

Financial Support Office: COVID-19 Financial support scheme

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1. COVID-19 Financial support scheme

1. COVID-19 Financial Support Scheme

1.1. *Overview*

1.1.1. **UKRI have issued updated guidance to advise that research council funded COVID extension schemes will close at the end of the 2024/25 academic year. In practice, this means that the ESRC COVID extension scheme closes for applications on 01 August 2025 and must be fully resolved and recorded with ESRC no later than 01 October 2025. For non-ESRC funded students, the deadline to submit a COVID-19 extension request is 19 June 2026.**

1.1.2. If your research was significantly disrupted by the two UK lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic, you may be eligible for additional financial support. The following is an indicative and non-exhaustive list of some of the ways your research plans may have been impacted.

- i. Caring responsibilities
- ii. COVID-19 related illness, including effects on mental health
- iii. Dislocation and/or inadequate working environment
- iv. Disruption to fieldwork
- v. Disruption to data gathering and/or data processing
- vi. Disruption to archival work
- vii. Disruption to the very definition of the topic of research

1.1.3. This scheme was originally introduced to support students directly affected by the 2020 UK lockdown. In its original form, the scheme applied only to students who were registered on an MRes/MPhil/PhD programme in the 2019/20 academic year.

1.1.4. As disruption associated with the third UK lockdown of January 2021 continued into the 2020/21 academic year, the School broadened the scheme to include students who first enrolled in August/September 2020 (in either an MPhil/PhD programme, or an MRes/PhD programme, or in an ESRC funded MSc programme) and to students who had *already* received a COVID extension under the original scheme.

1.1.5. In the interest of fairness, it is vital that you only apply for a COVID extension if your research truly was significantly impacted by the UK lockdowns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The financial support made available to fund this is a common good, which we are also responsible for – the studentship funds available in any one year are finite, and the more the School allocates through this scheme, the less it has to allocate to future generations of students.

1.2. *Terminology*

1.2.1. Students funded by ESRC were initially invited to apply for an extension under what ESRC called 'Phase 1' and 'Phase 2'. The ESRC refers to the later broadening of the scheme as 'Phase 3'. To avoid confusion, the School has adopted ESRC terminology. Accordingly, in what follows we refer to the original scheme as 'the original COVID extension scheme', and we refer to the broadening of the scheme as 'Phase 3'.

1.2.2. The key difference between the Original COVID Extension Scheme and Phase 3 is that under the original COVID extension scheme, students can apply for a maximum of 6

months, whereas under Phase 3 students can only apply for a maximum of 3 months.

1.3. *How to apply*

1.3.1. Applications are managed via the School's [change of circumstances system](#). Students are asked to submit the relevant forms as attachments to extension applications submitted [through the School's change of circumstances system](#).

1.3.2. Please note: You are entitled to apply for a COVID-funded extension *and also* an un-funded extension at the same time. To do so, please submit two extension applications via the [change of circumstances system](#) – one for your funded extension application, and one for your un-funded extension application. These will be considered together by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee Chair.

1.3.3. If you have questions about the application process itself, or are experiencing difficulties in accessing the change of circumstances system, please [contact the PhD Academy](#). If you have questions about your eligibility for the scheme or award criteria themselves, please [contact the Financial Support Office](#).

2. Eligibility and entitlements

2.1. *The original COVID extension scheme*

2.1.1. For students who enrolled in their programme before August/September 2020, who have not yet applied for a COVID extension, and who are either:

- i. funded by an LSE studentship (extension will cover stipend and fees), or;
- ii. funded by a Departmental studentship that covers both fees and stipend (extension will cover stipend and fees), or;
- iii. funded by a Departmental studentship that only covers fees (extension will cover fees), or;
- iv. funded by external sponsors (e.g. Grantham) (extension will cover fees), or;
- v. self-funded (extension will cover fees).

2.1.2. The maximum length of extension available is 6 months.

2.1.3. Please note: If you are funded by ESRC, see also 'Phase 3' below.

2.1.4. If you are funded by The London Arts and Humanities Partnership (LAHP)/the Arts and Humanities Research Council, your eligibility for extensions is administered by LAHP. Accordingly, please contact LAHP at info.lahp@london.ac.uk.

2.1.5. To apply, please complete the [Original COVID extension scheme application form](#) and submit this as an attachment to an extension request via the School's [change of circumstances](#) system.

2.2. *Phase 3 COVID Extension Scheme*

2.2.1. This scheme is for:

- i. all ESRC funded students who are currently in their award period who first enrolled in their programme in or before August/September 2020, whether or not they have already received funded extensions under phase 1 and or 2 (in this case, any approved

extension will cover stipend and fees).

- ii. all other (non-ESRC funded) students first enrolled in their programme before August/September 2020 who have already applied for a COVID extension under the original COVID extension scheme (in this case, any approved extension will cover, pro-rata, any LSE funding students are on and will cover fees for self-funded or externally funded students)
- iii. all other (non-ESRC funded students) who first enrolled in their programme in August/September 2020 (the extension will cover, pro-rata, any LSE funding students are on and will cover fees for self-funded or externally funded students).

2.2.2. If you are funded by The London Arts and Humanities Partnership (LAHP)/the Arts and Humanities Research Council, your eligibility for extensions is administered by LAHP. Accordingly, please contact LAHP at info.lahp@london.ac.uk.

2.2.3. The maximum length of extension available is 3 months.

2.2.4. To apply, please complete the [Phase 3 COVID extension scheme application form](#) and submit this as an attachment to an extension through the School's [change of circumstances](#) system.

2.3. *Cumulative extensions*

2.3.1. Students who have not previously been granted any COVID extension funding *and* meet the eligibility criteria for *both* (i) the original COVID extension scheme *and* (ii) the Phase 3 scheme are entitled to apply for a cumulative nine month funded extension.

2.3.2. Please note that this only applies to students who can demonstrate that, despite their best efforts to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, their research was severely disrupted by both the 2020 and the 2021 UK lockdowns.

2.3.3. To apply, please complete the [Original COVID extension scheme application form](#) and submit this as an attachment to an extension request via the School's [change of circumstances](#), specifically stating that you are applying for nine months of funding,. In this case, you *do not* need to submit a Phase 3 COVID extension scheme application form.

3. Additional guidance for visa holders

3.1. *If I am granted an extension, do I need to do anything to extend my visa?*

3.1.1. If your extension moves your submission deadline beyond your current visa expiry date, you will need to renew your visa if you wish to remain in the UK. For visa advice, please contact the [student advice and engagement team](#).

3.2. *Will the School automatically support a visa extension?*

3.2.1. Assuming the School has no concerns regarding your compliance with the terms of your visa, the School will sponsor your visa extension. However, every case is different and is assessed separately. (For example, how many years you have been studying in the UK can affect your eligibility for visa extensions.) Accordingly, all visa holders are required to [contact the Student Advice and Engagement team](#) before applying to discuss the impact of an extension on your visa status. The Student Advice and Extensions can be contacted

[here](#).

4. Assessment process

4.1. *What happens after I submit my application?*

4.1.1. Your application will be forwarded to the School's COVID Extensions Panel. This is composed of the PhD Academy Director, the Chair of the Research Degree Sub-Committee, and one Doctoral Programme Director.

4.2. *How long will it take for me to be notified about the outcome of my application?*

4.2.1. Applications are sent to the panel in batches on a weekly basis on Monday morning. The panel then considers applications by correspondence, on a rolling basis., and it can take 1-2 weeks for the panel to return their decision. Once decisions are received, outcomes are processed as soon as possible, and normally not more than 1-2 weeks from the point at which the panel makes its decision.

4.3. *Will I need to do anything to ensure that I continue to receive my funding?*

4.3.1. The Financial Support Office are automatically notified of any COVID extension approvals through the School's [change of circumstances](#) system. If you receive a COVID extension award and have any questions about your funding, please [contact the Financial Support Office](#).

Version log

| Review interval | New review start date | New review due by |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Annual | August 2024 | September 2024 |

Version history

| Version | Publication date | Approved by | Notes |
|----------|------------------|---|---|
| 23-24.01 | 01/02/2022 | Financial Support Office Deputy Manager (PGR) | Extant published version. |
| 23-24.02 | 28/03/2024 | Financial Support Office Deputy Manager (PGR) | Transfer into house style for guidance documentation. Shift to submission of applications via the change of circumstances portal. |
| 23-24.03 | 15/04/2024 | Financial Support Office Deputy Manager (PGR) | Fixing broken hyperlink. |
| 23-24.04 | 14/05/2024 | PhD Academy Manager | Typos corrected, additional information on the application assessment and outcome notification process provided, directions. |
| 24-25.01 | 11/06/2025 | PhD Academy Assistant Manager | Scheme closing deadlines added. |

Contacts

| Query type | Contact | Email |
|--|---|--|
| Operational (application and outcome notification process) | PhD Academy | phdacademy@lse.ac.uk |
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Feedback

| Mechanism description | Mechanism access details |
|-----------------------|--|
| Email | Financial-support@lse.ac.uk |

Communications and Training

| Query | Answer | Notes |
|---|----------------------------|---|
| Will this document be publicised through internal communications? | <u>Yes</u> / No | Inclusion in the PhD Academy newsletter, and dissemination via the Doctoral Programme Directors' Forum and PhD Managers' Forum mailing lists. |
| Will training needs arise from this document? | Yes / <u>No</u> | N/A. |