

Policy to Minimise the impact of Covid-19 on Postgraduate Research Degrees

Frequently Asked Questions

1. My submission date is after 31 March 2021; will I be eligible for an extension?

It is difficult to predict the full impact of the Covid-19 lockdown on your research, but the University understands that some projects will be significantly affected even after research activity restarts. You should complete [survey 2](#) by 30 September 2020 to document the disruption you have experienced so far. We will then be able to assess your case individually to determine if you require an extension to your submission date. Please note, whilst we may be able to extend your studies, this **does not** automatically mean there will also be funding to support you – these decisions will be assessed on a case by case basis and by an academic panel. Any student who applies for and is granted an exceptional extension beyond 12 months (from original submission date) will be eligible to pay [Council Tax](#), these costs will not be considered in any request for funding. Please note, only students who are resident in Aberdeen city can apply for a Council Tax exemption during normal extension period.

2. How much time can I request for an extension?

You can request up to 6 months extension. All requests will be considered individually and awarded based on individual need - there will be several different factors that need to be considered in order for a decision to be made. For example: Does the research proposal need to be reworked completely? Does the methodology for data collection need to be changed? Will additional ethical approval be required?

3. Will there be funding available if I am granted an extension?

In exceptional circumstances where there have been insurmountable difficulties associated with research progress, all non-UKRI students will be able to apply for a funded extension of up to 6 months. All requests for funded extensions will be treated individually and an assessment on duration and whether funding is required will be made. Any funding awards made will be in line with UKRI stipend rates.

4. I am a self-funded PhD student; am I eligible for an extension?

Yes, if there is evidence that your project has been significantly disrupted by Covid-19 then, you will be eligible for an extension. If you have already suspended your studies due to Covid-19, you will not be eligible to apply at this stage. On return from suspension, there will be other opportunities to apply for extensions as outlined in the policy document. As with all cases any extension request and /or funding will be considered on a case by case basis. If awarded, an extension will commence after the register period of supervised study has ended. There will be no requirement to pay the continuation fee within the first six months of extension. The University is also committed to providing support to students who may be in financial hardship, please contact student.support@abdn.ac.uk to discuss your situation.

5. I am already in an extension period, can I apply?

Unfortunately, we are only in a position to support applications from students who are within the final year of their original supervised study period. However, if you feel there are exceptional and

extenuating circumstances which can be considered, please contact pgrs-covid@abdn.ac.uk to discuss.

6. I am a Tier 4 Visa holder, can I apply for an extension because of a Covid-19 related disruption to my project?

Yes, you may apply for an extension in these circumstances. If you are a Tier 4 visa holder and receive an extension to your submission date as a result of Covid-19, your new submission date may be extended beyond your current Tier 4 visa expiry date.

If this is the case, you may be eligible to apply for an extension to your Tier 4 visa. Please get in touch with the [International Student Advisers](#) approximately 3 months prior to your visa expiry date to discuss your study circumstances.

Please also note that if you require an ATAS certificate to study, any extension to your studies of 3 months or more from the end date given on your previous CAS requires you to apply for new ATAS clearance before your study extension can be processed. Further guidance on ATAS can be found [here](#).

7. I suspended my studies during the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, can I apply?

If you have already suspended your studies due to Covid-19, you will not be eligible to apply at this stage. On return from suspension, there will be other opportunities to apply for extensions as outlined in the policy document. As with all cases any extension request and /or funding will be considered on a case by case basis. If awarded, an extension will commence after the period of supervised study has ended

8. I submitted a postponement form, do I need to submit the extension form as well?

Yes, even if you completed a postponement form, the clock did not stop on your studies so you must complete the extension form. Please note that in the majority of cases, this extension request will supersede your postponement application. Where this is not the case, we will be in touch with you directly.

9. I am due to submit very soon but I cannot access a specific text/data set/conduct a set of experiments due to the lockdown – what should I do?

There will be some situations where the Covid-19 lockdown regulations have restricted access to facilities or academic resources. In these rare situations and where there will be no impact on your argument or conclusions, we encourage you to discuss with your supervisor the potential to submit your thesis for examination together with a short explanation from you about what you had planned to do. Please note that this will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, where there is agreement between the student and the supervisory team and where the University is satisfied the thesis in its current state meets doctoral standard and shows evidence of independent thought and an original contribution to knowledge.

10. Can I submit my thesis electronically?

If you are submitting your thesis for examination (pre viva voce), you should submit to postgraduate@abdn.ac.uk. If you have had your viva voce and are submitting the final version of your thesis, you should submit to cataloguing@abdn.ac.uk.

In each case, your thesis must be in PDF format. If files are larger than 20MB (Outlook attachment's size limit) then you can send them via: <https://zendto.abdn.ac.uk>. At this time, it is not necessary to submit a soft or hard bound copy of your thesis. You may be asked to submit a hardbound copy at a later date, but the PhD award will no longer be contingent on submission of a physical copy.

11. My Viva Voce is scheduled to take place soon. What should I do?

PhD viva examinations will continue as scheduled (where all parties are in agreement to do so). With immediate effect, these will be conducted by videoconference (using suitable technology eg Microsoft Teams, Skype). Your School has guidance for the conducting of viva examinations by video conference, please contact your [PGR Coordinator/Director](#) for more details and review this guidance document.

If you do not have access to IT equipment to attend your viva digitally, please discuss this with your internal examiner to agree a suitable plan.

12. I have had the maximum extension permitted by the university, but I have been unable to complete my thesis because of the Covid-19 lockdown, what can I do?

The normal maximum period for extension is 60 months (96 months for part-time). However, where the request is as a direct result of the Covid-19 restrictions, an extension request may be made to extend your submission date beyond 60 months. These will be considered in the normal way. It is important to consider carefully how much time you need and request only that. Exceptional requests to extend beyond 72 months (108 months for part time) will be considered on a case by case basis by the Dean for PGR.

13. I have had my *viva* and have some additional work for corrections – but I cannot get access to archives/library/laboratory to complete the work - what do I do?

No student will be unfairly disadvantaged from making necessary adjustments or corrections to an examined thesis as a direct result of Covid-19 preventing action within normal timeframes. If you have minor corrections and need more time, your internal examiner has the authority to grant this. We would not expect this to be more than 6 months from your viva date.

If you have major corrections or your thesis requires a re-write, your examiners and the University will consider these exceptional situations on a case by case basis.