



## NWSSDTP 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 committed to in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

### Extension Request Rounds to Date

There have been the following opportunities for NWSSDTP 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 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021
- *Phase 1.5 (Dec 2020)*: A NWSSDTP initiative, for DTP students with an end date after 30<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> April - 30<sup>th</sup> 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 £69,038.54 to the NWSSDTP from Phase 1 underspend, to support further funding extensions due to COVID-19. This can support 14 x 3 Month Studentship Extensions for our students. Beyond this, the NWSSDTP 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.

### NWSSDTP COVID-19 Extension Policy

1. Any student commencing their NWSSDTP studentship before September 2021 can apply for a Phase 3 Studentship Extension.
2. 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.

3. There will be four deadlines a year. Upcoming deadlines will be:

- 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021
- 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021
- 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022
- 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022
- 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022
- 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022

Applications should be submitted to [nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk)

4. 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 (CASE) 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.

5. 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 project<sup>1</sup>.

6. 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.

7. The ESRC 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 1). You must be able to justify why you need the length of time you request.

8. All cases will require a supporting signature from the primary supervisor. If there is information that you are not confident disclosing to your supervisor, please contact the NWSSDTP [nwssdtp@liv.ac.uk](mailto:nwssdtp@liv.ac.uk) to discuss alternative arrangements.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 read the QAA's advice on its [website](#).

9. 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).
10. Extension requests will be assessed by the NWSSDTP Manager and the relevant Institutional Lead.
11. Should a student wish to appeal, a notification of appeal should be sent in writing to the NWSSDTP 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 NWSSDTP 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 NWSSDTP Director.

### **Sick leave**

The ESRC 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

Find out more in the 'student health and well-being' section of the [guidance for doctoral students supported by UKRI](#). 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.

### **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.

Find out more in the 'part-time students' section of our [guidance for doctoral students supported by UKRI](#).

## **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.

Find out more in the [guidance for doctoral students supported by UKRI](#).

**Please direct any queries to [nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk)**