept with other monitoring documentation.

At the PGR's final progression review in final year of registered study, progress towards the doctoral outcomes should be assessed, and if the attempted adjustments have been insufficient to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, consideration should be given to the need to confirm the need for an exceptional Covid-19 extension to the period of registered study.

Confirmation of the need for an exceptional Covid-19 extension should be made by the PGR, with the support of the supervisors, using the [appropriate form](#). This should include a brief plan for research and thesis completion, as usually produced as part of the final annual review.