



Extensions Due to COVID-19 Procedure for Postgraduate Researchers (Phase 1)

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1. Introduction

1.1 This procedure forms part of and should be considered alongside the [Change of Circumstances Policy for Postgraduate Research Students](#) and was developed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Purpose and Scope

2.1. This procedure is relevant to all postgraduate researchers (PGRs) with a funding / programme end date between 1 March 2020 and 31 March 2021.

2.2. UKRI funded PGRs with a funding end date on or after April 1 2021 should refer to the [Extensions due to COVID-19 Procedure for Postgraduate Researchers \(Phase 2 – UKRI funded\)](#).

2.3. All PGRs in receipt of a stipend processed by the University of Manchester with a funding end date on or after April 1 2021 should refer to the [Extensions due to COVID-19 Procedure for PGRs \(Phase 2 UoM processed stipend\)](#).

2.4. The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance on how PGRs (as defined in 2.1.) can apply for an extension to their degree programme, an extension to the submission pending period or an extension to the resubmission period with mitigating circumstances relating to COVID-19.

2.5. For the definition of mitigating circumstances and examples of mitigating circumstances due to Covid-19 please refer to section 4 of the [Change of Circumstances Policy for Postgraduate Research Students](#).

2.6. Prior to making an extension request PGRs should discuss with their supervisor / supervisory team whether an extension is required in order to bring their work to completion at doctoral standard. PGRs and

Supervisors should bear in mind the intellectual and practical competencies expected of doctoral candidates, as set out by the [QAA doctoral characteristics document](#), which emphasise that **doctoral degrees should be awarded based on the quality of the work rather than the quantity of the research undertaken**. In some cases PGRs may have already met the required doctoral standard without having to complete all of the work originally planned. Alternatively, these competencies could be met by adjusting the original research question or by re-scoping the project in order to address the topic by undertaking research remotely. For examples see [Rescoping PhD projects in response to COVID-19 impact: Guidance for Supervisors](#).

3. General Principles for all COVID-19 Related Extension Requests

- 3.1. PGRs should keep a record of any time lost due to COVID-19 in order to support their extension request (see section 8 for further details of suggested supporting evidence).
- 3.2. PGRs should normally apply for up to a 3 month COVID-19 extension in the first instance. A supplementary request of up to 3 months can be submitted (no more than 1 month prior to the end of the existing extension) if more time is needed and an update to the original case can be provided. Extension requests of less than 1 month will not be considered.
- 3.3. Full-time PGRs can submit a request for an extension within three months from their funding end date (programme end date), their submission pending deadline or their re-submission deadline. Part-time PGRs can submit an extension to programme request within 6 months of their funding end date. By this point in their programme, PGRs will know the extent of the impact of COVID 19 on their research and so will be able to better assess the length of any extension required.
- 3.4. Applications should detail the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the applicant's research or writing. This should include what amount of research or writing they have been / were able to complete remotely, what mitigating actions they have taken / took and what work they plan to do during the extended period.

4. Extensions to Degree Programme due to COVID-19

- 4.1. The time permitted to complete the degree will be extended by a corresponding period to the granted extension. Self-funded PGRs will not be charged a tuition fee for the duration of any approved extension (up to 6 months).

4.2. On the application PGRs must indicate why their work to date (including the time remaining on their programme) doesn't wholly meet doctoral standards and how the work they plan to do during the extension will bring their work to doctoral standard. The [QAA doctoral characteristics document](#) provides further information.

5. Extensions to Submission Pending due to COVID-19

5.1. In order to extend the submission pending period, the mitigating circumstances should normally have arisen within the submission pending year.

5.2. The University will not charge submission pending fees for any approved extension to the submission pending period.

5.3. PGRs will not be permitted to interrupt during a period of extension to submission pending.

6. Extensions to Resubmission-Period due to COVID-19

6.1. PGRs who have been asked to resubmit their thesis with substantial revisions after first examination have either six months or twelve months to resubmit a revised thesis.

6.2. PGRs can apply for a COVID-19 related extension to their re-submission deadline by outlining why they were unable to re-submit their thesis by the required deadline.

7. The Application Procedure for COVID-19 related Extensions

7.1. The PGR is responsible for submitting the relevant application form to the appropriate Faculty/School Graduate Office. Please contact the appropriate [School or Faculty Graduate Office](#) for the form.

7.2. A member of the supervisory team will be required to comment on the application, providing a statement of support where appropriate.

7.3. The PGR should consider the terms and conditions of their funder/sponsor, where appropriate, before they submit an application for extension. Please refer to the [PGR FAQs](#) for details of funding eligibility criteria.

7.4. In some cases, the PGR may first need to apply to the sponsor for permission to extend their studies before submitting a formal application to the School or Faculty Graduate Office. It should be noted that while the

University has the authority to approve extensions, it does not have any influence over a sponsor's approval.

- 7.5. International PGRs with a student visa who are funded by an external organisation will require a letter of support from their sponsor when applying to extend their stay in the UK.
- 7.6. International PGRs on programmes that require ATAS clearance will require a new ATAS clearance certificate if their end date is extended by more than 3 months (this is applicable even if the current visa is long enough to cover the extension to programme).
- 7.7. International PGRs should contact the Student Immigration Team for further advice and guidance on any visa restrictions when applying for an extension - visa@manchester.ac.uk.
- 7.8. Applications should, where possible, include relevant documentary evidence (see section 8 below) and must meet the COVID-19 mitigating circumstances criteria as set out in the [Change of Circumstances Policy for Postgraduate Research Students](#).
- 7.9. The decision of a postgraduate research degrees panel (or the postgraduate research degrees panels' delegated authority) is final. Applicants may reapply for an extension after a refusal has been made only if they have new or additional information and/or evidence to add to their application which was not originally considered. If the request is refused again, the applicant will not normally be permitted to reapply. Appeals are allowed under [Regulation XIX](#).

8. Suggested Evidence in Support of COVID-19 Extension Request

- 8.1. The table below details the types of evidence that could be submitted in support of a COVID-19 extension request. The more evidence that can be supplied in support of the application the easier it will be for the appropriate postgraduate research degrees panel to reach their decision.
- 8.2. PGRs who would prefer not to document personal evidence directly on the form should contact the appropriate School or Faculty Graduate Office in advance of making an extension request for support in completing the application confidentially.

COVID-19 Mitigating Circumstance	Examples of Evidence / Case
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<p>Redeployment to work on COVID-19 related research or other COVID-19 related activity</p>	<p>A letter confirming redeployment e.g. from the employer or supervisor.</p>
<p>Critical research activities have had to be postponed or have suffered a major delay (greater than 1 month), alternative activities have not been available and the impact cannot be mitigated.</p>	<p>Details of the inability to access labs/crucial equipment and a justification as to why research activities could not / cannot be re-planned, how it has impacted remote working, why the remaining work is necessary to meet doctoral standards and what further work is planned during the proposed extension period.</p> <p>Details of the inability to access source materials/research resources and justification as to why research activities could not / cannot be re-planned, how it has impacted remote working, why the remaining work is necessary to meet doctoral standards and what further work is planned during the proposed extension period</p> <p>Details of the inability to collect vital equipment, primary data or resources prior to campus closure and justification as to why research activities could not / cannot be re-planned, how it has impacted remote working, why the remaining work is necessary to meet doctoral standards and what further work is planned during the proposed extension period.</p> <p>Details of the loss of research work (including data) as a result of the campus closure including an estimation of the amount of time it will take to recover the lost work.</p> <p>Details of any time lost due to delays in obtaining the necessary approvals / clearance e.g. ethics.</p>
<p>Additional COVID-19 related caring responsibilities.</p>	<p>Details of additional caring responsibilities as a result of COVID-19.</p> <p>Details of what level of work has been / was possible remotely during the campus closure (or a justification as to why no work could be completed).</p>

<p>Illness related to COVID-19 (including mental health issues).</p>	<p>For those who contracted COVID-19 - details of the length of time impacted and details of what level of work was / has been possible remotely. Evidence of a formal diagnosis would be helpful but we realise is not always possible.</p> <p>If no research has been possible, PGRs should consider applying for an interruption and may be entitled to sickness pay - depending on funder terms and conditions.</p> <p>PGRs suffering from mental health and wellbeing issues could provide details of how the issues impacted or continue to impact their ability to work, how they are trying / tried to mitigate the issues (e.g. changing research plan and scheduling, seeking the support of supervisors or support services) and provide details of why any such strategies haven't been effective. PGRs should give details of what level of work has been possible.</p>
<p>Extended lack of supervision/guidance due to COVID-19 related activity.</p>	<p>Details of why the supervisor / supervisory team were unable to provide support/guidance (e.g. redeployment to work on COVID-19, supervisor illness).</p> <p>Details of length of time lost on research/ writing.</p>
<p>Specific impact resulting from remote working as a result of a disability or any other protected characteristics.</p>	<p>All disability related cases will be referred to the Disability Advisory and Support Service for consideration.</p>
<p>Any other considerations that can be specifically attributed to COVID-19 and evidenced in the case.</p>	<p>Details of the reasons for the impact and what level of work has been possible remotely during campus closure (with appropriate supporting evidence).</p> <p>Evidence of inability to return to the UK due to advice of overseas or UK government.</p>

Version amendment history		
Version	Date	Reason for change
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Document control box

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Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations:	https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/rbe/rdrd/ordinancesandregulations/
Related policies/procedures/guidance etc	Change of Circumstances Policy for Postgraduate Research Students
Policy owner:	Alex Hinchliffe
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