

Funder Advice Relating to COVID-19

We recognise that this is a very difficult time for all staff and that there are many questions regarding continuity of research funding. As an institution, we are in contact with funders directly and are also engaging as part of the Russell Group on matters associated with applications, awards etc. We will continue to update this page as new information becomes available.

Please feel free to contact the relevant Research Development team member supporting your area for any further guidance or assistance.

- For Faculty of Medicine, Health and Lifesciences queries, please contact Susie Gray (S.Gray@qub.ac.uk) or Mani Narayanan (M.Narayanan@qub.ac.uk)
- For Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences queries, please contact Mani Narayanan (M.Narayanan@qub.ac.uk) or Tom Gibson (Thomas.Gibson@qub.ac.uk)
- For Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences queries, please contact Peter Stephenson (p.stephenson@qub.ac.uk)
- For EU Funding queries, please contact euoffice@qub.ac.uk
- For International Funding queries, please contact Nikki Kernaghan (n.kernaghan@qub.ac.uk) or Mary Harte (m.harte@qub.ac.uk).

UKRI

Information on the impact of COVID-19 on UKRI funded research has been added to their website and is being updated regularly, so we encourage all PIs to check the following link –

<https://www.ukri.org/news/coronavirus-impact-on-ukri-supported-research/>

“UKRI is taking a very pragmatic approach. For instance, where travel is impacted, if researchers or students cannot travel due to government/official advice, or it poses a risk to the individual (due to an underlying medical condition etc.), this can be charged to the grant in line with any other cost. If that cost cannot be absorbed by any overall underspend on the grant then UKRI will cover that small addition. In the same circumstances, no cost extension requests to grants would be allowed”.

UKRI staff have been advised to work from home where possible and should still be contactable via email.

Additionally, the Russell Group have written to UKRI expressing concern about staff salaries and other research costs. They have requested that UKRI consider establishing an emergency fund to cover these types of costs. We will update this page as new information comes available regarding UKRI's support.

EPSRC

Have requested to be kept informed about any impacts arising related to the research and training programmes supported by EPSRC and any other aspects of working with them. They have requested institutional coordination regarding this feedback and the Research Development Team will facilitate this contact. If you have concerns or questions specifically relating to EPSRC, please contact M.Narayanan@qub.ac.uk or Thomas.Gibson@qub.ac.uk.

NIHR

Many research studies funded by NIHR, or supported by NIHR (via the Clinical Research Network and other NIHR infrastructure) may need to be paused, to free up NIHR-funded staff to help bolster the frontline response to COVID-19. In addition, we recognise that NIHR award-holding organisations may need to pause research studies for locally determined public health reasons.

However, clinical trials or other research studies which are funded or supported by NIHR should continue if discontinuing them will have significant detrimental effects on the ongoing care of individual participants involved in those studies. These are clinical decisions which will need to be made on a case-by-case basis by local decision makers on the basis of local risk and capacity assessments.

All organisations holding NIHR awards that are paused will, in the short term, continue to receive payments from DHSC in line with existing NIHR contractual payment schedules. This will be reviewed and if necessary, payment schedules will be updated as usual following the annual statement of expenditure. Where necessary, contract deliverables will be rescheduled allowing staff to concentrate on frontline care and COVID-19 research.

Further details, contact points, and FAQs are available here:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/dhsc-issues-guidance-on-the-impact-on-covid-19-on-research-funded-or-supported-by-nihr/24469>

Wellcome Trust

Wellcome Trust have published the following information

- We are not currently making changes to deadlines or committee dates, although we will be running some committees remotely. If your organisation closes, we can approve the submission of applications for you, but we must have your permission beforehand.
- Where someone is called away to work on the Coronavirus response for one month or more (for example carrying out clinical duties) we will provide extensions and supplements.
- Where there are other impacts we will look to minimise the impact on our funded research activities wherever possible. This may be extensions and/or supplements, if there is no insurance.

All our staff who work on grants and applications can work from home and will be contactable by email and phone as usual. We are all equipped with Teams and BlueJeans

for conference calls and will be able to continue our work with you as best we can in these unusual circumstances.

Additional information and updates are available on their website:

<https://wellcome.ac.uk/grant-funding/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-grant-applicants-and-granholders>

HSC Research & Development Division

The HRA has produced new guidance for sponsors, sites and researchers about the COVID-19 pandemic.

The guidance covers the set up of new studies, amendments to existing studies and changes being made by sponsors at this time.

The guidance can be found at www.hra.nhs.uk/coronavirus and will be updated regularly. The site also contains links for sponsors, sites and researchers who need to get in touch with additional questions.

US-Ireland

HSC Research & Development Division have published guidance that is in line with other UK funders - <https://research.hscni.net/covid-19-impact-funded-research>

Similarly, for **DfE-funded projects under the US-Ireland R&D Partnership**, they have indicated that any requests for no-cost extensions resulting directly from the rapidly unfolding coronavirus situation will be prioritised and treated sympathetically. These requests should be submitted in the normal way using the standard 'no-cost extension' request form.

SFI, IRC and HRB

The Health Research Board (HRB), Irish Research Council (IRC) and Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) are taking a pragmatic approach and will give due consideration on a case-by-case basis to the following:

- Call deadlines
- Deadlines for progress reporting
- Deadlines for the return of award documentation
- Budget reallocations or exceptional charges to grants arising from travel/other restrictions
- No-cost extensions
- Restructuring of project deliverables and timelines for researcher mobility and collaborations, where direct adverse impact has occurred

More information and advice is available at:

[visit www.sfi.ie](http://www.sfi.ie)

Horizon 2020

UKRO have advised that, while we are currently awaiting clarification from the Commission on the general situation in relation to research and innovation funding, any projects which have been affected by COVID-19 containment measures should refer firstly to [Article 51 of the Annotated Model Grant Agreement covering *force majeure*](#), which stipulates that coordinators and beneficiaries should contact their Project Officer, to discuss issues that may affect the implementation of projects. UKRO expect further guidance to be made available on [the Funding and Tenders Portal](#) shortly. It is also worth noting that the staff of the Commission Services and Agencies are now working remotely and that there is a specific warning on the Funding and Tenders Portal that, due to this non-standard way of working, delayed responses are expected for queries submitted to the IT helpdesk.

Call Deadlines

The recent escalation of restrictions related to the COVID-19 outbreak may hamper applicants' ability to prepare and finalise high-quality proposals. For this reason, for Horizon 2020 calls with original deadlines between now and 15 April, extensions will be applied. The precise new deadlines for each call and topic will be published on the call and topic pages on the Funding and Tenders Portal.

For the following two calls, no extension of deadline/cut-off date will apply:

- IMI2-2020-21-01
- EIC-SMEInst-2018-2020

In all cases, potential applicants are advised to prepare themselves as necessary, especially by establishing effective communication links for remote collaborative work, also anticipating possible further restrictions in the coming weeks."

European Research Council

The [ERC have posted a statement on their website](#) stating that they are doing their utmost to remain fully operational during this period, that grant management activities continue as normal (although technical issues may slow some processes down) and that panel evaluations are currently being organised remotely. They do not currently anticipate any delays to evaluations or application deadlines.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

The [Research Executive Agency \(REA\) have released a statement](#) advising grantees and fellows to follow the travel advice provided by national authorities and to cancel or postpone all non-essential travel where possible. REA will adopt a flexible approach towards projects, which fail to meet grant agreement obligations due to the COVID-19 containment measures, and may apply the rules on *force majeure*, or extend the duration of projects. Projects will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and grantees and fellows should speak to their Project Officer if they require support.

US National Institutes of Health

NIH have published guidance on the following:

[COVID-19 Resources for Applicants and Recipients of NIH Funding](#)

[Guidance for NIH-Funded Clinical Trials and Human Subjects Studies Affected by COVID-19](#)

[NIH Late Application Policy, Administrative Flexibilities, and FAQs Related to 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

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Other Funders

A number of other funders not included in the above list have also issued guidance relating to Covid-19, and in general are supportive of facilitating extensions and finding mutually-workable solutions to any arising issues.

Please feel free to contact the relevant Research Development team member supporting your area for any further guidance or assistance.