The University is assessing the impact of the COVID pandemic on our Doctoral Researchers and will be offering support to eligible researchers who have experienced disruption to their PhDs.

If you require an extension to the time permitted for your current part, or an extension to your submission deadline you should complete and submit a mitigating circumstance claim to your School when you complete your progression paperwork. The forms are available here: <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/doctoral-college/essential-information/documentation/>

Between July 2021 and April 2022 we will also be able to offer limited financial support Doctoral Researchers who have experienced delays to their PhD due to the pandemic.

If you are funded by the **UKRI** different conditions may apply. You should apply using the UKRI funded extension request form which is available on the [Doctoral College website.](https://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/doctoral-college/)

To be eligible for **COVID financial support from the Doctoral College** you will need to demonstrate:

* You are completing R3 and are progressing into an extension period **OR** have been permitted a 1st or 2nd attempt in R3. Funding support for those entering an additional extension will not be available via this route.
* Mitigation was not possible in terms of changing the academic content of your PhD (see appendix A)
* The sources of funding you expected to have access to in your extension period are not available, or reduced due to the pandemic.

If you wish to apply, please complete this form and submit it to [DoctoralCollege@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:DoctoralCollege@lboro.ac.uk) by the following deadlines.

* For the July 2021 Board – submit form by **30th June 2021**
* For the October 2021 Board – submit form by **30th September 2021**
* For the January 2022 Board – submit form by **3rd January 2022**
* For the April 2022 Board – submit form by **31st March 2022**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name of Doctoral Researcher: | | | |
| Start Date (dd/mm/yy) |  | Registration number: |  |
| Title of the Project: |  | | |
|  | | | |
| Sponsor: | | | |
| What is your expected submission date (see [Student Self-Service](https://www.lboro.ac.uk/students/enquiries/self-service/) if unsure):  Has your thesis been submitted yet? Yes/No | | | |
| How have you been impacted? (Please select all that apply)  1. **Despite best efforts to reorganise work, I have experienced significant disruption and normal progression has stopped or become severely limited, specifically:**   Unable to conduct fieldwork, or work with participants on a face to face basis  Unable to access equipment/facilities in laboratories  Unable to access equipment/facilities at a partner organisation  Unable to return to UK  Supervisory input (e.g. from meetings, feedback) affected due to covid-19 impacts on supervisors  Other (please specify below) | | | |
| Other (and any notes to above): | | | |
| 1. **I have experienced significant disruption to my personal life and normal progression has stopped or become severely limited, specifically:**   I have dependents or household members requiring care (e.g. significant caring responsibilities for children, other family members, partners, or those in an at-risk group)  I have / had family or household members requiring care due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19  I am part of the national response to COVID -19 e.g. those recalled to NHS roles. This may be a paid or voluntary role.  I have experienced a mental or physical health issue that has not already been addressed via a leave of absence or sick leave request  Current working arrangements and situation are disruptive (e.g. difficult home working environment)  Financial hardship caused by COVID-19 (for example the loss of part-time or casual work) has led to lifestyle changes that have impacted progression  Other (please specify below) | | | |
| *Other (and any notes to above):* | | | |
| Academic mitigation: What reasonable steps have you taken to re-plan the doctoral project to deliver a thesis of sufficient quality to pass, to the original time scale? Please provide details of the mitigating actions that have been taken or are planned.  *Please refer to appendix A (guidance approved by Doctoral College Sub-Committee) for further information on academic expectations.* | | | |
| How long is the expected disruption, after mitigating steps have been taken?(Provide an indication of timescale). | | | |
| Financial mitigation: What reasonable steps have you taken to cover the costs of continuing to work on your PhD beyond your expected submission date. E.g have you experienced a loss of expected income from casual work, support from family etc, that would otherwise have supported study beyond the end of the standard funded period. | | | |
| For studentships with an industrial co-funder  Have you discussed the potential for matched funding?  Is additional funding available? | | | |
| Previous funding: If you have received any previous funding from the University in response to the pandemic please provide further details here. You should include the type of funding (hardship, stipend extension, fee waiver etc), the date you received it and the amount you received. | | | |

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| --- |
| Case for support (300-500 words) |

The University may request additional evidence in support of applications although this will not be requested at the time of application.

If you are awarded support via this route we will notify your academic School before final payment is confirmed.

**DECLARATION: By sending this to the Doctoral College / School, you are confirming that the information you have provided is accurate and up to date and you understand that claims based on false or misleading information will be subject to a request for re-payment. In order to verify the details of your application we may approach your supervisors to verify the length / extent of the disruption to your research. Personal details related to your case will not be shared without your consent.**

Please note that any funding offered via this scheme may need to be declared if you apply for other financial support in the future. This may have an impact on the outcome of those decisions.

**Appendix A**



**Loughborough University, Doctoral College: Additional information for examiners of research degrees**

Thank you for agreeing to be an examiner for a research degree candidate at Loughborough University.

The following guidance has been produced by the Doctoral College and approved by the University’s Doctoral College Sub-Committee in response to the pandemic. We ask that you read this guidance before commencing the examination process.

External examiners are asked to liaise with the internal examiner in the first instance if there are any queries arising from this document. Alternatively, you may contact the Doctoral College via pgresearch@lboro.ac.uk.

**Assessing criteria for a research degree in response to COVID-19**

It is recognised that as a result of the pandemic many doctoral researchers will have had to modify their original research plans in order to complete and submit their work by their final submission deadline. This adaptation has been encouraged by the Doctoral College, and across the wider Higher Education sector, and is in line with guidance and expectations from UKRI.

On account of reductions in access to research facilities, fieldwork locations or human participants, for example, some theses may have less empirical research than under normal circumstances. Moreover, the completion of some originally planned chapters/sections, publications, and placements or other wider work/educational experiences (e.g., conferences) may not have happened, or been practicable, in order to meet expected submission deadlines.

It is still the expectation, however, that **examination of all doctoral degrees will be focussed specifically on the candidate’s demonstrated achievement of doctoral outcomes**. Even in cases where a doctoral researcher has been required to modify their research plans or activities in response to the pandemic, this must still apply.

In cases where the volume of empirical research produced has been negatively impacted it may still be feasible for the candidate to demonstrate they have met the criteria for the award of a PhD.This could include exploring new implications of previous findings in light of new information; revisiting a current issue or debate from a different perspective or context; replication of earlier work in a different context or presenting research in a novel way.

Any such mitigations should not be at the expense of the overall quality of the PhD however. The candidate must still demonstrate a contribution to knowledge and contain original work worthy of publication.

Absolute volume of work, or number of chapters, should not therefore by used as an indirect means of assessing if doctoral outcomes have been met.

These standards and expectations can also be extended to best practice when assessing a doctoral researcher’s progression at the mid-part or end of part reviews.

Excerpts from QAA guidance on criteria for research degrees and Loughborough University Regulations are included for information as an appendix to this document.

**Mitigating circumstances**   
Doctoral researchers who have been affected by the pandemic have had the opportunity to submit mitigating circumstance claims at each progression point, including at the end of the standard active registration period in order to request an extension. It is not therefore appropriate to apply further mitigations at the point of assessment or to accept a lower quality of work as a form of re-dress for any disruption experienced.

**Recommendation of awards**

In making a recommendation following an examination the current situation must be taken into consideration when asking the candidate to make corrections or complete further work.

In particular, if there is a requirement for additional work to meet key doctoral

outcomes relating to quality, recommendations should be considered very carefully to

ensure that they are appropriate and achievable under current constraints, including the

time asked for completion of any changes.

Although the Government’s current exit strategy gives us hope for the continued easing of restrictions in the coming months, examiners are advised to take into account the likelihood of continued restrictions to research facilities, fieldwork locations or human participants in the short to medium term. In such cases, alternative mitigations that enable the candidate to still demonstrate the quality of the work is sufficient should be given further consideration.

**Appendix**

**Criteria for Doctoral Degree Award**

The QAA provides the following outcomes descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 8, doctoral degree, namely doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

* the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
* a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
* the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
* a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

* make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
* continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

And holders will have:

* the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

University **Regulation XXVI** specifically describes the following criteria for the award of a PhD: 11.2.1 The thesis should be presented in satisfactory literary form (including references, notes and bibliography, as appropriate) and should not be of unnecessary length. Students are advised not to exceed 80,000 words or their adjudged equivalent for a Doctoral thesis.

11.2.2 The thesis should represent a contribution to knowledge and contain original work worthy of publication. It should also provide evidence of training in and application of research methods appropriate to the particular field of study.

11.2.3 In addition the student is expected to satisfy the examiners that they are well acquainted with the general field of knowledge to which their subject relates.