



Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
<p>1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed</p>	<p>UKRI COVID-19 Doctoral Extensions Policy: Further action to support doctoral students (March 2021)</p>
<p>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</p>	<p>Aim: To provide further flexibility and funding to research organisations (ROs) and UKRI training grant holders (TGHs) to support costed extensions for UKRI students so that those most in need can complete their studies to a doctoral standard and be paid to do so.</p> <p>Our earlier interventions, announced April and November 2020, provided funding for extensions of up to six-months for UKRI-funded doctoral students due to finish their funded period between 1 March 2020 and 31 March 2021 (Phase 1) and support for students with a funding date after the 31 March 2021 targeted at those who find it most difficult to adjust their projects and complete within their current funding period (Phase 2). This included students who recently entered their final year of funding (with a funding end date on or before 30 September 2021), disabled students, those with a long-term illness and neurodivergent students, or those who had caring responsibilities.</p> <p>This further action to support UKRI-funded students includes allocation (via training grants) of £7M underspend assigned to Phase 1 and giving TGH the flexibility to use existing training and cohort development budgets and to reduce planned investment in recruitment by up to 10% of the 2021/22 commitment to new studentships to support extensions.</p> <p>The eligibility criteria for accessing extension funding have been relaxed in this new action,</p>

	<p>such that all UKRI-funded students can request funded extensions. Funding will continue to be targeted to those students most in need, in line with previous Phases of support.</p> <p>Without this further support, there is a high risk that students' health and wellbeing will suffer further. This would be detrimental to their career aspirations, undermine the investment the student and UKRI have already made in their development and be a loss to the future research and innovation workforce.</p>
<p>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? <i>(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</i></p>	<p>We announced on 22 February 2021 that we were earmarking a £7M underspend from Phase 1 into continuing support for students. In this announcement, we indicated that we would consult training grant holders and research organisations on the flexibilities. Additionally, we sent a letter to all our students with the same information. Other ongoing engagement included with PVC-Rs from different universities and the Mission groups.</p> <p>We wrote to all training grant holders and ROs with UKRI students asking for feedback on the options presented around flexibility and reduction in recruitment. Webinars were held – both at UKRI- and individual discipline Council-level – seeking more detailed input on the options.</p>
<p>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>UKRI-funded doctoral students.</p> <p>Other doctoral students in the UK if universities and other funders follow a similar policy of offering extensions.</p> <p>Potential applicants to UKRI-funded studentships commencing 2021/22 (and 22/23)</p>
<p>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>Training Grant Holders will be required to report on these further actions through annual reporting to UKRI. Additional questions will be added to the standard annual report form to capture relevant data and information.</p>

Summary of issues that may lead to disadvantage

Issues	Mitigation
<p>Students are having to adjust and re-plan their work to reflect the impact of working through the pandemic. The stage the student is at in their studies and their personal circumstances may mean the level of adjustment they are able to make is constrained and they are still unable to complete within their funded period.</p> <p>Disabled students, those with long-term illness and neurodivergent students or those with caring responsibilities may be less able to change their working hours to access facilities.</p> <p>Vulnerable and very vulnerable groups may be advised to not work outside the home or are otherwise more cautious about engaging with research work in shared environments.</p> <p>Some students or their families may be ill with COVID-19</p> <p>Some students may be marginalised or less connected with their research groups and research communities. For example, Autistic students and those with high anxiety may struggle to form new communities (or reform them in a new format) and the move to online may have exacerbated this.</p> <p>Greater impact on lower income families; family members more likely to be at risk of Covid-19 working in public facing roles.</p> <p>Loss of income from other family members, leading to the need to find higher paid work.</p> <p>Potential loss of co-funding from some partner organisations</p> <p>Reduction in training and cohort development will limit the opportunities of students to gain the breadth of skills needed/expected from doctoral education.</p>	<p>The policy opens our support to all UKRI-funded students, continuing to target funding to those who have found it most difficult to adjust their projects and complete within their current funding period. This includes, not exhaustively, students in their final year of studies, disabled students, those with a long-term illness and neurodivergent students, or those who have caring responsibilities.</p> <p>UKRI is developing council-specific guidance on how any additional funding can be released from existing training grants (through reductions in training and cohort development budgets or in investments in future cohorts). These guidelines will be co-created with training grant holders. As with Phases 1 and 2 grant holders will be expected to ensure their processes will provide open, transparent and equal access for all students.</p> <p>ROs and/or TGHs are encouraged to provide students with contact details of alternative professional staff in case students do not wish to disclose sensitive personal issues to training grant holders and/or supervisors.</p> <p>Web guidance issued 11 November provides guidance on supporting students who have had periods of long-term absence. Sickness and shielding guidance was updated on 22 February 2021.</p> <p>Web guidance issued 11 November: Additional costs include costs for home working.</p> <p>UKRI will continue to encourage grant holders to seek contributions from students' co-funders for extensions.</p> <p>Training grant holders are expected to identify any reductions in training or cohort development opportunities in consultation with their strategic advisors, leadership teams and student representatives, to ensure that such reductions are limited and do not impact on key activities or differentially impact or reduce inclusion for particular student groups.</p>

Reduction in student recruitment in future years will limit UKRI-funded opportunities for doctoral education

Reduction in student recruitments will only be undertaken as a last resort. Training grant holders will need to demonstrate transparent, open and merit-based recruitment practices continue, and monitor the diversity of students being recruited. We will engage closely with them on this positively intervening if the data indicate particular groups are disproportionately impacted.

Protected Characteristic Group	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
Disability	Possible	<p>May have a negative impact on any student who is now required to declare a disability which they might not have otherwise needed to declare e.g. mental health or invisible disabilities which may now require additional new support in a home environment. For example, students may now need a notetaker or interpreter which was not necessary in face to face communication.</p> <p>There is potential for a negative impact on those with ill-health that may make them more susceptible to Covid-19 and are therefore advised to take extra precautions. Our review has found that some may value the ability to work at home.</p> <p>Potential for negative impact for those with existing, new or exacerbated mental health and wellbeing issues feeling that they are unable to speak-up to request an extension and therefore not getting the support they need.</p> <p>Potential for negative impact for students who may be less able to keep in touch with their research group and community. For example, deaf students have reported they are being excluded from online friendship/networking groups as they have no</p>	<p>Training grant holders are expected to follow the same principles as those set out in the Phase 2 policy. This includes the need to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> have in place open, transparent and inclusive allocation processes and ensure the decision-making panel includes the expertise required to make decisions on the diversity of student circumstances. <p>It is suggested they include the Disability Support Team and student support services in the decision-making process.</p> <p>They are also required to ensure the process is not onerous for the students and where data protection laws allow, they should avoid requiring students to resubmit medical evidence they have previously provided to the RO.</p> <p>ROs need to identify an alternative professional if the student does not want to disclose information to their training grant holder or supervisor.</p> <p>Web guidance issued 11 November: Additional costs include costs for home working and for disabled students and those with additional needs they may call on the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).</p>

		<p>access to captions or interpreters for what is categorised as non-academic.</p> <p>Potential negative impact for students who may need additional support to be able to work from home or be less able than others to resume their doctoral work. For example, some autistic students may need additional support to return to face to face teaching and research after lockdown.</p> <p>Potential for students to find the process of seeking an extension stressful further exacerbating their condition.</p> <p>Reduction in the number of students recruited into future programmes may impact negatively on groups who are already under-represented in UKRI cohorts.</p>	<p>Web Guidance 11 November: on supporting students who have had periods of long-term absence.</p> <p>Training Grant Holders should ensure that any support they provide students online (e.g. training or virtual networking) is as inclusive as possible.</p> <p>Training Grant Holders are required to use open, merit-based and transparent approaches to recruitment, monitor the diversity of people they shortlist, interview and offer places to. We will review the monitoring data carefully to gauge the impact of the recruitment reductions on under-represented groups. If necessary, we will intervene positively as permitted under law to target recruitment to under-represented groups.</p>
<p>Gender reassignment</p>	<p>Possible - unlikely</p>	<p>It is possible that the need for an extension may have a negative impact on those who are transitioning and may now need to declare this within their institution.</p>	<p>ROs need to identify an alternative professional if the student does not want to disclose information to their training grant holder or supervisor.</p>

Marriage or civil partnership	Unlikely	It is not expected that this will have an impact.	
Pregnancy and maternity	Possible	<p>It is possible that there may be a negative impact on those students who are pregnant or are expecting that will now fall during any extension period and may need to now declare to their supervisor.</p> <p>It is possible that there may be a positive impact on those who are pregnant that may now receive maternity pay owing to the extension which they might not have received if their PhD completed as planned.</p>	The offer of an extension (not mandatory) and through a case by case approach.
Race	Possible	<p>Students from a minority ethnic background, or their families, may be more likely to suffer serious ill health due to Covid-19, in part due to more likely to work in public-facing roles.</p> <p>Culturally some ethnic groups are more likely to live with their parents and extended relations.</p> <p>Reduction in the number of students recruited into future programmes may impact negatively on groups who are already under-represented in UKRI cohorts.</p>	<p>Training grant holders are expected to follow the same principles as those set out in the Phase 2 policy. This includes the need requirement to have in place open, transparent and inclusive review processes which recognises individual students' personal circumstances.</p> <p>Training Grant Holders are required to use open, merit-based and transparent approaches to recruitment, monitor the diversity of people they shortlist, interview and offer places to. We will review the monitoring data careful to gauge the impact of the recruitment reductions on under-represented groups. If necessary, we will intervene positively as permitted under law to target recruitment to</p>

			under-represented groups.
Religion or belief	Unlikely	It is not expected that this will have a major impact, although some people may be more marginalised with their research group and community.	
Sexual orientation	Unlikely	It is not expected that this will have a major impact, but people may be less comfortable working from home or be worried about disclosing information on their personal life not previously shared. This may have the potential to exacerbate existing anxiety and mental health concerns.	
Sex (gender)	Possible - likely	It is possible that there will be a negative impact on women who are more likely to have caring/childcare responsibilities.	<p>The policy indicates that extensions should be given on a needs priority basis and specifically identifies students with caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Training Grant Holders are required to use open, merit-based and transparent approaches to recruitment, monitor the diversity of people they shortlist, interview and offer places to. We</p>

			will review the monitoring data carefully to gauge the impact of the recruitment reductions on under-represented groups. If necessary, we will intervene positively as permitted under law to target recruitment to under-represented groups.
Age	Possible – likely	<p>There is a possible negative indirect impact in terms of future career progression owing to completing later than originally expected and possible reduction in training and development opportunities.</p> <p>There is a possible negative impact to those who are older if they are clinically vulnerable and advised to stay at home.</p>	<p>The extension is not mandatory and the length is flexible.</p> <p>The policy indicates that extensions should be given on a needs priority basis and specifically identifies disabled students and those with long term illness.</p>

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification
Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	The Covid-19 pandemic will affect doctoral students differently. This policy seeks to support those students who will find it most difficult to adjust their projects and complete within their current funding period such as students in their final year, disabled students, those with long term illness and neurodivergent students, or those who have caring responsibilities.

Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will proceed .	X	The implementation has been developed and modified based on the EIA.
2. You can decide to stop the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups		
3. You can adapt or change the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias		
4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy or practice (e.g. in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore, you are going to proceed with caution with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.		

Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	Yes, it will be published alongside the policy announcement.
Date completed:	17 March 2021
Review date (if applicable):	