

Dear doctoral students,

In the current uncertainty, and even with the very positive recent news giving us hope of a vaccination becoming available, it is clear that we must be prepared for pandemic-related limitations to extend well into 2021 and possibly beyond. It is therefore still very important that you are reviewing your research plans for the coming year and, where possible, re-planning any activity that may be impacted by the pandemic.

This approach is reinforced by the recent UKRI statement (UKRI have written to all Research Council-funded students on Wednesday 11 November 2020) regarding the second phase of funding extensions, specific to UKRI-funded students, which is limited primarily to students who have recently gone into their final year of study (funding end date before or on 30 Sept 2021), and only then on a needs-priority basis against a capped pot of funding. The funds awarded are limited and it is unlikely that any more will become available.

All students, especially in the early stages of their studies, must therefore continue to review their research plans with their supervision teams.

Your plans must aim for you to complete your studies irrespective of current/anticipated pandemic restrictions, and within your current period of funding. Although this is something that we have been recommending to all of you since the start of the lockdown in March - "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/changing your study, enabling you to continue your studies without having to suspend or lengthen your project" - this continues to be a priority.

It could mean adapting the research question, approach, or methodology, to enable you to still conduct a doctoral-level research project within the current restricted climate. This may result in your research project being significantly different from that originally proposed. We will also be writing to your supervision teams to encourage them to access help and advice from directors of studies in how to adapt/change elements of project plans to still allow you to reach a successful research goal. Where the opportunities for changing project plans are most difficult, we will work with your supervisors and directors of studies to try to find the best solution for you.

I want to also remind you of our previous advice of recording such changes in your six-monthly progress reviews - see <https://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/recording-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-your-doctoral-studies/>. It is even more important now.

I realise that the pandemic may have made your research experience different from the one you originally planned, and you may be disappointed. Our priority, however, is to work with you to help mitigate the impact of the pandemic and ensure that you can be supported through your studies within the resources available to reach a successful conclusion.

In the case of the potential extensions for UKRI-funded students, details on how to apply will be announced once we receive further information from UKRI.

With best wishes

Prof Jeremy Bradshaw
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International and Doctoral)