GUIDANCE ON COMPLETING THE UKRI COVID-19 PHASE 2 TRAINING GRANT GOVERNANCE PLAN

The text below sets out how UKRI expects Research Organisations (ROs) to deliver the COVID-19 Phase 2 Training Grant allocation.

You should use the Governance Plan form to:

- Confirm your agreement to the UKRI process and expectations
- answer the specific question in section 2 regarding equal access to the funding.

The Governance Plan must not exceed two sides of A4.

Please do not use any personal identifiers or provide information on individual students.

We are asking for the Governance Plan to be returned to UKRI by **Monday 7 December**. The intention is that we will be able to issue confirmation of the funding before the end of the year to enble you to implement the process and provide support to students as early in 2021 as possible.

Guidance Notes

Background

This funding is to provide support for extensions for UKRI-funded doctoral students who are unable to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their research project to complete within their funded period. It should be allocated on a **needs-priority basis**.

The UKRI Review identified that students who have recently gone into their final year of study are likely to find it most difficult to adapt and adjust their research to complete within their funded period. We consider these final year students to be those with a funding end date on or before 30 September 2021. It also recognised that for some students in other stages of their doctoral studies, for example disabled students, students with long-term illness, those who are neurodivergent, or who have caring responsibilities, project adaptation and mitigation may be more difficult. This may be the case even when additional support, such as Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), has been provided. The funding provided via the Phase 2 training grant is not intended to cover 'time lost' due to COVID-19, but rather to address circumstances where, even with adjustments and mitigation, the student will be unable to complete their doctoral research within the funding period.

You should refer to the *UKRI COVID-19 guidance for studentships* and the *UKRI Terms and Conditions for COVID-19 Phase 2 Doctoral Extensions Funding* to ensure that you are following the UKRI criteria and conditions for allocation of the funding to UKRI-funded students.

We expect this funding to be managed centrally by the RO and this Governance Plan asks you to either **confirm you will follow the process and expectations described below or outline how you will meet the expectations through an equivalent process** for allocating these funds. Importantly, the RO process must provide UKRI with assurance that the funds will be distributed fairly and in accordance with the Terms and Conditions and guidance we have provided. The funding may not be sufficient to support all UKRI-funded students who are eligible to receive it and it is essential that there are robust processes in

place to make decisions on a needs-priority basis for those who cannot adapt their research to mitigate against the impact of the pandemic.

UKRI will assess the Governance Plan and will confirm funding once we are assured of the process you will be following.

Section 1: Overall framework and governance

We recognise that ROs will already have in place decision-making bodies for considering COVID-19 and/or other extensions for doctoral students, therefore we do not require you to put in place additional structures. However, we will need confirmation that the structures meet our requirements for the allocation of this funding.

This section describes the decision-making process that your organisation will need to have in place to prioritise use of the allocation.

You should indicate **'yes' in the box provided on the form** to confirm that the process you will implement aligns with the process described below and meet UKRI's expectations for allocating the COVID-19 Phase 2 funding. You are also confirming that the funding will be allocated on a **needs-priority** basis.

If you will need to take a different approach, for any stage, please indicate this in the form.

Required process

Communication
You are confirming that you will implement a process which will enable all eligible UKRI-funded students, including those registered at your organisation but not necessarily based at your organisation, to have equal access to the funding. The communication strategy should ensure that information regarding the funding opportunity reaches all eligible students and gives them enough time to apply. Wherever possible, we would encourage you to use the published UKRI wording in any communications to ensure consistency of approach with other ROs.

Application process
An accessible application process must be developed for students to apply for the funding. You must clearly set out to potential appplicants:

- who is eligible
- what support might be available to them
- the information they need to provide to make the case
- what the deadline(s) are for applying
- who they should approach with queries
- how the application will be assessed and by what body or bodies
- when and how they will be notified of the outcome
- the complaints or appeals process.

You are confirming that the application process will have due regard to the need to account for public money without creating undue stress or pressure on the students who are applying for the funding. It will not be too onerous nor ask for information beyond that needed to consider the application fairly. It is expected that you will ask what steps have been taken to mitigate and why mitigation has not been possible or why it has been insufficient. We are

not specifying what evidence you will ask students to provide as you are best placed to make this decision.

The process should enable students from all disciplines to make a case for support on an equal basis. You are not required to meet a prescribed disciplinary balance but, this is a UKRI allocation and you are confirming that the process will be open and fair to all students, irrespective of discipline.

Where data protection laws allow, we expect you to seek to minimise the new evidence that students need to provide e.g. for students who have a pre-existing condition. We also ask you to ensure that you can consider applications from students who are unable to provide evidence due to pressures on the NHS.

You are confirming that the process will give due regard to those who have reduced access to information and support, e.g. who are part-time due to caring responsibilities, and you should provide enough time for them to apply. We also expect that the mechanism, e.g. online form, by which the students will apply will be easily accessible to all students.

You are confirming that you will create a safe environment for students to disclose the information necessary to make their case. Research Organisations need to identify an alternative professional if the student does not want to disclose information to their training grant holder or supervisor.

We expect the application process to outline the engagement required from the supervisor or training grant award holder in supporting the student's application. Please see annex 1 for further information about engagement of training grant holders which you should address in developing your process.

You are confirming that the assessment criteria for making the awards will be made available to applicants and to those who will be supporting them through the application process. You should make clear to applicants how many stages of decision-making there will be and who will be involved at each stage.

Decision-making
You may have more than one stage of decision-making but, you must confirm that one of these stages will be a cross-disciplinary panel. Disciplinary representation in the decision-making must be reflective of the student body which will be applying for funding. Membership of this decision-making body must be developed with full consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion. You should confirm that members will be briefed appropriately to ensure an equitable process for all applicants which mitigates against any potential bias in decisions.

It is not permissible to simply distribute this funding across schools or departments etc, there must be a process which enables consistent and fair assessment of applications from across the RO.

The decision-making process must include members with the expertise to consider the needs of disabled students, students with long-term illness, those who are neurodivergent, or who have caring responsibilities. For example, this may include members of the RO's Disability Team and the Head of Student Services, or equivalent.

You are confirming that the decision-making process will enable consideration of why the student has been unable to adapt their research project and mitigate the impact of the

pandemic. The allocation is not to make up 'time lost': it is to ensure there is enough time available to complete their research to a doctoral standard within their funding period. The majority of requests should be for **up to** 3 months, you should have a clear process in place for deciding circumstances in which students may receive awards for longer than 3 months.

If you are proposing more than one round of applications, you are confirming that you will ensure equity across the different rounds.

Queries and complaints
You are confirming that you will have a clear and transparent process for dealing with queries throughout, that all applicants will be informed of the outcome, and there will be a complaints or appeals process available to them.

As noted above, please confirm your agreement by indictating 'yes' in the 'overall framework and governance' box on the form (section 1). If you need to provide additional information, please do so in the box provided.

Section 2: Assurance on equality of assessment

Organisations are best-placed to determine priorities for additional support for students on a needs-priority basis.

In this section, **we are asking you to state the approach** your organisation will take to ensure that decision-makers are able to make fair comparisons between, for example, the impact of lack of access to laboratories or lack of access to archives or inability to conduct fieldwork and the needs of disabled students, students with long-term illness, those who are neurodivergent, or who have caring responsibilities, for whom project adaptation and mitigation may be more difficult.

Please indicate the support and guidance that will be in place for decision-makers to enable them to make a fair assessment of very different cases for support.

You must describe the approach or process in enough detail to provide the necessary assurance.

Section 3: Funding and Reporting Processes

Funding Process

We need assurance that the RO can implement the funding process as set out below. **Please confirm the RO's agreement by indicating 'yes' in the box provided in the Governance Plan (section 3).**

It is expected that successful students will be funded directly from the COVID-19 Phase 2 Training Grant with payment made from the next available quarter (noting students are paid in advance, not arrears). The Phase 2 Training Grant will be active for one-year (between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022) and all payments need to have been made before the Phase 2 Training Grant end date. You should confirm that there is no underspend to draw on before authorising payment from the Phase 2 Training Grant.

The student stipend (or equivalent) should be paid at level of UKRI-funding they would have received for this period from the 'home' Training Grant (the grant from which the student is normally funded). There is an exception for EPSRC Incorporated students and the level of

support for these students must be agreed by EPSRC[1]. If the student is co-funded, only the UKRI contribution may be drawn from this COVID-19 Phase 2 Training Grant. If the student receives a higher stipend from UKRI funding, this can be drawn from the COVID-19 Phase 2 Training Grant. Fees drawn from the COVID-19 Phase 2 Training Grant must be at the level which would have been paid from the home Training Grant for this period. These funding levels should be confirmed by the home Training Grant.

If the student has reached, or is due to reach, their end date, the new end date (as a result of the COVID-19 Phase 2 extension) needs to be recorded on the home Training Grant. For example, if the end date was 30 June 2021 and this allocation provides funding for a two-month extension then the end date on the home Training Grant needs to be amended to 31 August 2021. A note should be added to the home award that the studentship has received an extension from the COVID-19 Phase 2 Training Grant.

If the student has not yet reached the end date of their studentship award, the payment must be **suspended** on the home Training Grant for the period in which they are funded from the COVID-19 Phase 2 Training Grant. As above, the end date would be amended on the home Training Grant to reflect the extension and a note added to the student record.

You must ensure that no duplicate funding is provided for students i.e. they must not receive funds from both the home training grant and COVID-19 Phase 2 Training Grant for the same time period.

Reporting

We need assurance that the RO will meet the reporting requirements, as set out below. **Please confirm the RO's agreement by indicating 'yes' in the box provided in the Governance Plan.**

All students receiving funding from the COVID-19 Phase 2 Training Grant need to be recorded against the COVID-19 Phase 2 Training Grant Je-S record in the usual way. Each student's record should show the start and end date of the funding period from the award and the amount of funding received. In the example above, it would show that the [name] student was funded from 1 July 2021 to 31 August 2021 and £[X] in fees and £[Y]was drawn from the Grant. This will help with the reconciliation process at the end of the award and will be used for monitoring purposes.

The Je-S record will not show Research Council or discipline and it will be necessary to report on this separately. We may ask for an interim report to check the initial allocation for each student. You will be required to submit a final report confirming funding details and the process you followed in making the allocation. Our starting point will be to extract the data from Je-S, which therefore needs to be accurate.

A Final Expenditure Statement will be required in the usual way.

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[1] EPSRC CDT directors received guidance on the UKRI contributions as part of the final-year extension guidance. Please use this same guidance. Requests for copies or queries on this topic should be directed to students@epsrc.ukri.org

Authorisation

The Governance Plan needs to be authorised by someone within the RO who can accept the process and risk on behalf of the RO. The responsible owner should sign and date the completed form.

Annex 1

Engagement of Training grant award holders

We expect you to have a clear process for engaging all relevant Training Grant award holders, i.e. the grants from which the students are funded currently.

It is expected that the home training grant holder will confirm if students are eligible and that they have not already received a UKRI-funded extension under the initial UKRI policy. Once a prioritised list of students has been determined for funded extensions, the RO should determine if the home training grant has any existing underspend - underspend should be used before drawing on the COVID-19 Phase 2 Training Grant allocation to ensure all available funds are utilised fully. The availability or otherwise of training grant underspend should not influence or contribute to the decision-making process.

The home Training Grant should confirm that funding will be available to support research costs as these will not be supported from the COVID-19 Phase 2 Training Grant.

Governance Plan Template – UKRI COVID-19 Phase 2 Doctoral Extensions

Organisation name	
Allocation (£)	
Principal investigator	*Responsible owner of the COVID-19 Phase 3 Training Grant*

Section 1: Overall framework and governance	
Please confirm agreement to the framework and governance	
If you will be implementing a different process, please specify here:	
Section 2: Assurance on equality of assessment	
*In this section, **we are asking you to state the mechanism** by which your organisation will ensure that decision-makers are able to make fair comparisons.*	

Section 3: Agreement and authorisation

Please confirm agreement to the Funding Process	
Please confirm agreement to the Reporting Process	
Responsible owner name and signature	
Responsible owner position within the organisation	
Date	

Please complete and submit your Governance Plan to Covid19Allocation@ukri.org by **Monday 7 December** .

November 2020