



Extensions due to COVID-19 Procedure for Postgraduate Researchers (UKRI funded)

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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. The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance on how postgraduate researchers (PGRs), as defined in 2.2. can apply for a funded extension to their degree programme to complete essential research that could not be re-scoped, with mitigating circumstances relating to COVID-19.¹

2.2. This procedure is applicable to all UKRI funded PGRs regardless of their funding start / end date.

2.3. UKRI funded PGRs who have already received a funded extension for COVID-19 related reasons but are still struggling to adapt their project can re-apply.

2.4. For the definition and examples of mitigating circumstances due to COVID-19 please refer to section 5 of this procedure.

2.5. All PGRs not included under the definition in 2.2 should refer to the relevant guidance detailed on the [PGR COVID-19 FAQ](#) page.

2.6. PGRs seeking an extension for non-COVID-19 related reasons should refer to the [Extensions Procedure for Postgraduate Research Students](#).

¹ Any funded extensions awarded will be at the UKRI standard stipend rates.

3. General Principles

- 3.1. Prior to application for an extension, all PGRs, with support from their supervisory team, must seek to [adapt and adjust their research projects](#) so that they are able to complete their research to a [doctoral standard](#) within their funding period.
- 3.2. Full-time PGRs can apply for up to a 3 month COVID-19 extension and part-time PGRs can apply for up to a 6 month COVID-19 extension. Only in exceptional circumstances will longer extensions be considered. Extension requests of less than 1 month will not be considered.
- 3.3. Full-time PGRs can submit a request for an extension within six months from their funding end date (programme end date). Part-time PGRs or those whose research is dependent on a period of essential fieldwork (including placements for the purpose of data collection) postponed or interrupted due to the pandemic can submit an extension to programme request within 12 months of their funding end date.
- 3.4. Applications will be assessed on a needs priority basis and with priority afforded to PGRs with ongoing support needs (including disabled PGRs, PGRs with a long-term illness, those who are neurodivergent or those with caring responsibilities) and those with fieldwork that cannot / could not be adapted irrespective of funding end date.

4. Application Procedure

- 4.1. 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.
- 4.2. A member of the supervisory team will be required to comment on the application as part of your submission, providing a statement of support where appropriate. This statement can be requested separately where the PGR prefers not to disclose full details of the application with the supervisor / supervisory team.
- 4.3. The PGR should consider the terms and conditions of any additional funders/sponsors, where appropriate, before they submit an application for extension.
- 4.4. International PGRs with a student visa will require a letter of support from their sponsor when applying to extend their stay in the UK.

- 4.5. 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).
- 4.6. 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.
- 4.7. PGRs must detail the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on their work including what adaptations have already been taken in response to the impact, an explanation as to why no further adaptation or rescopeing is possible, and an outline of the work to be completed during the proposed extension period.
- 4.8. Applications should, where possible, include relevant documentary evidence (see section 5) and must meet the COVID-19 mitigating circumstances criteria.
- 4.9. All applications will be reviewed by the relevant faculty postgraduate degrees panel and where necessary input will be sought from the Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS) and the relevant CDT/DTP Director or Training Grant holder.
- 4.10. If successful the time permitted to complete the degree will be extended by a period corresponding to the granted extension.
- 4.11. 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](#).

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

- 5.1. 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 panel to reach their decision.
- 5.2. 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
Redeployment to work on COVID-19 related research or other COVID-19 related activity	A letter confirming redeployment e.g. from the employer or supervisor.
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>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, carry out fieldwork 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>
Additional COVID-19 related caring responsibilities.	Details of additional caring responsibilities as a result of COVID-19.

	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).
Illness related to COVID-19 (including mental health issues).	<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 this 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.</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>
Extended lack of supervision/guidance due to COVID-19 related activity.	Details of why the supervisor / supervisory team were unable to provide support/guidance (e.g. redeployment to work on COVID-19, supervisor illness).
Exacerbation of COVID-19 related impact due to a disability including neurodiversity or any other protected characteristics.	<p>All disability related cases will be reviewed by the Disability Advisory and Support Service as part of the panel review process.</p> <p>Please provide relevant medical certificates where possible.</p>
Any other considerations that can be specifically attributed to COVID-19 and evidenced in the case.	<p>Details of the reasons for the impact and what level of work has been possible (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
1	June 2021	New procedure

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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