

3 month extensions

Could you please clarify how the 3 month fee-free extension applies to students studying for a PhD that is funded by a 3-year Alumni/University Scholarship? The reason behind this question is that these students originally aimed to finish their PhD studies within those 3 funded years and not the 'allowed' 4 years of registration. Thus, providing the 3-month fee-free extension at the end of the 4 years of registration does not alleviate pressures faced by these students, who have also been impacted by the Covid outbreak. Why is the 3-month fee-free extension not available for these students at the end of their 3rd year of studies?

The 3 month fee-free extension granted to all students to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 is an extension of students' registration end date (or final submission deadline), not their funding, and as with all extensions it is applied at the end of the period of registration. If students have reached, or are approaching, the end of their funding period and are worried about paying fees then they should refer to the [Doctoral College's coronavirus web guidance on the Impact on funding and income](#).

3 month extensions and funding for extensions

I note that the UKRI has offered UKRI-funded final-year PhD students an extension of up to 6 months due to the pandemic, whereas the University has offered students a shorter 3-month extension. UKRI-funded PhD students can also apply for additional funding. However, to the best of my knowledge, the University has not acknowledged that University-funded PhD students are unlikely to be able to financially support themselves during an extension. This may lead to poorer PhD students having to abandon their studies. If the University cannot afford to help students financially, it should at least be honest and say so. My question is thus: Why has the University chosen to be silent on this important issue?

The 3 month fee-free extension granted to all students to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 is an extension of students' registration end date (or final submission deadline), not their funding. Since the lockdown began, we have acknowledged the difficulties that students have faced, and continue to face, and the Doctoral College has provided guidance to address those difficulties, including those involving financial support. This guidance has been updated on a regular basis with the most recent update being published just last week. This guidance has made clear from the start of the COVID-19 disruption that the University can provide support for doctoral students through the Hardship Fund. That remains our message.

There is also a specific Covid-19 non-furlough Hardship Fund for students who don't qualify for the University Furlough Scheme and are facing financial hardship due to COVID-19.

Details of both Hardship Funds are at <https://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/applying-for-the-university-of-bath-hardship-fund/>

Funding extensions

a) I am an international student funded by the University to do my PhD studies. My research project and my daily life have been affected by the current situation. I am currently working with my supervisors and trying to adapt and carry on with the project. However my funding will end in the coming October. I am trying to focus on my studies however, I am concern about how I am going to pay for my living expenses and to support myself without any sources of funding. Is any discussion

going on about extending funding for those students like me who have been affected? How does the University will support us?

b) What is the situation with extensions for URSA funded final year students who require access to a laboratory to carry out our research (we have lost 3 months to date). Our UKRI funded counterparts have long had re-assurance that there are options to help them. From our perspective, we have been ignored. On the 14/5/20 I received an answer to this question telling me that hopefully I would receive information the following week. When my supervisor enquired he received a similar response. It has now been over a month and we have heard nothing - not even re-assurance that this is still being discussed. I am extremely concerned as having no access to a lab means that I have made no progress at all towards my PhD since March and I am in my final year of study with a lot of lab-based research still to carry out. At this point I am not re-assured that it is still possible for me to achieve a PhD as financially my deadline is March 2021. More time to write up research/experimental results that I do not have, will not help me.

c) Regarding the lab re-openings, we can agree that there's been a considerable delay regardless of the concerns for the safety, as other universities have managed to do a better job on that matter, minimising the damage for the doctoral projects inflicted by long delays. Since the University of Bath has chosen the path of the minimum risk showing little concern about the progress of the doctoral projects, should a funded extension of at least 3 months be considered as a sure thing to compensate for the already done damage? In specific, any comment regarding the URSA funding?

As above, please apply for funding through the University Hardship Fund. The most recent [Doctoral College guidance on Impact on funding and income](#) provides all of the available information on funding support.

Library access

a) Do you have a date when the library will be open again? Is it likely to be open before September? Thank you.

b) The total closure of the Library is causing problems for PhD students who are writing up and finding it hard to access some books and are unable to buy them all. Could we be allowed to borrow books from the Library or could someone send us scans of the books' sections. If Uni closed also means the Library is closed for the next 6 months it is a problem, not everything is digitalised.

We have contacted the library team, and this was their response:

We are working hard with various senior university staff groups to plan the reopening of the Library building. As you may be aware, they are meeting regularly to examine the practical means by which the Library (and all other campus services, facilities and buildings) may reopen safely for staff and students alike in light of ongoing social distancing requirements and management of the risks associated with Covid-19 across campus.

In relation to specific information requirements PhD students may have, while the building itself and the print collections are not accessible, the Library's services and digital collections are still very much open and I would strongly encourage them to contact us via library@bath.ac.uk with their specific needs. Library staff are working remotely and queries received are being passed on to our Subject Librarians, Acquisitions and Inter-Library Loans teams in order to try and get hold of the

resources requested (for example, scanned chapters, ebooks) in a format that can be delivered directly to them.

As and when we know when the Library building is permitted to open again, this will be communicated widely to all our students and staff accordingly.

Reopening of labs

a) Many (most?) Doctoral Researchers cannot work from home and the doctoral college's statement that "most" labs will be open by the end of September. Many doctoral students have been unable to work for over 3 months now and saying it might be another 3 has caused distress to many students who are rightly considering whether they wish to continue with their doctoral research at all. When will you (or whoever is actually responsible) provide realistic information that PGRs can use to make decisions about whether to continue or give up, including uncertainties on timelines? So far PGRs have been left in the dark.

b) What is the COMPLETE decision and responsibility tree for lab reopening? Please publish this in full in your email reply. Trials seem to have been underway for weeks to reopen labs now but I have heard at SSLCs and elsewhere from directors of studies and head of departments directly that the reasons for slow progress come down to poor communication from the University. They are supposedly waiting on approvals from deans and university central management, health and safety at various levels, gold silver and bronze response teams. What is being done to address this?

As I announced last week, the process of reopening labs will be slow and measured, balancing the need for core support measures and infrastructure, along with social distancing requirements. All activities are under Risk Assessment overseen by the Deans, working with technical support teams and Health & Safety teams. It is important that this process is treated seriously.

As you will have seen on Tuesday, the Government has announced a further relaxation of the social distancing requirements, from two metres to one metre. The University is now working on how this change will be implemented in labs, with new web pages at <https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/plans-for-summer-and-the-2020-21-academic-year/> that will be published over the next two weeks as details are agreed.

More detailed information from Prof Jonathan Knight, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), on the reopening decisions and responsibility tree is currently being finalised and will be circulated within the next few days.

Work for GTAs

Can you guarantee work for casual teaching assistants/ graduate teaching assistants providing small group tutorials? This is an important source of income.

We are unable to guarantee casual teaching work, but discussions around teaching are underway. The intention is to use blended teaching from the start of Semester 1. This clearly depends upon any Government requirements at the time, but it should mean that there will be opportunities for online and class-based small group teaching. If you have been undertaking paid teaching work at the University in previous years you should check with whoever you liaise with for your teaching within

your department regarding teaching opportunities and, if necessary, equipment and software to enable you to teach online.

Home working support

Can clear guidance on use of TSF or availability of any other sources of funding for home working equipment e.g. extra screens, chairs, keyboards etc be given?

We have contacted the Human Resources team as they're looking into a similar issue for University staff, and we will provide updated guidance as soon as it's available.