

HEA Cost Extensions for Research Disrupted by COVID-19

MU Terms and Conditions

Introduction

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, through the Higher Education Authority, has provided funding to higher education institutions to cover costed extensions for certain research activities that are at risk because of interruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The HEA cost extension budget provides funding for additional payments (salary / stipend) to be made in exceptional cases to research projects that were active on 12th March 2020, and where activity was interrupted due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Research students and contract research staff whose research has been interrupted by the pandemic may apply for an extension of their contract/stipend period under this programme. Research students who are not in receipt of a stipend and whose work has been disrupted may also apply for a once-off exceptional stipend support.

Any awards made under this scheme will be additional to the Covid-19 fees waiver already committed by the University.

The application form individual fellowships/self-funded students is to be completed by the research student / member of contract research staff, in consultation with their supervisor. The application form for research projects should be completed by the PI in consultation with the research staff/students funded from the project.

The Programme

- The funding is solely for the provision of costed research extensions to compensate for research interruptions due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Extensions of up to a maximum of **4 months** may be granted under the programme to contract research staff and research students funded by the exchequer, state funders from other jurisdictions, charities/civil society organisations and industry co-funded programmes. Self-funded and internally-funded research students are eligible. Research staff or students fully funded by industry are not eligible.
- For industry co-funded projects, additional company contribution (cash or in-kind) is required to maintain the overall funding rate in line with State Aid rules. All relevant State Aid rules must be fully complied with.
- This funding will prioritise research staff and research students (research masters and doctoral students) who have experienced the greatest disruption in their research progress, and where the requested extension can compensate for this. The application will be expected to show:
 - Clear evidence of interruption to the research due to the Covid-19 pandemic (for example through inability to access labs/facilities/archives/fieldwork sites/subjects, caring responsibilities, illness, etc.);
 - Significant impact of the interruption on the delivery of the research project and/or the career development of the applicant (for example where the period of interruption accounted for a significant period of a researcher's contract, or where their contract or period of study is coming to an end and there is insufficient time to complete a meaningful body of work);
 - Clear evidence that the period of extension can compensate for the earlier interruption (for example, it must be expected that the factors that caused the interruption will not still be in place for the period of the extension). If this is not the case for a research student, then a temporary suspension of studies is advised;

- The expected impact of the research that will be delivered during the extension.
- The research activity will have been in progress on 12th March 2020.
- The extension requested must be no longer than is necessary to compensate for the period of interruption.
- Any cost extension granted will be subject to your research funder granting a no cost extension. The HEI will seek pre-approval on your behalf in the first instance to expedite the process.
- All other reasonable avenues to fund the completion of activities will have been exhausted, for example no-cost extensions, budget re-allocations within the research grant currently funding the activity (where applicable) or other external sources (e.g. GRA/RIF accounts).
- For contract research staff who are successful under the programme, their contracts will be extended for the period (maximum 4 months) necessary to compensate for the interruption to the programme at their current rate.
- For externally funded research students who are successful under the programme they will continue to receive a stipend at the same rate of their funding per month (pro-rated for part-time students) for the period of the extension (maximum 4 months). For internally funded research students who are successful under the programme they will either continue to receive a stipend at the same rate or at a minimum of €1333 and self-funded students will receive a rate €1333 per month for the duration of the extension.
- There will be no double-funding of costed extensions.
- The support of the Higher Education Authority and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science will be acknowledged in any publications and any publicity associated with this funding.
- Any additional personal taxation considerations that may arise resulting from an award under this scheme will be the responsibility of the individual.
- All awards will be subject to the terms and conditions of the HEA COVID 19 fund.
- It is envisaged that three calls will be opened over the coming year the exact details may vary based on experience.

Eligibility

- The applicant must be a member of research staff or a research student in the University at the time of application and with a contract (in the case of a staff member) that extends to at least 31 October 2020.
- The supervisor who co-signs the application must be a member of academic staff with a contract that covers the period of the extension.
- The research conducted by the applicant, as described in the application, must have been in progress on 12 March 2020.
- Research staff or students who have already received costed extensions in respect of Covid-19 interruptions are not eligible. Those costed extensions will now be repaid to the funder and covered from the HEA funding. Please contact MUheacovidfund@mu.ie if you already are in receipt of a costed extension.
- Research students who are not in receipt of a stipend and whose work has been disrupted may also apply for a once-off exceptional stipend support.
- Research staff or students fully funded by industry are not eligible.

- For students co-funded by industry, all relevant State Aid rules must be fully complied with. This means that there must be a continued contribution to funding at the same level as before from the industry partner. This contribution may be in cash or in-kind. A letter from the industry partner on headed paper confirming the contribution must be uploaded with your application form

Principles for Prioritisation

- Priority on the basis of timing will be given to those whose current end date for their research contract or course of study (e.g. completion of fulltime PhD programme of 4yrs) is between October 2020 and end of February 2021.
- The second highest priority on the basis of timing will be given to those whose current end date for their research project or course of study is between March and December 2021.
- Consideration will be given to the type of research involved, and the extent to which it will have been possible to conduct the research while working remotely. It is anticipated that approximately 50% of research students and projects will not have been significantly disrupted.
- Considerations of disruption due to caring responsibilities or similar will be taken into account in making awards.
- The additional funding must result in a substantive outcome that would not otherwise be achievable.
- A proportion of funding will be held in reserve until September 2021, and will be used to support cases that extend into 2022.

Assessment

The following necessary conditions must all be met. Any applications where they are not met will be returned without review.

- Applications must be made by individuals with the endorsement of their supervisor/PI for holders of individual PhD/postdoctoral or research fellowships or self-funded PhD students
- Applications must be made by a principal investigator (PI) for researchers/PhD students funded by a research grant.
- The applicant satisfies the eligibility requirement.
- The applicant or PI confirms that all other reasonable avenues to fund the completion of activities have been exhausted, for example redirection of funds enabled by no-cost extensions, budget re-allocations, other internal/external sources etc.

Where all eligibility criteria are met, the application will be assessed against the following criteria:

Criterion		
Research project due to end between October 2020 and March 2021	Y/N	Y-10
Research project due to end between April 2021 and December 2021	Y/N	Y-10
Clear evidence of interruption to the research due to the Covid-19 pandemic	Y/N	30

Evidence of the impact of the interruption on the delivery of the research project by the projected end date; and/or the impact on the career development of the applicant	Y/N	30
Evidence that the research can be completed within the extension timeframe of four months under the current pandemic conditions.	Y/N	30

- Four “Y” equates to high priority for funding, with timing dictating highest priority.
- All eligible applications will be reviewed by a board convened by VPR which will decide the level of award based on the assessment criteria.

Reporting

You will be required to submit a final report 2 weeks prior to the end of your costed extension detailing how the funds benefitting you in completing your research project.

Contact

Please consult the website for FAQ's.

If your question is not answered, please email MUheacovidfund@mu.ie