

Q Does the Peer Mentoring Scheme apply to DBA students as well?

Currently, the peer mentoring scheme does not apply to the DBA programme. If DBA students are interested in peer mentoring, then they should discuss this with the Peer Support Team within the Students' Union.

Q How will belonging and community be ensured for incoming doctoral students despite an increase in student working from home?

We anticipate that all campus-based students will be able to spend some time on campus.

Further, you can find details of Induction activities and online events at <https://www.bath.ac.uk/topics/doctoral-induction/>, including:

- All departments will have a PGR induction programme, mostly online. Many departments have set up a MS Teams site for their programmes to encourage peer-to-peer interaction across new students.
- Doctoral College are running online Doctoral Welcome sessions for new students. These sessions are designed for new students to meet other new students as well as ask experienced students questions.
- Doctoral College and SU are offering peer mentoring to new students. Peer mentoring will be online and will be done as group-based sessions, in addition to 1:1 sessions when needed.
- The Doctoral College have decided to run a 100% online events programme until January 2021. New students will be able to attend and present at research seminars, forums and online writing groups.

Q For questions that haven't been answered in this format, will there be written responses which deal specifically with the concerns expressed?

Yes.

Q Comments from Prof White are very welcome regarding the impact of CV on PhD research. With 5 months to understand and assess the variable impact of CV on PhD research will the university now differentially provide extensions and finance to individual students commensurate with individual circumstances?

When it comes to extensions to registration, all doctoral students can benefit from the COVID-19-specific, fee-free 3-month extension. Plus, they are all able to apply for an additional extension to their registration based upon their individual circumstances through the normal route. Please speak to your

programme administrator if you want to apply for an extension. The University has recently reviewed its position on funding support for University-funded students and a separate communication about this will be sent to all doctoral students in the next few days. We continue to review the situation and will look at other mechanisms to see if we can provide further support.

Q Could we please have a feedback questionnaire for this meeting? I do not feel reassured and I am very concerned about the future of PhD.

We are sorry that you are not reassured, and we encourage you to come forward with your specific concerns directly to your programme administrator, so that we can investigate ways in which we can help. The SU has just run a survey and they are providing feedback from the doctoral community as a whole. We are not planning to run a feedback questionnaire from the meeting, but we do welcome ongoing dialog through the SU for more general concerns and the programme administrators for specific issues. Please also be aware that Student Services are there to support you.

Q Have the university decided a number of plans for COVID second wave?

All COVID related plans at university level will be in accordance with the current government guidelines. The latest updates to the ongoing situation are found here:

<https://www.bath.ac.uk/topics/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Q How does the three-month extension works for self-funded students? Could you please explain this action more clearly. Thanks.

All doctoral students can benefit from the COVID-19-specific, fee-free 3-month thesis extension. You will be contacted at an appropriate time as you enter your final year of registration to ask if you would like to take up the offer of the 3-month extension, and it will then be added to your registration period as standard. You will not be charged any fees for the three months that are added. So, if your original programme was for 4 years, you will be allowed 4 years and 3 months to complete your studies. Please contact your programme administrator if this is not going to work for you, as there are many options that can be considered but they will need to be looked at on a case by case basis.

Q Can a formal framework (risk assessments etc.) for interdepartmental working be drafted to allow supervisors to OK this.

The return to campus work is currently being advanced and you will soon hear from your HoD about the plans for the return of more people over the next few weeks, including a health questionnaire and risk assessment. If you are not clear about the information from your department, please in the first instance talk with your supervisors and then with your director of studies. If your questions cannot be answered, then please ask your lead supervisor to liaise with your HoD about your particular

circumstances. If you are working across more than one department, please ask your supervisors to liaise with both HoDs.

Q Could you explain a bit on how each department is going to open? What is the strategy and how and when are we going to be allowed to go back to work?

You will hear from your HoD very soon on this matter. Please see the previous question.

Q When will final year students who applied for UKRI extensions find out if they have been granted?

We have been working through the list and if you are a final year student then you will have been informed by now. UKRI students who are not in their final year of funding, and who applied for an extension via our SharePoint form, will have also received a communication about their extension applications. If you have not heard, please contact your programme administrator.

Q Do we know when the university travel ban will be lifted in order to allow travel to other institutions for data collection? Other places are ready to welcome us safely back and to continue our work but we are unable to book travel with the ban in place.

The international travel ban has now been lifted. Any member of staff or doctoral student who wishes to travel abroad must seek formal approval from their Head of Department, must book their travel through the approved university travel agent, Clarity, and must complete the risk assessment process operated by Clarity. In addition to this, students intending to travel abroad in connection with their research must complete and submit the standard Fieldwork Risk Assessment form (<https://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/fieldwork-safety-standard-and-risk-assessment/>), as normal. This will be considered as part of the process of approval by the Head of Department.

Q Is the three-month extension for every doctoral student? Or, it is needed to applied

All doctoral students can benefit from the COVID-19-specific, fee-free 3-month extension. You will be contacted at an appropriate time as you enter your final year of registration to ask if you would like to have the 3-month extension, and if you accept the extension, it will then be added to your registration period as standard. Please contact your programme administrator if this is not going to work for you, as there are many options that can be considered but they will need to be looked at on a case by case basis.

Q Are there any updates as to when it will be possible to carry out in person human participant experiments?

This depends on the exact nature of your research and how it can be adapted in line with current regulations around social distancing. Please ask your supervisors to clarify this for you.

Q Follow up to Catherine: For purely experimental projects - how can we do fewer experiments whilst you're not adjusting the requirements? You say we should plan and do analysis... we don't have 6 months of analysis to do if we have no way to collect new data! What will the university do to help these students?

Students have been encouraged to find alternative ways to progress their research while their access to laboratories/facilities has been restricted. However, it is recognised that there will be some students who require access to laboratories/facilities to replace the restricted access over the past few months. We are currently looking at how this particular group can be supported, and we will make a separate announcement to explain this.

Q How is the University assessing how enforced home working may be disproportionately affecting people with protected characteristics, e.g. disabled students?

All our students are offered support from Student Services who actively work with academic colleagues to identify situations where students are experiencing difficulties. This support has continued during lockdown and students have fully engaged with virtual service delivery. Targeted support is provided to those who are identified as vulnerable e.g. Student Services have recently written to all disabled students reminding them of the support available and encouraging them to review their DAP in the context of the new learning environment.

Q Could I ask that the telephone contact number for the Doctoral College is reinstated as only having email communication is difficult when dealing with emotional issues, written conversations are cold. Having a contact number would be more humane

Yes, we are looking into this now. We are in the process of ensuring that all Doctoral College team members have their office phone linked to Teams, and we will update our Contacts web page when this is done. Please also note that all doctoral students are welcome to request meetings with individual programme administrators over Microsoft Teams.

Q How will space for doctoral students be preserved in the wake of the incoming undergraduate cohort and social distancing requirements?

The return to campus work is currently being advanced and you will soon hear from your HoD about the plans for the return of more people over the next few weeks.

The Doctoral College is currently also making changes to the Graduate Commons space in 10West to provide additional space reserved for doctoral students, in line with social distancing requirements.

Q How is our uni's strategy compared to other unis? Many unis have opened to allow PhD students to go back since end of last month. What are the special difficulties that delayed our campus to open?

Some of our doctoral students are back on campus. We have had a phased approach with the research laboratory access starting over the summer, and offices being opened up now and over the next few weeks following assessments of room occupancies to allow for social distancing. Our priority is careful assessment of the capacity so that we can open up safely and we will be in touch shortly about further reopening of offices and study spaces.

Q I'm wondering if Teaching Assistants have to deliver face to face seminars? Do we have a choice to choose online delivery?

This will depend on the specific tasks being undertaken and must be discussed with your department at the time that you take up a position.

Q When we are not able to be in our offices, can we have access to our pc equipment? My personal laptop is not high enough spec to support the kind of software I need to use for my research.

Yes, you should be able to have access to your pc remotely. Please contact DDAR (IT) about this.

Q Many students will lose income and potential academic employment experience this year through decreased GTA and service positions. Will the university acknowledge this loss of income and find other ways to support doctoral student financially and how will they ensure students remain competitive when they enter the job market (particularly the academic job market)?

We anticipate that there will be many GTA positions opening up over the next days and weeks.

Q I think what the VC just said about diversity of mechanisms for feedback underlines that there is a problem. All of the community I have discussed this with do not feel comfortable voicing concerns. Hence most questions here are anonymous. Citing past policies, which clearly have not worked as no material change in culture has yet to be witnessed. Is there a better plan to make people feel safe? No one feels at all reassured by what the VC said

We are sorry that you are not reassured, and we encourage you to come forward with your specific concerns directly to your programme administrator or your director of studies. Please also be aware that Student Services are there to support you. The SU has just run a survey and we encourage you to speak to your SU representative to help to voice your concerns and to gain reassurance.

Q People external to the university have been using the campus throughout the campus restart. I was even asked by a prospective student's mother to give her a tour. These people (families, dog walkers, teenagers) are using our facilities (toilets, grounds, cafes) without social distancing rules or signing risk assessments. How are they allowed onsite whilst the majority of postgraduate researchers are not? I have had to try and inform people myself, which is not my responsibility, please can the security teams take over!

Please do report any incidents such as this to security.

Q When will we here back about UKRI extensions for 2nd year PhD students?

UKRI students who are not in their final year of funding, and who applied for an extension via our SharePoint form, will have received a communication from the Doctoral College about their extension applications and the current position with UKRI. We are still waiting for UKRI to confirm how extension requests for the group covered by the 30 June survey will be dealt with. It is likely that they will be considered by UKRI on a case-by-case process but the funds, the mechanism and the process for doing so have yet to be confirmed.

Q Not just labs. Lots of students work in offices!

We have students who are campus based and some who work remotely. We try to consider all groups in our communications. However, some of those that are laboratory based have been particularly challenged in advancing their doctoral studies over the past few months. The return to campus offices is currently being advanced and you will soon hear from your HoD about the plans for the return of doctoral students over the next few weeks.

Q Are any additional fee-free extensions planned? The disruption is clear to extend beyond the initial 3-months extension. Will extensions take place after the end of the funded period? The current situation is not very useful for those affected by the lockdown but that cannot wait until their handing date to enjoy the extensions

We are considering how to support different groups of our doctoral students but we have no current plans to offer further fee-free extensions. Please contact your programme administrator if you want to explore the options available to you, as there are many that can be considered but they will need to be looked at on a case by case basis.

Q Working in offices is as important as labs. Most of our computing focused research are badly delayed during this lockdown. We have to re-direct original plan of research. This is not standard nor good for the long-term doctoral project.

We recognise this and we encourage you to bring your case forward to your supervisors and director of studies to see how you can be given access to the facilities you need, as we're working through the process of reopening offices.

Q For PGR who has 3 years funding instead of 4 years official programme, can he/she utilise the 3-month fee-waived period after his/her funding ends? How to go about to utilise the waive?

All doctoral students can benefit from the COVID-19-specific, fee-free 3-month extension. You will be contacted at an appropriate time as you enter your final year of registration to ask if you would like to have the 3-month extension, and it will then be added to your registration period as standard. The length of funding for a programme is often less than the maximum programme length, as the studentship length is funder specific. We encourage you to bring your specific circumstances to the attention of your programme administrator, so that your specific funding arrangements can be reviewed and the options available to you explored.

Q The University's planning has been based around predictions of a very large financial shortfall due to reduced student fee income. Now that new student intake looks likely to be higher than normal, the financial situation should be much better. Given that, what plans are there to extend University studentships, provide new studentships, and to provide fee waivers and other targeted support?

We are continually reviewing the situation and considering how to support different groups of our doctoral students. The University has recently reviewed its position on funding support for University-funded students and a separate communication about this will be sent to all doctoral students in the next few days.

Q The three month extension only adds to the registration (i.e. the end of the write up period) this provides no support for the many students who have lost significant lab/fieldwork data collection time. What will the university do to support these students?

We are considering how to support different groups of our doctoral students. Each is in a slightly different situation and we encourage you to bring your specific circumstances to the attention of your programme administrator who can talk through the options that are available. Requests will need to be reviewed on a case by case basis, as students' funding arrangements will need to be taken into account. We can also explore whether an additional standard extension is needed to recover time lost due to the pandemic.

Q I agree in principle that extensions should be given on a case-by-case basis, but I also have a lot of concerns about using the hardship fund as the mechanism to do this. It sounds like - 'wait until you are in real trouble before you can find out whether you can get any financial or practical support'. Can you give us any more reassurance that most hardship fund applications are successful and the average amount of money that has been provided so far?

The hardship fund has specific criteria and supports a certain group of students. We cannot provide details of the amount of money allocated, but we can say that there has been a generous response from our donors, and we are very grateful for the support it provides. The University has recently reviewed its position on funding support for University-funded students and a separate communication about this will be sent to all doctoral students in the next few days.

Q in the wellbeing support slides you mentioned that the university has provided support through hardship funding (paid for by Alumni) and mentoring (a free student -student initiative) what monetary support is the University putting in place to help the wellbeing of doctoral students, or is all of the support funded by others?

We are very grateful to the generous donors to the hardship funding, many of whom are alumni. The University has recently reviewed its position on funding support for University-funded students and a separate communication about this will be sent to all doctoral students in the next few days.

The university also provides other aspects of support:

The University has recently launched the Be Well – Talk Now scheme, which is delivered by an external partner Spectrum Life on behalf of [Student Services](http://www.bath.ac.uk/professional-services/student-services/) (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/professional-services/student-services/>) who oversee and monitor the quality of the service.

Students can contact a trained welfare adviser by phone, video call or live chat from anywhere in the world, who will be able to support them with any problems they are facing.

This service will be available to all students but is particularly useful for those that find it difficult to access our normal services including:

- students off campus
- students requiring support out of hours
- students on placement anywhere in the world
- students who would like counselling in their first language including: Mandarin, Italian, German, Lithuanian, Polish and Russian
- postgraduate research students
- students studying at a doctoral training partner
- distance learners

For students currently in the UK, follow up support is available for more complex issues, including counselling in multiple languages. This service also offers access to counsellors from a diverse range of backgrounds.

For students on campus or for those that would prefer to speak to someone in person, we still recommend our [Wellbeing Service](https://www.bath.ac.uk/professional-services/wellbeing-service/) (<https://www.bath.ac.uk/professional-services/wellbeing-service/>) in the first instance who offer appointments every day of the year.

For more information and contact details, please visit the [Talk Now webpage](http://www.bath.ac.uk/campaigns/be-well-talk-now/) (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/campaigns/be-well-talk-now/>).

Q Is there any recognition of the fact that the impact of the lockdown isn't limited to the period we've been away from the university? The talk of three-month extensions is already insufficient to cover the ~five months we've been away. For those of us beginning to return to the laboratory, we've very much still impacted by lab capacity and working hour limitations. As such, despite an apparent return to work, our research is very much impacted and restricted. When will this be factored into the calculation for funding and extension requirements?

The impact of COVID19 is clearly long-term and is different for each individual. We do not underestimate this and we have been working tirelessly to mitigate the impact as best we can. In addition to the COVID-19, fee-free 3-month extension, which is available to all students, we have granted many additional extensions, both to thesis submission and confirmation deadlines, to students affected by the lockdown. The University has recently reviewed its position on funding support for University-funded students and a separate communication about this will be sent to all doctoral students in the next few days.

Q Does the university recognise much of the bad sentiment coming from the doctoral community stems from the handling of communication at the beginning of this pandemic? If you do recognise this, has the university reviewed what happened and put in place a proper structure for the coming winter when we know things will get worse?

The start of the pandemic posed great challenges for communication and we found that the changing parameters cascading down to us (e.g. evolving situation with government guidelines emerging) meant that freshly prepared communications were rapidly out of date. We still managed to continue to send information on a weekly basis through the Doctoral Digest, and we implemented a dedicated webpage for doctoral students and made sure that our communications were uploaded there and that they were clear and correct. Bath was commended for our web-based doctoral communication by the Office for Students.

Q What about people whose research is not lab based? We are trying to carry on at home but working environments are often very difficult and substantially affecting physical and mental health. When will I be allowed back into my office?

The return to campus work is being advanced and you will soon hear from your HoD about the plans for the return of more doctoral students over the next few weeks.

Q As a follow up to what Prof. Jeremy Bradshaw addressed about extensions, that currently extensions cannot be provided to everyone but is, however, a "work in progress". Is there a way we can make this progress transparent so we understand what is going on?

Making changes to the regulations or financial arrangements requires meticulous consideration of the potential implications. We would not wish to raise expectations by publicising any initiative before we are sure that it will actually happen. The University has recently reviewed its position on funding support for University-funded students and a separate communication about this will be sent to all doctoral students in the next few days.

The following three questions have been grouped together as they're asking about the same issue.

Q Many PhD students will not be able to complete their research without funded support. Surely funded extensions are the responsibility of the university to ensure that we don't waste the funding provided so far? Does the university not have a responsibility to find the money to support its students and staff?

Q I'm really concerned about the reliance on the hardship fund. This is not a form of long-term planning and it pushes people into desperate situations, adding considerable stress to an already extremely difficult period. The university accepts that our research is affected, so it should maintain its commitment to financially supporting students. Why is the university unable to provide funding and fee waivers? Has this been costed? The university has a duty of care to provide this.

Q We have just heard that there is no additional support available but that the burden falls entirely on us PhD students to achieve the same high standards. How is this an acceptable approach?

We are considering how to support different groups of our doctoral students. Each is in a slightly different situation and we encourage you to bring your specific circumstances to the attention of your programme administrator who can talk through the options that are available. Requests will need to be reviewed on a case by case basis, as students' funding arrangements will need to be taken into account. The University has recently reviewed its position on funding support for University-funded students and a separate communication about this will be sent to all doctoral students in the next few days.