

DTP Policy on Funded Extensions due to SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic

02 November 2020



This policy is guided by the [UKRI guidance](#) and will be periodically reviewed. This policy applies to PGR students funded in whole or part by the EnvEast or ARIES DTPs. Please note it does not apply to Associated DTP students, who should consult with their Supervisors and home institutes.

The global pandemic is a continuously evolving situation - please do not submit an application for extension until we announce that the application process is open. If you are in financial difficulties, please contact the DTP office immediately so that we can assess your individual situation.

The DTPs will 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 work for the award of a PhD degree.
- **no DTP-funded PGR should be disadvantaged** versus another in so far as financial constraints allow.

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.

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.

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.

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](#).

None of the above replaces normal UKRI sick leave provision, and PGRs who are delayed by ill health unrelated to COVID-19 and can present evidence of such (noting changes in provision of certification introduced during the pandemic) to claim this.

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.

Specific guidance on extensions due to pandemic-related disruption are given on the following pages according to studentship funding end date.

1. PGRs whose funded period ends between 1 March 2020 & 31 March 2021

- PGRs final 12 months of their studentship funding are eligible for the funded extension of **up to 6 months** announced on 9th April by UKRI.
- Those whose period of funding (the period within which the student receives a stipend) ended on 31 March 2020, 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.
- For avoidance of doubt, this **does not include** those whose original funding would have ended on or before 31 March 2021, but who have interrupted their period of study and whose funding now ends after 31 March 2021; these students should refer to **Section 2**.
- 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.
- 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.

2. PGRs whose funded period ends after 31 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.

- All extension requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 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.
- The **maximum** extension will be six months unless there are *exceptional* circumstances; the DTP has limited resources.
- 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 be used as evidence. The above principles of no detriment and no disadvantage apply.
- Applications will be gathered via a simple online form, and assessed by the DTP Executive Team within three months of application.
- 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*.
- 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.