



University of
St Andrews

Discounted time guidance

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Purpose	This document provides guidance for students and Schools on for applying for discounted time to mitigate delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.2	Changes to Associate Provost titles.	Approved	Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office	03/08/2021

COVID-19 DISCOUNTED TIME (from March 2021)

Guidance for students

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on many of our PGR students' research and it continues to disrupt the normal working patterns for a sizeable proportion of students. Between March 2020 and February 2021, we were able to support over 800 periods of Discounted Time, with funding from a variety of sources, including UKRI and donations. We are fortunate to be in a position whereby we can continue to support our students, although under more limited circumstances.

[UKRI has indicated](#) that as the pandemic enters its second year, most PGR students are expected to have been adjusting their research project to enable them to finish within their adjusted period of study. Students and Supervisors who have not yet made all possible adjustments are also encouraged to do so. In line with these recommendations, we have adjusted our discounted time process to meet the requirements set out by UKRI following their recent release of Phase 2 Covid-19 Doctoral Extension funding.

Despite the support offered to PGR students to date (regardless of year of study), we, along with UKRI, recognise that students who have recently gone into their final year of study/funding are likely to have the most difficulty adapting their research to complete within their allocated period of study. In addition to this, it is also recognised that for some students in earlier stages of their PGR studies, project adaptation and mitigation may be more difficult. For example, students with disabilities, long-term illness, neurodivergence, and those with caring responsibilities, may have found this particularly difficult.

The new Discounted Time process is not intended to cover 'time lost' due to Covid-19, but rather to address circumstances where, even with adjustments and mitigation, the student will be unable to complete their doctoral research within their allocated period of study. (E.g. a student may have redesigned their project in response to Covid-19 and consequently needs an additional 3 months to gather supplemental data). Under this process, Discounted Time and any funding available will be allocated on a **needs-priority basis**.

The process set out below is for the allocation of **additional time only**, although all students applying for discounted time will also be considered for additional funding if appropriate. Additional stipends for students funded by the University will be awarded via a separate process, also on a needs-priority basis, as funds become available.

Eligibility:

Students who commenced their PGR studies prior to 1 March 2020, and who have not previously received discounted time due to disruption caused by Covid-19, are eligible to apply in this round. Under exceptional circumstances (e.g. extenuating circumstances relating to disability, long-term illness, neurodivergence, caring responsibilities) students who have already received discounted time will be considered further. Students who started their research degree after 1 March 2020 will only be considered for discounted time if they can demonstrate serious pandemic

related delays which would have been impossible to foresee prior to starting their degree. Students applying for additional discounted time must meet the criteria for the cumulative amount of discounted time they are requesting.

Priority:

Priority will be given to students who are unable to mitigate delays due to Covid-19 or adjust their projects. This is most likely to apply to students whose end date/funded end date is on or before 30 September 2021; and students who have extenuating circumstances.

Process:

- Students, in consultation with their supervisor are asked to complete the Discounted Time application in MMS, while considering and referencing the rubric for Discounted Time applications.
- A completion plan will be submitted as part of the application alongside any other pertinent information. The application and completion plan must also be considered/agreed with the student's supervisor(s) prior to submission.
- After the student submits an application for discounted time, the application will be sent to the supervisor for comment and onward submission to the Director of Postgraduate Research.
- The Director of Postgraduate Research, or a nominated qualified assessor, will review the application against the criteria set out in the rubric. The assessor may contact the student for additional information or for clarification, when required.
- If the person assessing the application recommends Discounted Time, the application will be forwarded to a University Discounted Time Board. If they do not recommend Discounted Time, the reasons must be discussed with the student and the supervisor(s).
 - School level decisions can be appealed by filing a [Stage 1 academic appeal](#).
- The University Discounted Time Board will be composed of the Associate Provost Students, two members of the University Central Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group, two members of senior academic staff (one from each faculty) and the Registry Support Officer PGR.
- Decisions on Discounted Time applications will be communicated within 10 working days of the Board meeting. If the board decides not to award Discounted Time, it will provide recommendations on how to proceed with their studies, in order to enable the student to complete their degree programme on time.
 - Where a student is dissatisfied with the decision of the University Discounted Time Board, they can appeal using the [established appeals route](#). Appeals against the decision of the Board will be treated as a Stage 2 appeal as laid out in the [Student Academic Appeals](#) policy.

Additional guidance for School-level internal assessors

Thank you for agreeing to conduct this review of a Discounted Time application. Your input is greatly appreciated by the student, their supervisors and the University Discounted Time Board. Below you will find a few points of guidance for this task.

Assessor Process:

- Discounted time applications will be assessed by the DoPGR within the School or another member of academic staff in the School with appropriate expertise to review the application.
 - Schools must assign assessors in MMS, if the assessor is not the DoPGR.
- Once the person reviewing the Discounted Time applications receives an application, please complete the Assessor's form in MMS.
- Assessors may follow up with the student or supervisor on any queries that they may have about the application, including establishing how much of the work still needs to be completed, how realistic the completion plan is, and what adjustments the student has made in order to mitigate the impact of Covid-19.
- If, after reviewing the application, you do not recommend the award of Discounted Time, please use the form to advise the student on what steps they will need to take to complete their degree programme on time. Please also consider whether a Leave of Absence or a move to part-time study may be helpful for the student.
- If you do recommend the award of Discounted Time, please explain why the student has not been able to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on their research project. The application will then be passed on for final decision to the University Discounted Time Board.

Many thanks for your assistance during these difficult times. Your help is much appreciated.

University of St Andrews Discounted Time (DT) Rubric

The majority of requests are expected to be for less than 6 months. Requests for longer periods of discounted time must be supported with clear evidence of exceptional circumstances.

Extension reason and length awarded	2 months	4 months	6 months	Over 6 months
Caring Responsibilities	<p>Clear evidence as the sole primary carer for a period of 2 months in a circumstance directly caused by Covid-19 (e.g. school/nursery closures or supporting shielded individuals).</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Clear evidence as the joint carer for a period of 3-4 months in a circumstance directly caused by Covid-19.</p> <p>Please include the date range during which your studies were impacted by caring responsibilities.</p>	<p>Clear evidence as the sole primary carer for a period of 2-4 months in a circumstance directly caused by Covid-19 (e.g. school/nursery closures or supporting shielded individuals).</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Clear evidence as the joint carer for a period of 4-6 months in a circumstance directly caused by Covid-19.</p> <p>Please include the date range during which your studies were impacted by caring responsibilities.</p>	<p>Clear evidence as the sole primary carer for a period of 4-6 months in a circumstance directly caused by Covid-19 (e.g. school/nursery closures or supporting shielded individuals).</p> <p>There is a clear case as to why the student is/was unable to do any work towards their degree.</p> <p>Please include the date range during which your studies were impacted by caring responsibilities.</p>	<p>Clear evidence as the sole primary carer for more than 6 months in a circumstance directly caused by Covid-19 (e.g. school/nursery closures or supporting shielded individuals).</p> <p>There is a clear case as to why the student is/was unable to do any work towards their degree.</p> <p>Anyone with circumstances requiring responsibility as a primary carer beyond 6 months is encouraged discuss alternative options e.g. a move to part- time status or a Leave of Absence.</p>
Fieldwork or Data Access challenges	Demonstration of short-term impacts and evidence of mitigation activity – this might include assessment of existing data, reworking	Demonstration of short/medium term impacts and evidence of mitigation activity – this might include all of	Demonstration of medium-term impacts and evidence of mitigation activity following an assessment of any already	Demonstration of very significant impacts on the nature of the degree requiring a fundamental re-working of fieldwork or data access

	research questions, redrafting sections of methods chapters.	previous column plus design of alternative methods for the purposes of filling gaps in data collection, and/or use of alternative sources of secondary data. All cases should contain a completion plan of proposed mitigation (further fieldwork extensions are unlikely to be considered).	collected/accessed data, this might include significant reworking of methodological approach All cases should contain a completion plan of proposed mitigation (further fieldwork extensions are unlikely to be considered).	plans and a reorientation of the literature chapters. This is most likely to be of relevance to a small number of students commencing year 2 of the PhD. All cases should contain a completion plan of proposed mitigation (further fieldwork extensions are unlikely to be considered).
Reorientation to new ways of working	<p>Demonstration that personal circumstances have resulted in the need to adjust working practises. This may relate to challenges in study space, supervision, IT connection etc.</p> <p>Includes an evaluation of % reduction in productivity levels in the affected period and mitigation strategies implemented.</p>	<p>Demonstration that personal circumstances have resulted in the need to adjust working practises over a prolonged period with evidence to explain why mitigation has not been possible.</p> <p>Includes an evaluation of % reduction in productivity levels during the affected period. This may relate to challenges in study space, supervision, IT connection etc.</p>	<p>Not Available</p> <p>It is expected that within 4 months, reorientation and adaptation to new ways of working has occurred and the research has been adjusted accordingly.</p> <p>DT of this length can only be awarded in cases that include other disrupting factors (e.g. Fieldwork plus health and wellbeing)</p>	<p>Not Available</p> <p>It is expected that within 4 months, reorientation and adaptation to new ways of working has occurred and the research has been adjusted accordingly.</p> <p>DT of this length can only be awarded in cases that include other disrupting factors (e.g. Fieldwork plus health and wellbeing)</p>
Reorientation impact or dissemination activities	Minor disruption to impact and/or dissemination activities (e.g. cancelled conferences) which are an essential aspect of the degree and/or will have	<p>Not Available</p> <p>There is unlikely to be any requirement for specific impact or dissemination of this length during the</p>	<p>Not Available</p> <p>There is unlikely to be any requirement for specific impact or dissemination of this length during the</p>	<p>Not Available</p> <p>There is unlikely to be any requirement for specific impact or dissemination of this length during the degree.</p>

	demonstrable impact on future career.	degree. Extensions beyond 2 months for this purpose will not be considered.	degree. Extensions beyond 2 months for this purpose will not be considered.	Extensions beyond 2 months for this purpose will not be considered.
Health and Wellbeing	<p>Demonstration that a student's personal health and/or wellbeing has been affected as a result of specific circumstances related to the Covid-19 outbreak.</p> <p>This includes a clear description of the nature and extent of the health and wellbeing issues, the impact of these issues on the research (including assessment of impact on productivity/specific time lost), the support that has been sought and agreed next steps.</p> <p>Supporting evidence and/or statement from supervisor required.</p> <p>In exceptional cases, an alternative staff member may provide evidence in-lieu of the supervisor.</p>	<p>Demonstration that a student's personal health and/wellbeing has been significantly affected as a result of specific circumstances related to the Covid-19 outbreak.</p> <p>This includes a clear description of the context over the relevant time period, what support has been sought and agreed next steps.</p> <p>Supporting evidence and/or statement from supervisor required, as well as details of the strategies for support that have been implemented (if appropriate).</p> <p>In exceptional cases, an alternative staff member may provide evidence in-lieu of the supervisor.</p>	<p>Demonstration that a student's personal health and/wellbeing has been severely affected as a result of specific circumstances related to the Covid-19 outbreak.</p> <p>This includes a clear description of the context over the relevant time period, what support has been sought and agreed next steps.</p> <p>Supporting evidence and/or statement from supervisor required, as well as details of the strategies for support that have been implemented (if appropriate).</p> <p>In exceptional cases, an alternative staff member may provide evidence in-lieu of the supervisor.</p>	<p>Not Available</p> <p>It is expected that within 4 months, support options have been investigated and strategies developed in conjunction with a medical professional. This may involve taking a Leave of Absence using the standard procedures.</p> <p>DT of this length can only be awarded in cases that include other disrupting factors (e.g. Fieldwork plus health and wellbeing).</p> <p>Supporting evidence and/or statement from supervisor required, as well as details of the strategies for support that have been implemented (if appropriate).</p> <p>In exceptional cases, an alternative staff member may provide evidence in-lieu of the supervisor.</p>

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.0	New guidance	Approved	Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office	08/Mar/21
1.1	Amended eligibility to permit students starting their studies after 1 March 2020 to apply for discounted time.	Approved	Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office	18/06/21
1.2	Changes to Associate Provost titles.	Approved	Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office	03/08/2021