**EnvEast/ARIES Policy on funded extensions for DTP students affected by disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic**

**Document last updated: 30 April 2020.**

This policy is guided by the UKRI statement at this [website](https://www.ukri.org/news/coronavirus-impact-on-ukri-supported-research/) and will be periodically reviewed as UKRI guidance is updated.

*UKRI published an Implementation Strategy on 24th April 2020 and we at the DTP will be contacting those in need of extensions in tranches over the coming month (May 2020). Please be patient with us as we look into eligibility and impact on research outcomes.*

All the below applies to PGRs funded in whole or part by the EnvEast/ARIES DTPs. It does **not apply to “Associated” DTP PGRs**. The latter should consult with their Supervisors and home institutes.

The policy is divided between those in their **final year of study** and those in **earlier years**.

The DTP will, in both cases, adopt the twin principles of:

* **no detriment** due to the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of completing such work as is necessary for the submission of a *suitable and sufficient* body of workfor the award of a PhD degree
* **no DTP-funded PGR should be disadvantaged** versus another in so far as financial constraints allow
1. **PGRs whose funded period ends between 1 March 2020 and 31 March 2021**
	1. These PGRs, in the final 12 months of their studentship funding, are eligible for the funded extension of **up to** 6 months announced on 9th April by UKRI.
	2. Those whose period of funding (i.e. the period within which the student receives a stipend) ended on 31 March 2020 (mostly the EnvEast cohort of 2016-starters), are deemed eligible but, if they had completed their PhD studies by this date, or would be able to do so with a shorter period of extension, they should report the need for reduced or no additional support.
	3. For avoidance of doubt, this does **not include** students who were writing up on 1 March 2020 after their studentship stipend had ended. It also does **not include** those whose original funding would have ended on or before 31 March 2021, but who have interrupted/intermitted their period of study and whose funding now ends after 31 March 2021; they should refer to **Section 2**.
	4. Longer extensions will not be funded by UKRI. In *exceptional* cases an appeal can be made to the DTP to fund a longer extension, but a compelling case would need to be presented as DTP resources are limited.
	5. Where a Studentship is co-funded by an HEI, research organisation, or other external body, then UKRI expresses the hope that the cost of the extension will be split between UKRI and the co-funder, pro rata to the proportion of their co-funding. This is to be negotiated between the DTP and the partner. The above principles of no detriment and no disadvantage will be followed by the DTP.

A set of FAQs on the UKRI scheme are available here: <https://www.ukri.org/files/funding/q-a-for-phd-students/>.

1. **PGRs whose funded period ends after 31st March 2021**

UKRI have undertaken to review their current policy on extensions in the summer of 2020, including possible financial provision for those in earlier years of study. Meanwhile, any such provision is the responsibility of the DTP, and the current approach we envisage is outlined below, but is **subject to change** as further announcements from UKRI are made.

* 1. All extension requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
	2. The DTP notes that it has finite funds and asks that extensions are only requested where needed, and for the minimum duration necessary to complete such studies as necessary for submission of a *suitable and sufficient thesis*. A narrative on how options to rationalise, realign, and reschedule work were explored will be required as part of the extension application.
	3. The **maximum** extension will be six months unless there are *exceptional* circumstances; the DTP has limited resources.
	4. The DTP recognises that delays may be caused not only by cancellation of field work, and lab closures, but also from a variety of causes including wellbeing, mental health, caring responsibilities, etc. Whilst tangible evidence should be gathered wherever possible, personal statements (supported by supervisors where appropriate) may also be used as evidence. The above principles of no detriment and no disadvantage will be followed by the DTP.
	5. The process is designed to be administratively light. Applications will be gathered via a simple online form, and assessed by the DTP Executive Team within three months of application.
	6. A call for applications will be announced once restrictions on work and travel have been lifted, **or** when relevant new guidance is issued by UKRI, **or** by 31 March 2021, *whichever is soonest*.
1. **Conditions applicable to all DTP-funded PGRs**
	1. We are awaiting further instructions from UKRI, so please do not submit an application until we announce that the application process is open. We hope to do so soon. However, if you are in financial difficulties, please contact the DTP office immediately so that we can assess your situation on a case-by-case basis, with a view to providing interim support if applicable.
	2. PGRs are not expected to ‘make up’ lost time by working significant additional hours or by cancelling planned holidays. It is a requirement that PGRs should take **at least**28 days holiday each academic year, and we would encourage all PGRs to maintain a healthy work-life balance.
	3. In considering the length of extension applied for, the **PGR’s best interests** should be considered, in terms of both degree completion and career progression.
	4. Where placements (e.g. with CASE partners) are envisaged, we adopt UKRI’s policy that extensions are “*intended to enable students to complete their studies and (not) to cover internships/placements unless they are directly related to completion of the research project*”. Also that “*the exception is redeployment onto COVID-19 work*”. Therefore, any placements that are not an indispensable part of the thesis, should be shortened or cancelled if the need for an extension is consequently removed or reduced.
	5. It is imperative that all PGRs, whether or not they intend to request an extension, **record and evidence any impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic** has had on their progress using the **Risk Register** circulated to all PGRs at the start of the ‘lockdown’.
	6. None of the above replaces normal UKRI sick leave provision, and PGRs who are delayed by ill health and can present evidence of such (noting changes in provision of certification introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic) to claim this.
	7. An extension to the period of studentship funding **does not automatically extend the thesis submission date**. This latter process is handled by the University of Registration, and not by the DTP. PGRs and Supervisors are encouraged to consult with their Graduate Schools or equivalent in this regard. Our expectation is that all such requests will be considered sympathetically.

This version (post-Strategy Board) updated on 30/04/20