

Coronavirus (COVID-19) FAQs for Postgraduate Research Students

Supervision

Q: How do I maintain contact with my supervisors in the coming weeks?

A: *It is fine to have your meetings by telephone but you may find that Skype and Zoom are better platforms – especially if you want three-way meetings with your supervisory team. In the first instance, e-mail your Supervisors and discuss what might work for you and how you will schedule supervisory meetings.*

Q: I'm a PGR on a Tier 4 visa and I can't meet my supervisor in person. What should I do?

A: *Owing to this unprecedented situation UKVI is not taking any sanctions against universities who are unable to fulfil their usual monitoring activities.*

Research design and ethics

Q: I am in the early stages of my research and have not yet sought ethical approval but my research design involves human subjects. Do I need to revise my research design?

A: *We recommend that you continue to apply for Ethical approval as planned. Speak with your Supervisors about adjusting the project timetable to delay executing the element requiring human design, if possible. A leave of absence might be required if you are unable to leapfrog this element to return to later.*

Q: I have already obtained ethical approval for my research, which involves human subjects. Do I now need to reapply for ethical approval?

A: *Studies that have been approved by any LJMU REC (including UREC and all LJMU Faculty/School RECs) can be amended to utilise remote research methods (e.g. online questionnaires, telephone interviews etc.). If the amendments follow the [standard ethical protocol for the use of remote research methods](#) further ethical approval will not be required. To make study amendments that do not conform to the standard ethical protocol, investigators should submit request for study amendments in the usual way.*

Studies that have been approved by any other REC (e.g. NHS REC or MoDREC) can be amended as instructed by those RECs.

For more information, please see the Research Ethics and Governance website:

<https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/ris/research-ethics-and-governance>

Sickness Reporting

Q: I am ill as a result of the coronavirus. How should I report this?

A: *If you are unwell, contact your Lead Supervisor to advise them you are absent and follow the process below via eDoc:*

On your Project Page you will see a tab on the right hand side of your screen 'Recording Short Term Absence' you should select this and then select 'Start a new absence request' Once you start a new request, you will get an overview of your project page – by selecting 'The project details are correct' it will take you to the online form. Here you can select either 'Sickness' for short term sick leave (not longer than 1 month), or Authorised Absence for

those of you who are returning home, but will still be studying. Complete the form providing the necessary details and submit.

Should you need to record sickness leave for longer than 1 month, you should use the 'Request a Change' tab on your Project Page as per the steps above and then select 'Leave of Absence' to record a longer term absence. As above complete the form providing the necessary details and submit.

Accessing eDoc off Campus

eDoc can be easily be accessed off campus – go the LJMU Home page, select 'Students' and on the quick links you will find the eDoc icon. Select the icon and it will bring you to the log in page. Sign in with username @ljmu.ac.uk (not your LJMU email address) and your standard LJMU password.

Managing your project

Q: What should I do if the pandemic is affecting my ability to conduct my research (for example, my experiments have been disrupted, I work with vulnerable people, or I need access to university buildings and specialist equipment)?

A: A number of PhD projects may be disrupted by COVID-19. The University will be looking at measures to deal with this in coming weeks. Talk to your supervisors in the first instance to see if there are any steps you can take to revise the schedule or design of your project. We encourage you to keep a log of any impact upon your research at this time.

Q: How should I log the impact of any disruption the pandemic is causing my research?

A: A record of any disruption experienced should be logged via a Supervisory Meeting on eDoc. When you log into eDoc, go to your Project Page – on the right hand side of your screen you will see a tab 'Supervisory Meetings' – select this and from the next screen select 'New Supervision Meeting'. Then you can complete the form recording the specific details of the nature of the disruption you have experienced. Once you have completed the form, press 'Save and Continue' and on the next screen you will see a summary of your notes and you should then select the Green 'Submit Notes' and the 'Confirm: Submit Notes' buttons. You can then quote the meeting date in any correspondence with your Lead Supervisor or Doctoral Academy in relation to any ongoing issues.

Q: Do I still need to stick to my project deadlines such as the programme approval, first progress review, confirmation of registration?

A: If you are able to conduct your research, you should still work to the Project Dates listed on your eDoc record. eDoc facilitates the circulation of documents, recording the format of meetings (by telephone or virtually eg. Skype or Zoom), alongside the formal approval of outcomes.

Q. Do I need to take a Leave of Absence?

A: You only need to request a Leave of Absence if you are expecting to be absent for longer than 4 weeks.

Q: What is the process for applying for a Leave of Absence/Extension?

A: Please note that a **Leave of Absence** is a formal break from your research. If you are in receipt of stipend payments then these will cease whilst you are on a Leave of Absence.

An **Extension to Thesis Pending** is when you need additional time because you will not submit your thesis for examination before the **Project end** date listed within **Project dates** on your eDoc record. The **Extension to Thesis Pending form** is available on our website <https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/the-doctoral-academy/supporting-your-study> or you can email DoctoralAcademy@ljmu.ac.uk to request a copy to be emailed to you.

If you choose to take a **Leave of Absence** you should advise your Lead Supervisor in the first instance. Requests can be made via eDoc: <https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/the-doctoral-academy>, within the **Request a Change** tab. Once you have submitted the request, it will be sent to your Lead Supervisor for their action. If you are able to **Return to Study** sooner than expected, you can formally reactivate your registration using the same tab on eDoc.

Specialist resources

Q: I need access to specialist software to undertake/analyse my research, which is only available on specific computers within the University. Can I get a licence to use this software off-campus and who can advise me about this?

A: IT Services Information can be accessed: <https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/ithelp>

Thesis Submission

Q: Can I still submit my thesis for examination?

A: The Doctoral Academy office is currently closed, but PGRs can submit their thesis for examination electronically to PGRExaminations@ljmu.ac.uk. Where possible, this should be via a link to a digital download of a PDF document (for example via Drop Box or One Drive). Alternatively, you may submit a PDF copy directly to PGRExaminations@ljmu.ac.uk. Your Thesis submission must be accompanied by a completed Thesis Declaration form, which can be downloaded from the Doctoral Academy website: <https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/the-doctoral-academy/supporting-your-study>

Vivas and assessment

Q: My viva is due to take place in the next few weeks. Will it have to be postponed or can it be conducted remotely?

A: The Doctoral Academy remains in contact with all examiners taking part in scheduled vivas. Please stay in touch with your Lead Supervisor for updates.

Q: Will degree certificate still be issued and how can I get mine?

A: Unfortunately, degree certificate production is currently on hold as the Staff are working remotely. However, we can produce a formal letter confirming the status of your conferral, should it be needed for potential Employers etc. Please contact PGRExaminations@ljmu.ac.uk for further details.

Funding

Q: I receive stipend payments, will these continue?

Yes, stipend payments will continue as normal. Any issues should be discussed with your local PGR administrators.

Q: What will happen to my scholarship funding if I need an Extension/Leave of Absence?

A: Please contact your Lead Supervisor to determine what the arrangements are for your scholarship scheme. You should be aware that University stipend payments are not normally paid during a Leave of Absence.

Q: I am self-funded and the current situation has affected my employment/income. Is there anyone I can talk to for advice on finances and benefits?

A: Please contact moneyadvice@ljmu.ac.uk and a member of the team will get back to you. For any queries about your fees contact Registry on studentfinance@ljmu.ac.uk

Services

Q: Who can I talk to if I have concerns about the current situation and the impact on my research?

A: Please liaise with Supervision Team, in the first instance. The Doctoral Academy is also available.

Q: Is the Doctoral Academy still open and how can I get in touch?

A: The Doctoral Academy is open during office hours. Email addresses: DoctoralAcademy@ljmu.ac.uk for general or eDoc enquiries, PGRTransfers@ljmu.ac.uk for questions relating to Confirmation of Registration, PGRExaminations@ljmu.ac.uk if your enquiry is about examinations.

Should you wish to speak to somebody, please email Jo McKeon at j.m.mckeon@ljmu.ac.uk detailing your enquiry and include your telephone number. Jo will then arrange to speak with you or forward your email to an appropriate Colleague.

Q: How can I access support services while the university buildings are closed?

A: There are a number of LJMU resources available, details are in the table below.

Online information Student Welfare and Advice Team's Student Support website: <https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/discover/student-support>

SAW's Health and Wellbeing pages include COVID-19 information and links to external resources: <https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/discover/student-support/health-and-wellbeing>

Support service	Email
Student Engagement Team	studentengagement@ljmu.ac.uk
Registry (for fees and enrolment queries)	studentfinance@ljmu.ac.uk
Money Advice	moneyadvice@ljmu.ac.uk
International Advice	internationaladvice@ljmu.ac.uk
Accommodation Advice	accommodationadvice@ljmu.ac.uk
Disability Advice	disability@ljmu.ac.uk
Counselling	counselling@ljmu.ac.uk
Mental Wellbeing	mentalhealth@ljmu.ac.uk
Care Leavers and Estranged Students	imagine@ljmu.ac.uk
Retention and Academic Advice	stayoncourse@ljmu.ac.uk

How can I look after my wellbeing whilst working from home?

We are all finding out that working from home can be challenging! Here are some ideas about how to manage remote working:

If you can, set up a dedicated workspace so that you differentiate between work and home time.

Maintain a routine, define the hours that you will be working, and take regular breaks away from your workspace.

If you have caring responsibilities, speak to your supervisor about how to manage your research work.

Make use of the online resources including podcasts and apps on mindfulness and wellbeing. It is also a good idea to connect with PGR/researcher communities online if you can. This might be through Twitter, WhatsApp groups, or you could arrange virtual meet-ups (through Zoom, Skype, Teams etc) with other researchers from your office or research group.