

Case study scenarios for Covid-19 related extensions

This document contains a sample of scenarios that can be used as guidance when completing a GCU Covid-19 related extension request RDC3c. Some of these scenarios are from the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science, COVID-19 Related Studentship Extension Request Form, with the inclusion of scenarios arising from the GCU Covid-19 related Disruption survey responses. Further examples of case studies will be added to this document as needed and as the covid-19 situation evolves.

The following case studies give an indication of the level of detail that might be expected in the application for Covid-19 related extension. It is important to note that each student will have their own unique case of circumstances and research recovery plan. And decision on the application for extension is made based on each student's unique case.

Caring Responsibilities

1. David is a full time PhD student with two children, aged two and four. He is in his second year, has completed his fieldwork and is in the process of analysing the data. His partner also works as a doctor, full-time. Although many nurseries have remained open for the children of key workers, his one has decided to close to all.

The only option available to David is to take over the primary care of his children, which means he is unable to continue with his PhD at present. He has evaluated what he can do and acknowledges that it is important to keep some momentum going. He works three evenings per week when the children are asleep, which is the equivalent to approximately one day per week.

Assuming a 3-month disruption, this case could warrant an extension of 2.5 months.

Case revisited March 2021:

David's partner contracted Covid in October 2020 and had to self-isolate for two weeks. David was the sole carer for his two children and unable to work on his PhD during this period. Since then his partner has made a full recovery and returned to work, full-time. David's children returned to nursery at the end of February 2021 following nursery/school closures at the end of December 2020. David is now able to work for 4 hours per day, however prior to nurseries reopening he had been unable to progress with his PhD. David has worked with his supervisory team to revise his research recovery plan in light of the disruptions he has experienced since October 2020.

Assuming a 6-month disruption, this case could warrant a second extension of 4 months.

David did not put in a request for the first extension of 2.5 months, as he was waiting for the situation to settle down and for his research plans to become realised before applying for the extension of time. His situation then changed again considerably. As of March 2021, he is considering putting in one extension request covering the previous 9 months.

Assuming the multiple disruptions over the 3 and 6 mth periods above, this case could warrant an extension of 6.5 months.

2. Angela, a single parent and full-time student, is in her first year with two teenage children who are now home-schooling. She is currently writing her literature chapters but instead of being able to work 8 hours every workday (her normal routine) she is now having to reduce her hours to ensure

that her children are undertaking their own work. She finds she is able to work productively for only 6 hours per day.

Assuming a 3-month disruption, this case could warrant an extension of 0.75 months.

Case revisited March 2021:

Angela has been home-schooling her two teenage children during the second period of extended school closures. Her eldest child is struggling to keep up with school work remotely and experiencing increased anxiety as a result. Angela now spends the majority of the school day focused on supporting her children with their learning. Angela has also experienced a decline in her own mental health due to ongoing pressures caused by the pandemic and has been less able to work productively on her PhD since the start of the year. Angela now finds that she can carry out around 3 hours work per week on her PhD.

Assuming a 3-month disruption (around 12 weeks of home-schooling in the period from January through until Easter 2021), this case could warrant a second extension of 2.7 months.

Fieldwork

1. Christophe is coming to the end of first year as a full-time student. He was planning to conduct his fieldwork in China starting in October 2020. As a result of Covid-19, continuing to plan to complete his fieldwork as set out in his application is no longer viable. Christophe will need to completely rework his research proposal including his literature chapters.

This case could warrant an extension of 10 months.

2. Ayisha is also coming to the end of first year as a full-time student. Her fieldwork is in the UK, but she is concerned that she will need to switch to a different set of methods to avoid face-to-face contact in autumn 2020. If it turns out that she does have to switch then she thinks that her existing interviews might be replaced with a combination of an online survey and online interviews but would need to rework the methods in her proposal and seek online training.

This case could warrant an extension of 2 months but, it would be better for Ayisha to hold off making an extension just now because her existing (and preferred fieldwork plan) may still be viable. Ayisha should be reassured that if changes are required then an extension will be granted further down the line but, in the meantime, she should continue to progress with her writing and planning.

3. Niamh is coming to the end of her second year as a full-time student. She has done most of her fieldwork but had expected to collect some additional data. Niamh will need to consider her existing data and discuss possible options with her supervisors (for example: collecting data using a different method or mode of collection requiring an ethics amendment; following a rapid appraisal of data already collected, taking the view that the thesis RQs can be addressed using the existing data; or that – again, following rapid appraisal, reaching the view that through refocusing the RQs, the additional data is no longer required).

These cases could warrant extensions of 3 months, 1 month and 1.5 months respectively.

Re-orientating to new ways of working

1. Tracy is a full time, first year PhD student who lives alone in a small city centre apartment. She is the main contact for her elderly parents who are in the shielded category and live a four hour drive

away. She is currently writing her literature chapters but is having difficulty with her productivity levels.

After a conversation with her supervisory team about the initial challenges she has been facing, she realised that a number of factors are affecting her including her anxiety about her parents, her cramped working space and a lack of interaction with others. She re-evaluated the situation, developed a plan of support for her parents, set up a regular online support group with two fellow PhD students, spoke to her HEI about borrowing a monitor to link to her laptop and, used some of her RTSG fund to invest in a basic office-chair for her bedroom. She began keeping a log of her daily progress and agreed to alert her supervisor if her productivity levels fell again.

After a month of good progress, the level of worry increased again after her mother received a government letter advising that due to her shielded status she should not leave the house until at least July. At the same time, one of her parents' neighbours passed away from Covid-19. The constant worry and increased support (phone calls) again reduced her productivity significantly. She continued her log of progress during this time, and in comparison to previous entries, she was being approximately 25% less productive due to the stressful situation. This was not consistent - some days she could focus on it really well but on others she could do nothing. Upon discussion with her supervisor, it was agreed the stress that Tracy is experiencing would not necessitate a period of sick leave as she was still able to work on her thesis and continuing to do so was giving her a sense of normality.

Tracy was awarded a one-month reorienting extension, which covered her initial productivity challenges. Her further challenges, documented over a three month period from May to August could warrant an extension of an additional month.