
To all doctoral students

With grateful thanks for your cooperation and patience in these uncertain times, I would like to attempt to answer some of the questions you have been asking.

Many of you have financial concerns in light of the COVID-19 situation. Some of you who are receiving studentships may be worried about either having to suspend (and potentially stopping your stipend) or in having to extend your studies such that you may be unable to complete by the time your funding ends. Some of you may also have been relying on casual work e.g. demonstrating in labs or supporting face-to-face lectures (not all of which can be transferred online) which have now stopped. Whilst we cannot answer all your questions at this stage, below are some comments and updates. It is also clear that a number of funders are yet to decide on how to support existing grant or scholarship-holders, but we shall monitor the situation and update our advice accordingly.

Before making any changes to your plans, we would repeat our advice (in the email sent to all doctoral students 17th March 2020) that you should first discuss with your supervisory team how your planned activities might be adapted. In practice they may be able to suggest a way of reorganising or changing your study, enabling you to continue your studies without having to suspend or lengthen your project, and therefore without incurring financial issues.

Studentship holders

[In case you are not sure of your funder, check your original offer letter or any subsequent correspondence. If it is still not clear then check with your Doctoral College (DC) Administrator.]

The [UKRI's Impact of Coronavirus on UKRI-supported research](#) provides some useful guidance for all **Research Council (RC) funded students**. In particular it states that:

Where a student is ill, you should follow the standard T&Cs. For the purposes of the T&Cs, UKRI will accept any revised Government guidance regarding medical certification.

Where students are not ill, but self-isolating, you should not suspend their studentship.

- *In many cases students will be able to work from home even if the activities undertaken change. For short periods of self-isolation, even if they cannot work, many students will have sufficient time left that they can make this up over the remainder of their doctorate. In these cases, extensions to funded periods should not be applied.*
- *Where self-isolating undermines a student's ability to finish their doctorate within the funded period, an extension should be considered. In keeping with UKRI T&Cs, we would expect these to be costed extensions, funded in the first instance from any underspend on the grant. Where there is no underspend, UKRI will reconcile this at the FES stage and increase grant cash limits appropriately. Examples (not exhaustive) of when an extension may need to be applied include:*
 - *A significant period of self-isolation (we do not define significant as this is likely to be proportional to the time left in the funded period)*
 - *Postponement of critical activities where alternatives are not available. Examples could include: experiments due to take place at a national/international facility which will delay the research for a significant amount of time; access to critical archives being unavailable for a significant period*

Whilst the above advice should apply to all the RCs, for those students who are part of a RC-funded Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) or Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT), it may be worth checking with the relevant team if they have any further guidance. For all RC-funded students – irrespective of whether or not you are part of a DTP or CDT - you may also wish to visit your own RC webpage: see [AHRC](#), [BBSRC](#), [EPSRC](#), [ESRC](#), [Innovate UK](#), [MRC](#), [NERC](#), [Research England](#) or [STFC](#). NB we are contacting the UKRI for future information.

University of Bath's **University Research Student Allowances (URSA)** will align with the UKRI guidance (above).

Information on **other funders** webpages is limited at this stage (e.g. Cancer Research UK's page [Coronavirus Information for grant holders, including students](#)). However:

- the university's Research & Innovation Services (RIS) has published the guidance received so far at <https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/covid-19-funding-information/>, and it is worth checking regularly for any updates on your particular funder
- the university's [Studentships Team](#) is also closely monitoring the situation
- also check on your own funders web pages, and revisit frequently in case of updates

It is important to remember though that if you are a doctoral student in receipt of a studentship, you will continue to receive this in the normal way if you are:

- fully registered
- or (if your funder normally supports such a scheme) you are temporarily suspended but are entitled to receive a stipend e.g. you are receiving maternity/paternity/adoption pay
- or (if your funder normally supports such a scheme) off sick, and you receive a RC or a University of Bath URSA studentship, award payments can continue during absences covered by medical certificates for up to 13 weeks, within any rolling 12-month period.

The Doctoral College remains sympathetic as to the effects on your registration, including the need for **suspensions** and **extensions**. We recognise that where continuation of your research may not be possible, and where we might *normally* suggest a suspensions of studies, we will need to take into account the expectations from the funders. In some cases a suspension may be an option for those that will not be fully dependent on their stipend (or who are self-funded). However, for those who will be dependent, they should not suspend. In all cases, we strongly recommend that all students keep a record of time lost, for whatever reason, to be reviewed once we can come up with an agreed process for dealing with these cases. In practice the Doctoral College will need to consider each case in-turn.

Financial support

If you have financial difficulties, either due to your studentship stopping or loss of paid work, there may be other opportunities. [NB you will need to check any conditions that your funder has with respect to paid work¹] Examples include:

¹ e.g. UKRI states that "Students in full-time employment are not eligible for a stipend of any kind from UKRI. A Student in part time employment may be eligible for a part time award, which should not be less than 50% of full time."

- depending on your research area, it may be worth checking for calls for paid work, sometimes to support action against COVID19 e.g. there has been a call from Public Health England (PHE) to recruit lab-capable researchers to help with COVID19 testing on short term contracts, and some students are engaging with the Royal United Hospital (RUH) in Bath.
- there may be other paid work outside of the research-sector including additional delivery drivers and shelf-stackers for supermarkets who are struggling due to unprecedented demand and loss of staff.
- check the [UK Government's guidance 'Universal Credit and students'](#)
- the [University Hardship Fund](#) provides limited discretionary financial support for students who are experiencing financial difficulty and are unable to meet basic or unexpected additional costs from other sources of support. The fund can also offer limited support to students who have experienced a change in financial circumstances due to unforeseen events.

Further guidance

With daily updates from the UK Government and a rapidly changing environment, the University is continually updating its guidance to students (and staff) and so please regularly check the University's guidance at <https://www.bath.ac.uk/topics/coronavirus-covid-19/>.

Please also check the Doctoral College's doctoral-specific guidance at <https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/coronavirus-advice-to-doctoral-students/>. (We will add this message to this page.)

We work closely with the [Studentships Team](#) to update our advice but please contact them on fos-pgstu@bath.ac.uk if you have any queries regarding your specific studentship.

We are working to minimise the impact on you as much as possible, and please be reassured that we will do all we can to ensure you are able to successfully complete your doctoral programme. Should you have any queries then please contact the Doctoral College by emailing doctoralcollege@bath.ac.uk.

Best wishes,

Professor Jeremy Bradshaw,
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International and Doctoral)