**Stage 6 Research Student Funding Extensions**

**Appeals and Complaints**

The University aims to consider all applicants fairly and in line with the principles outlined in the Stage 6 Funding Guidance. However, it is recognised that there may be occasions where applicants wish to request an appeal (review of the funding decision), or make a complaint about the handling of their application or enquiry. This is based on the University-wide Student Complaints Procedure.

The procedure covers the following types of appeal and/or complaint:

- Complaints about the University's handling of a query or an application for Stage 6 funding

- Appeals will be considered on the grounds that the published institutional process has not been followed.

Appeals will not be accepted on the basis of disagreement with the criteria that were applied or with the Panel’s decision.

**Complaints**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the University. In order to constitute a complaint under this Procedure, the issue must have impacted personally on the complainant and the outcome / remedy sought by the complainant must relate directly to them.

Complaints relating to this procedure must be submitted in accordance with the [Student Complaints procedure](https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/Procedures/StudentComplaintsProcedure/). It is hoped that any complaints can be addressed and resolved informally. Complaints about an element of service relating to a query or handling of an application for Stage 6 Funding may be sent to the Acting Graduate School Manager, Rebecca Rutherford c/o [pgawards@qub.ac.uk](mailto:pgawards@qub.ac.uk) by 12 August 2022.

We also welcome feedback to help us improve for future processes.

**Appeals**

If you believe that criteria as set out in the Guidance were not applied correctly to your application for Stage 6 Funding, and you have therefore not received funding, you may write to Postgraduate Awards ([pgawards@qub.ac.uk](mailto:pgawards@qub.ac.uk)) to ensure that correct information was applied. You do not need to use the appeals form. It is our goal to support all students who completed an application and met eligibility criteria, and it is hoped that this situation could be resolved without need for further escalation.

If you believe that there was a procedural irregularity in consideration of your application for Stage 6 funding, and wish to submit an appeal relating to a Stage 6 Funding Extension, after receipt of your outcome email please complete the form in Appendix 1 and submit by email ([pgawards@qub.ac.uk](mailto:pgawards@qub.ac.uk)) by 12 August 2022, the specified deadline for Appeals or Complaints

Upon receipt of your appeal, it will first be reviewed by the PG Awards team to determine if the decision was based upon accurate information. You may be asked to confirm details relevant to your eligibility or Needs Priority.

If it is determined that the decision was made on the basis of correct information, then the appeal will be reviewed by a Senior Academic who was not involved in the Panel decision, along with the criteria and an explanation of reason for the Panel’s decision. The independent reviewer will determine if the appeal is upheld, not upheld, or if more information is needed to make a decision.

You will receive confirmation that your appeal has been received within 1 working day (not including weekends or University closure period).

Please note, if you wish to query the School Postgraduate Research Committee (SPRC) endorsement of additional time to undertake research, please contact your School Postgraduate Office.

**Criteria to Prioritise and Assess Allocation of Funding**

[**https://www.qub.ac.uk/graduate-school/information/Weekly-update/PGR-covid-support-structure/**](https://www.qub.ac.uk/graduate-school/information/Weekly-update/PGR-covid-support-structure/)

Priority for allocation of additional stipend / funding support will be based on:

* the need for an extension has resulted from the Covid-19 disruption, either because the disruption has affected the project directly or the student’s ability to progress the project[[1]](#footnote-1), ***and***
* mitigation is not possible or cannot be sufficient to allow a student to complete their studies to the required standard in the study period due to the disruption.

As the funding available is limited, applications will be assessed in relation to what is ***essential in order to successfully complete your research and achieve a doctoral outcome***.

Extension stipend / financial support cannot exceed the standard level of support established by UKRI / DfE (i.e. this funding cannot support ‘top ups’ or higher stipend payments), and will not include extension of Research Training and Support Grants.

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| Identification of adaptations and opportunities to mitigate impact of delays | **Demonstrate that mitigation / adaptation not possible or sufficient to allow studies to be completed to the required standard**   * Attempts to mitigate impact have been identified and implemented * Focus on quality of outcome, not quantity * Student demonstrates that they understand that additional funding request is not to replace ‘time lost’, but to complete research to a doctoral standard. * Reasons for mitigations not being sufficient demonstrate exceptional occurrences / elements of their research project OR explanation is related to needs-priority (opportunity to provide further information in Needs Priority Form) |
| Evidence of additional time requested as relates to revised research plan and extension time requested | **Demonstrate that even with mitigation / adaptation, work to be undertaken cannot be completed in original study period**   * Realistic and feasible plan for achieving outcomes, demonstrating use of time where further delays incurred to progress other elements of research. * Highlighting ongoing delays as opposed to those which have been resolved * Indicate when you anticipate being in a position to submit your thesis |
| Demonstration that student has experienced additional disruptions that have made adapting research or mitigating Covid-19 impact more difficult.  In order for this criteria to be applied, you must make a successful case through the Needs Priority process, using the Needs Priority application form (see Section D) in addition to a research impact application. | * In the Needs Priority Form, student outlined **additional disruptions or challenges in adapting research** which requires priority consideration for additional funding support; for example, disabled students, those with long-term illness, who are neurodivergent, or who have caring responsibilities. * Impact of disability, condition or caring responsibilities on inability to adapt research to mitigate impact must be demonstrated. |
| If all of the above criteria are demonstrated, the Institutional Assessment Panel may choose other factors or criteria to enable prioritisation of funds to those in greatest need, which may include: | * Prioritise those closest to their funding end date * Duration of initial funding period * Level of stipend support throughout research degree * Some funding is aimed at students in particular disciplines |
| Identification of adaptations and opportunities to mitigate impact of delays | **Demonstrate that mitigation / adaptation not possible or sufficient to allow studies to be completed to the required standard**   * Attempts to mitigate impact have been identified and implemented * Focus on quality of outcome, not quantity * Student demonstrates that they understand that additional funding request is not to replace ‘time lost’, but to complete research to a doctoral standard. * Reasons for mitigations not being sufficient demonstrate exceptional occurrences / elements of their research project OR explanation is related to needs-priority (opportunity to provide further information in Needs Priority Form) |

**Criteria for Determining Eligibility for Stage 6 Funding Extensions**

The Panel used the following criteria to deem a candidate ineligible for Stage 6 Funding Extensions.

1. Candidate has already been awarded a funding extension from your funding body;
2. Candidate registered as thesis only;
3. Candidate asking for time only (not funding);
4. Candidate due to complete their research after 31 March 2023 (based on original award date);
5. Due to limited funds available and the high number of applications from candidates in Faculty of Engineering & Physical Sciences (EPS) the Faculty made the decision to prioritise applicants with initial funding duration of 3 years.

**Process**

The process for making Stage 6 Funding decisions is set out in the [Guidance](https://www.qub.ac.uk/graduate-school/information/Weekly-update/PGR-covid-support-structure/).

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| Step 1: | Discuss your application with your supervisor, and record these discussions on Qsis Research Student Lifecycle. You will be asked to confirm that this has happened on the application form. You should use your Annual Progress Review to update the panel on your progress and research plan.  Ensure that your updated Research Plan is set out in document that can be uploaded with your application (Word, Excel or Pdf) and that the file name follows this naming convention:  *School\_Lastname\_Firstname\_StudentNumber* |
| Step 2: | Review Guidance, especially eligibility and criteria. Ensure you have relevant information to complete the application, and that your files you are uploading use the appropriate file naming convention. |
| Step 3: | Complete the application form(s) as outlined above. You have an option to receive a copy of what you submit.  School Postgraduate Research Committees will review applications to ensure consistency between research students, reasonability of case for impact and accuracy of revised research plan.  Your School should communicate the process and outcome of your request for additional time and associated fee free period to you once approved. |
| Step 4: | SPRCs will submit their endorsements for funding extensions to the Postgraduate Awards team, for consideration by the Institutional Assessment Panel.  Schools may use information submitted as part of the Stage 6 extension application in supporting requests for time extensions. Where possible, we will seek to achieve agreement for time extensions as part of the funding extension process.  If you indicate that you are part of a Doctoral Training Programme, the School will need to share your application with the relevant DTP co-ordinator within Queen’s, and share the outcome in terms of time allocated with the DTP administration, who may not be based within Queen’s. |
| Step 5: | An Institutional Assessment Panel, with representation across Faculties and including a member of the PG Awards and team member from Student Disability and Wellbeing, will make decisions about stipend funding extensions and funding support that can be allocated.    Outcomes from the Institutional Assessment Panel may be: Not eligible for consideration, Not eligible at this time, Further information required, Period of stipend extension applied for is granted, some of the period applied for is granted, stipend extension not granted or contribution to living costs granted.  Outcomes from funding extension processes, and any time extensions agreed as part of the funding extension process, will be communicated to applicants.  Outcomes from the funding extension process will be shared with your School. If you are part of a Doctoral Training Programme, the Postgraduate Awards team will need to share the outcome of your funding application with the DTP administration, who may not be based within Queen’s |

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| Full Name: | |
| Student Number: | |
| **School:** | |
| **QUB E-mail:** | |
| **Grounds of Appeal** | |
| Please consider carefully the ground(s) on which you wish to lodge an appeal and indicate as appropriate. An appeal will NOT be considered unless it is made on one of the permissible grounds as follows: | |
| 1. There has been a procedural irregularity which has had a demonstrable impact on the outcome. |  |
| 1. Inaccuracy in information used to determine decision |  |
| 1. Other: |  |
| Please give full details of the circumstances **relevant to the ground(s) of the appeal**. | |
| Please state the outcome you are seeking from the appeal: | |
| Please state any evidence you have provided to support your ground(s) for appeal: | |

1. This reference includes difficulties due to additional factors such as disability, long-term condition, neurodivergence, caring responsibilities. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)