

### COVID-19 impact statement

At the beginning of 2021, we introduced Covid-19 impact statements for students whose thesis had been affected by the impact of Covid-19 and who wished to include a mitigation statement with their thesis submission. Clearly, there has been ongoing disruption for many of our PhD candidates and so we are extending the opportunity for students to include these statements to the end of December 2022, and will then further review the policy.

We have been made aware of some (few) students being encouraged to continue with their projects beyond their stipendiary period to “catch up”. We hope that extending the use of Covid-19 impact statements will alleviate the pressure that some may feel to ensure that the work is completed as originally envisaged.

#### Guidance for students

Any doctoral student submitting their thesis for examination before the end of December 2022 (when we will again review the policy) may choose to submit a Covid-19 impact statement alongside their thesis. The statement is **not mandatory** and should only be included where a student wishes to highlight the impact of the pandemic and the changes made to their research as a result. Students considering the submission of a Covid-19 impact statement should discuss with their supervisor(s) in the first instance.

Covid-19 statements, not exceeding 500 words, should be submitted to the Doctoral Examinations Officer ([deo@reading.ac.uk](mailto:deo@reading.ac.uk)), together with the thesis, for examination. Students may wish to include:

- Details of planned research activities disrupted due to the impact of Covid-19, e.g. inability to undertake/complete fieldwork as a result of travel restrictions, lack of or reduced access to facilities such as laboratories / libraries / archives, changes in the way in which they were able to liaise with research participants etc,
- An explanation of the expected impact on the thesis if the stated research activities had not been disrupted and how disruption was mitigated against (where possible),
- Any other relevant factors relating to the impact of Covid-19 disruption on their research.

The statement should not include confidential personal information. Individual circumstances, such as illness and well-being concerns, should be discussed with the Doctoral Research Office at the time of occurrence, and would normally be addressed through suspension. In submitting a statement, students agree that the contents will be provided to their examiners (and chair where one is appointed), and would be seen by the Doctoral Examinations Officer and, in exceptional cases, the Dean.

If students have any queries, they should contact their School / Department Director of PGR Studies.

### **Guidance for examiners**

Examiners are responsible for ensuring that academic standards are upheld in relation to the criteria set out in the relevant Guide for Examiners of Research Degrees:

#### Examiners for Research Degrees – University of Reading

Where a student has submitted a Covid-19 impact statement, ***examiners may wish to allow some flexibility in relation to the scope and volume of the thesis***, such as where the planned research activities have been disrupted, ***but not in relation to its quality or the criteria*** for the recommendation of an award.

As the examiners' recommendation is a matter of academic judgement, it is their decision as to the allowance given to the scope and/or volume of the thesis in relation to the reported disruption experienced by the student. Examiners are asked to consider the information provided by the student and to decide whether, in their academic judgement, the research meets the requirements for the award of the appropriate degree. If examiners recommend that minor or major amendments are required, these should only be those necessary to meet the criteria for the award and not to address the disrupted research activities.

Examiners are asked to confirm that they have considered the Covid-19 impact statement in their joint report.