UK Research and Innovation

Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	UKRI COVID-19 Doctoral Extensions Policy Phase 2
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	Aim: To provide additional funding to research organisations (ROs) to support costed extensions for UKRI students not covered by our earlier intervention. Our earlier intervention, announced April 9 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 who had been affected by the pandemic.

The Phase 2 policy is intended to focus support on those students who will find it most difficult to adjust their projects and complete within their current funding period, such as students who have 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 have caring responsibilities.

Without additional funding there is a high risk that they will drop out and/or their 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.

The funding will be allocated to ROs through a block grant award. They will be required to put in place a process for allocating the funding on a needs priority basis. |

3. **What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy?** *(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)*	When we announced our additional funding for final year students in April 2020, we committed to reviewing the policy to consider any further impacts to doctoral training that need to be taken in to account. As part of this review we engaged extensively with key stakeholders. This included a wide cross-section of students, training grant holders and research organisations. We also met with a group of students who authored an open letter highlighting the concerns of disabled students, those with long term illness and neurodivergence and held individual meetings with others living with long term illness. We engaged with the National Association of Disability Practitioners and UKRI advisory groups. This engagement directly informed the development of this policy.
4. **Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?**	UKRI-funded doctoral students whose funding end date is after the 1 April 2021 and therefore not covered by our policy for final year students. Other doctoral students in the UK if universities and other funders follow a similar policy of offering extensions.
5. **What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?**	ROs will be required to provide details on which students have been granted extensions, why, and for how long. This input will be linked to the student details already on Je-S to allow monitoring by age, disability, sex (gender) and ethnicity. Training grant holders are asked to ensure the Je-S diversity data is up to date. More broadly the impact of the policy will be reviewed as part of the UKRI evaluation of COVID-19 Research stabilisation interventions which is a joint UKRI/BEIS evaluation.

Summary of issues that may lead to disadvantage

Issues	Mitigation
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. 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. 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. Some students or their families may be ill with COVID-19 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. Greater impact on lower income families; family members more likely to be at risk of Covid-19 working in public facing roles. Loss of income from other family members, leading to the need to find higher paid work. Potential loss of co-funding from some partner organisations	The policy focusses our support on those students for whom our Review has found will find 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. UKRI has set clear expectations for how ROs should deliver the additional funding in the Terms and Conditions. ROs are asked to confirm they will follow the UKRI process in their Governance Plan and set out how their process will ensure open and equal access for all students. ROs 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. Web guidance issued 11 November provides guidance on supporting students who have had periods of long-term absence. Web guidance issued 11 November: Additional costs include costs for home working. UKRI will continue to encourage grant holders to seek contributions from students' co-funders for extensions.

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	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. 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. 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. 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	ROs are required to complete a Governance Plan confirming they will have open, transparent and inclusive allocation processes. Including that they will ensure the decision-making panel includes the expertise required to make decisions on the diversity of student circumstances. It is suggested they include the Disability Support Team and student support services in the decision-making process. 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. ROs need to identify an alternative professional if the student does not want to disclose information to their training grant holder or supervisor. 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).

		friendship/networking groups as they have no access to captions or interpreters for what is categorised as non-academic. 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. Potential for students to find the process of seeking an extension stressful further exacerbating their condition.	In addition, we are reviewing our DSA guidelines to ensure they fully recognise the impact of the pandemic. Web Guidance 11 November: on supporting students who have had periods of long-term absence. Our Review recommends to ROs that all online training and virtual networks needs to be inclusive and follow good practice in EDI.
Gender reassignment	Possible - unlikely	It is possible that the need for an extension may have a negative impact on those who are in the process of transitioning and may now need to declare this within their institution.	ROs need to identify an alternative professional if the student does not want to disclose information to their training grant holder or supervisor.

Marriage or civil partnership	Unlikely	It is not expected that this will have an impact.	
Pregnancy and maternity	Possible	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. 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.	The offer of an extension (not mandatory) and through a case by case approach.
Race	Possible	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. Culturally some ethnic groups are more likely to live with their parents and extended relations.	ROs are required to complete a Governance Plan confirming they will ensure open, transparent and inclusive review processes which recognises individual students' personal circumstances.
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.	The policy indicates that extensions should be given on a needs priority basis and specifically identifies students with caring responsibilities.
Age	Possible – likely	There is a possible negative indirect impact in terms of future career progression owing to completing later than originally expected. There is a possible negative impact to those who are older if they are clinically vulnerable and advised to stay at home.	The extension is not mandatory and the length is flexible. The policy indicates that extensions should be given on a needs priority basis and specifically identifies disabled students and those with long term illness.

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:	6 November 2020
Review date (if applicable):	