

COVID-19 Studentship Extensions – Phase 3

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has confirmed further action to support doctoral students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic: <https://www.ukri.org/news/rules-for-phd-funding-relaxed-for-those-affected-by-the-pandemic/>.

DTPs will be able to generate funds to support further funding extensions through repurposing training and cohort development funding, and through reducing investment in recruitment by up to 10% of the new studentships competition in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

NWCDTP funded students are now able to apply for extensions directly to the DTP.

Please carefully read the Guidance and Criteria below before starting your application. Please complete ALL of the sections below. You should discuss the application with your supervisors, who will be required to add a statement to the extension request form before submission.

Extension Request Rounds to Date

There have been the following opportunities for NWCDTP students to request extensions due to the impact of COVID-19:

- **Phase 1 (May 2020)**: An UKRI initiative, run by individual universities, for DTP students with an end date 1st March 2020 – 31st March 2021
- **Phase 1.5 (Dec 2020)**: A NWCDTP initiative, for DTP students with an end date after 30th September 2021, who would struggle to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their projects (established for students who may find it difficult to access extensions through Phase 2...)
- **Phase 2 (Jan–April 2021)**: A UKRI initiative, run by individual universities, for any DTP students but prioritising those with an end date 1st April - 30th September 2021 and/or who will struggle to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their projects (particularly those with caring responsibilities, long term health concerns and disabilities).

This new policy, Phase 3, will pick up after Phase 2 concludes at each institution.

Source of the funding

UKRI have allocated some funds to the NWCDTP from Phase 1 underspend, to support further funding extensions due to COVID-19. The fund will only be able to support a dozen of three Month Studentship Extensions for our students.

Beyond this, the NWCDTP will not receive any additional funding from UKRI for future extensions.

We are committed to supporting our current students, but to do this we will have to (a) reduce the range of non-core activities we can support for current and future cohorts and (b) reduce the number of PhDs we can fund in future years.

As such, we will need to carefully manage when extensions are granted, on a case-by-case basis, to ensure we can still continue to support postgraduate training in the region in an effective way.

NWCDTP COVID-19 Extension Policy

- a) Any student commencing their NWCDTP studentship before September 2021 can apply for a Phase 3 Studentship Extension.
- b) Students must be still funded by the DTP in order to apply for phase 3 (students who have entered submission pending/ writing up period and whose funding end date was before the 31st March 2021 are not eligible to apply). If you are unsure of your status, please contact the DTP office.
- c) Requests should only be submitted in the final six months of your studentship. This is to ensure that the full impact on the project is known, as well as the effect of any mitigation steps put in place, before submitting the extension request – therefore making it more straightforward for students to demonstrate, and the panel to assess, the need for an extension.
- d) There will be four deadlines a year (please note that this scheme will be in place for the foreseeable future):
 - 1st August
 - 1st November
 - 1st February
 - 1st May

Applications should be submitted to nwcdtp@manchester.ac.uk directly.

- e) We will consider the following students as being Priority Groups for extensions:
 - Those who have been balancing childcare responsibilities and home-schooling with their PhD research
 - Those with long term health problems and disabilities
 - Those on collaborative (CDA) studentships
 - Those for whom overseas fieldwork was a crucial component of their project plan

This does not mean that others outside of these Priority Groups will not be able to access support.

- f) The criteria for assessment will be:
 - A clear explanation of how you have tried to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 so far;
 - Why this is still not sufficient to complete your project within the current funding period;
 - A clear timeline of how you would use the requested extension, if granted, to complete your PhD project¹.
- g) Under this Phase 3 policy, it will be permissible to apply if you have already received a COVID-19 extension (through any of the previous phases). Decisions in these cases will be based on the above criteria PLUS:
 - The length of the original COVID-19 extension;
 - How you utilised the extension previously granted to mitigate the impact.

Those who applied for an extension through Phase 2 which was not granted can also reapply under this scheme.

- h) The AHRC expects most extensions to be up to three months long. They should only be longer in exceptional circumstances (particularly by those who belong to the priority groups listed under point e). You must be able to justify why you need the length of time you request.
- i) Candidates' supervisors are required to provide a supporting statement and signature in confirmation of your extension request. Please note that the NWCDTP will pass on your application to your institution for primarily approval before being considered further by the panel. If there is information that you are not confident disclosing to your supervisor or your institution, please contact the NWCDTP nwcdtp@manchester.ac.uk to discuss alternative arrangements.
- j) Extension requests are not intended to make up for time lost due to COVID-19. Unfortunately, it is not feasible for the NWCDTP to provide sufficient funding to meet this need. This scheme is intended only to provide the students with the most impacted projects additional funded time to review and revise their projects.

¹ The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) issued advice in response to concerns expressed by PhD students and others about the impact of COVID-19 on their ability to carry out research. Their guidance aims to reassure students and their supervisory teams who have had to plan their work again and reschedule their research to accommodate the obstacles they have encountered. You can find the document [here](#). 2

Clear examples of projects that need substantial adaptation may include (but are not limited to):

- Those whose projects require substantial fieldwork (overseas or UK), archival access or other data collection that has not yet been able to take place;
- Those whose projects required working with participants and where it has not been possible to undertake this work remotely (i.e. via video calls);
- Those who are working with collaborative non-HEI partners (i.e. CDA students) where projects have been delayed due to the unavailability of the partner.

- k) COVID-19 Extensions will not be granted to allow candidates additional time for activity beyond the completion of the core PhD project (e.g. delayed OIVs or Internships, dissemination activity etc.).
- l) Extension requests will be assessed by a NWCDTP panel including your DTP institutional lead. The NWCDTP will seek approval for the extension from your institution (Faculty or School) in the first place before making a decision.
- m) Should a student wish to appeal, a notification of appeal should be sent in writing to the NWCDTP Director within 14 days of receiving notification of the outcome of their application. The appeal notification should state the grounds of appeal. Within 14 days of being given the notification of appeal, the NWCDTP Director will arrange a meeting with the student concerned to discuss the appeal. Within 14 days of the appeal meeting taking place, the student will be notified of the outcome by the NWCDTP Director.
- n) Under General Data Protection Regulation, the NWCDTP is required to obtain your consent for the Extensions Panel to view the data you provide in connection with your application. By signing and submitting this funding extension application, the student is giving permission for all relevant staff to have access to their documentation.

Sick leave

The AHRC are asking DTPs to treat sick leave caused by the pandemic differently to the normal sick leave policy. This means:

- you may not need a medical certificate to prove sickness caused by the pandemic
- sick leave extensions can be for up to 28 weeks in length in a 12-month period, rather than the normal 13 weeks

Please note that the normal sick leave policy applies for sick leave not caused by the pandemic – this is up to 13 weeks within a 12-month period. Please see [UKRI terms and conditions](#) for further information.

Change in mode of study

If the pandemic has caused a change in personal or household circumstances, you can change your mode of study. Changing your mode of study could mean switching from full time to part time, or part time to full time. You can change your mode of study because of the pandemic more than once. This means you have flexibility if your circumstances change again.

Before you switch, first consider:

- getting support to adjust your project
- applying for our doctoral extension funding.

Redeployment

If you are supporting the government response to COVID-19, UKRI will agree to an extension.

Examples of this include:

- returning to clinical service
- working in an NHS Test and Trace laboratory.

If you are unsure how to progress with your application and have any questions please contact the DTP office at nwcdtp@manchester.ac.uk .