

Guidance Document: University of Limerick Internal Funding

HEA Support for Covid-19 Related Research Costed Extensions

***Round 1 Deadline for Submissions: 17:00, 9th November 2020**

•For the first round of funding under this scheme, your position (studentship or contract of employment) must be due to finish on or before 28th February 2021.

1. Introduction

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, through the Higher Education Authority (HEA), has provided funding to higher education institutions to cover costed extensions for certain research activities that are at risk because of interruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of this allocation is to support contract researchers and research students who are at serious risk of not completing their contract or study and, in doing so, to protect Ireland's national research and innovation system as best possible and to protect Exchequer investments made to date and future research funder budgets.

The HEA cost extension budget provides funding for additional payments (salary or stipend) to be made, in exceptional cases, to research projects that are not wholly funded by private sector sources, that were active on 12th March 2020, and where activity was interrupted due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Research students and contract research staff whose research has been interrupted by the pandemic may apply for an extension of their studentship or contract under this programme. Full details on the eligibility criteria for applicants can be found in Section 2 of this guidance document.

This scheme will only support extensions that can be demonstrated to be essential and to have solely arisen due to Covid-19 impacts.

Please note that any cost extension granted for externally funded projects will be subject to your research funder granting a no-cost extension.

The first round of applications will be accepted up to **5pm on 9th November 2020**. This round is open to research students and staff who are due to finish on or before 28th February 2021. Subsequent rounds of funding will be announced at a later date.

Applications can only be submitted by completing the online application form, which is available at <https://www.ul.ie/research/ul-funding-award-research-affected-covid-19>

2. The Funding Programme

The funding is solely for the provision of costed research extensions to compensate for research interruptions due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This funding will prioritise research staff and research students in greatest need and who have experienced the greatest disruption in their research progress, and where the requested extension can compensate for this.

The application will be required to show:

- Clear evidence of interruption to the research due to the Covid-19 pandemic (for example through inability to access labs/facilities/sites/subjects/archives/datasets, caring responsibilities, illness, etc.).
- Significant impact from the interruption on the delivery of the research project and/or the career development of the applicant (for example, where their contract or period of study is coming to an end and there is insufficient time to complete a meaningful body of work).
- Clear evidence that the period of extension can compensate for the earlier interruption (for example, it must be expected that the factors that caused the interruption will not still be in place for the period of the extension).
- Evidence that all other reasonable avenues to enable the completion of activities will have been exhausted, for example no-cost extensions, budget re-allocations within the research grant currently funding the activity (where applicable), alteration of project plans or project deliverables, etc.
- The expected impact of the research that will be delivered during the extension.

3. Eligibility Criteria

In order to be considered for this funding, applicants to the scheme must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- You must be a member of research staff or a research student in UL at the time of application.
- Your research activity must have been in progress on 12th March 2020.
- Your research must have been interrupted (or adversely impacted) by Covid-19.
- Your position cannot be fully funded from private sector sources (e.g. industry).
- Self-funded and internally-funded research students are eligible to apply, subject to revenue rules regarding scholarship tax exemptions.
- Funding should not have already been secured to cover the cost of the proposed extension (e.g. via a funder cost extension), as double-funding of costed extensions is not permitted.
- It must be feasible for the funding requested to enable you to progress the research in a meaningful way over the period in question.
- For the first round of funding under this scheme, your position (studentship or contract of employment) must be due to finish on or before 28th February 2021.

4. Conditions of Funding

The following conditions apply to any funding granted under this scheme:

- The extension requested must be no longer than is necessary to compensate for the period of interruption.
- For industry co-funded projects, additional company contribution (cash or in-kind) may be required to maintain the overall funding rate in line with State Aid rules. All relevant State

Aid rules must be fully complied with. It is the responsibility of the project lead (e.g. Principle Investigator) to address this.

- The support of the Higher Education Authority and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science will be acknowledged in any publications and any publicity associated with this funding.
- Any cost extension granted for externally funded projects will be subject to your research funder granting a no-cost extension. For a number of the main Irish funders, the University will seek pre-approval on your behalf in the first instance to expedite the process. In the case of EU-funded researchers, it is recommended that you inform your EU project officer (via the Co-ordinator if applicable) of your application for this additional funding from the Irish Government, stating that you will advise them of the outcome of your application in the coming weeks.
- Any contract of employment extension granted under this initiative would be on a fixed term basis (versus contract of indefinite duration) to support the legitimate objective of the University in completing the individual research project, which was disrupted due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Postgraduate research fees for the period of any extension funded by this programme will be waived by the University.
- For research students and staff currently funded from other sources, funding under this scheme will only be made available once current sources are spent.
- Information provided in the applications received will be shared within UL for the purposes of evaluation, and may be shared externally during an audit of this programme.

5. Eligible Costs

The application form asks applicants to identify the number of months of extension sought. The duration of extensions sought is limited to what can be demonstrated to be the duration of impact due solely to Covid-19.

The number of months of extension required should be no greater than the effective number of months of interruption, taking account of both the duration and the extent of the interruption. For example, if the interruption reduced research productivity to 50% over a period of 4 months, the effective interruption is 2 months.

It will normally be expected to be between 1 and 4 months.

For applicants successful under this scheme, funding will be allocated based on provision of a stipend (in the case of research students) or salary (in the case of research staff). The stipend/salary rates will be determined as follows:

- For research students:
 - Stipends provided under this scheme will be based on the stipends of the successful applicants at the time of the launch of this call.
 - For self-funded research students, a stipend rate of €16,000 per annum (on pro rata basis) will be used, which is based on the Irish Research Council Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship stipend rate.
- For research staff: Salaries provided under this scheme will be based on salaries of successful applicants at the time of the launch of this call.

6. Application Procedure

Eligible applicants should complete and submit the online application form, which is available at <https://www.ul.ie/research/ul-funding-award-research-affected-covid-19>.

Applications must be submitted prior to the call deadline of 17:00, 9th November 2020.

Research students should complete the application form in consultation with their supervisor.
Research staff should complete the application form in consultation with their line manager.

All applications must include a signed signature sheet. The signature sheet can be downloaded from <https://www.ul.ie/research/ul-funding-award-research-affected-covid-19>, and should be signed and dated by the applicant and by their supervisor / line manager. The signed sheet is then uploaded as part of the application.

7. Evaluation process

For all applications which meet the eligibility criteria listed above, the applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

Criterion	Weighting
Evidence of interruption to the research due to the Covid-19 pandemic	30%
Significant impact of the interruption on the delivery of the research project and/or the career development of the applicant	40%
The potential impact to the research of the requested funding	30%

An institutional review panel, chaired by the VPR and with cross-faculty representatives, will decide on the final awardees. Depending on the number of applications received, the University may convene faculty-level review panels to select applications from each faculty for submission to the institutional review panel.

8. Queries

All queries regarding the scheme should be directed to covid_research_disruption@ul.ie. Responses to queries will be provided using a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section, which will be made available at <https://www.ul.ie/research/ul-funding-award-research-affected-covid-19>.