

Information for postgraduate researchers and supervisors on PGR study and examination affected by covid-19 measures

Studying and supervision

How will my supervision continue if I need to self-isolate and/or work remotely for social distancing?

During a period of remote working, the work to be done should be discussed and agreed between you and your supervisors as usual, including agreed progression targets/milestones and meetings. A normal schedule of supervision/line management can be maintained using alternative methods to face-to-face meetings as appropriate, such as Microsoft Teams video meetings, Skype, Zoom, or Facetime. Email or online chat can be used in the intervening periods. E-vision supervision reports should still be completed.

My Annual Review is due. Can this be managed remotely?

You should continue to prepare the necessary documents/evidence required as usual and plan to submit as normal. The application is made online, so you can do this remotely. The University will look to use alternatives to face-to-face meetings for Annual Review applications but in many cases, a Review may be done remotely or the assessment done using alternative methods, if warranted. Further information will be circulated. Currently, this will mainly affect students with March or May cohort start dates.

Can I continue laboratory work?

Lab work cannot be undertaken at present as the majority of University buildings are closed. Please contact your supervisors in the first instance for advice on your laboratory work.

Who should I contact for advice if all my supervisors are unavailable?

If none of your supervisors are available, you can contact your School Postgraduate Tutor (PGT). If no-one at all is available, contact PGRCurrentStudentEnquiries@tees.ac.uk.

What should I do if I am working on a research project with human participant interaction?

You should discuss this as a matter of urgency with your supervisors. There are two possible courses of action, either pause the elements involving human participants or adapt the methods with human participant interaction so that they can be done remotely.

If you pause the project, this does not mean that your PhD/MPhil work cannot continue, only that the elements involving human participant interaction must be paused. You do not need to notify your School Research Ethics Committee if you choose to pause these elements and you only need to make a request for a modification of your original ethics. Clearance if in adapting the human participation to be done remotely, you will raise the level of potential harm to the participants, for instance when working with vulnerable people who may need in-person monitoring when taking part.

If you pause a study already in progress, you will need to contact the participants to inform them about what is happening. Further guidance on this issue is forthcoming.

Illness and Isolation

I am working remotely. How do I tell someone I am sick or self-isolating?

Let your supervisors know by email and also contact studentwellbeing@tees.ac.uk

I am worried that I will feel isolated while I am working remotely - what can I do?

Try to stay in normal frequency of contact with supervisors, colleagues and friends using online tools and on the phone. If you have concerns about your well-being, you can contact studentwellbeing@tees.ac.uk

Will I be entitled to an Extension of Registration if I am ill?

For most students a short period of absence because of COVID-19 will be accommodated within the standard Registration period, and the project adjusted as necessary. If there are significant effects on your health, this would be dealt with through the University's usual Extenuating Circumstances regulations. If your illness is such that your study will be affected for more than three months, you should apply for an Interruption of Registration that will allow you to pause study while you recover and not lose time on your Registration. Ultimately, if more time is required at the end of a study, an Extension of Registration can be approved in the majority of cases that are illness-related.

Submission and examination

I have made a Declaration of Intention to Submit and I am due to submit my thesis

As long as your examination team has been approved, you are able to submit your thesis as PDF versions by email attachment to PRABSecretary@tees.ac.uk copying in PGRThesisSubmission@tees.ac.uk. You do not need to submit hard copies.

How will my PhD viva examination be affected?

There are two options depending on whether you are sick (option A) or whether you are working remotely (option B).

Option A: you are sick

Contact PGRCurrentStudentEnquiries@tees.ac.uk and PRABSecretary@tees.ac.uk to apply for an Extension of Assessment and let us know that you will be unable to take the viva as scheduled. It is vital that you do this as soon as you think you will be unable to undertake the viva, as the examiners will need to be informed and the viva rescheduled. *You should not undertake the viva if you are not feeling well as this could affect your performance.*

Option B: you are working remotely, but are not sick

The University is planning to schedule viva voce examinations using remote/online tools. You will be provided with information about how the remote examination will work when your submission is processed and the viva arrangements commence.

In some cases, it may not be possible to undertake the viva remotely, such as when an examiner is unable to use the remote/online system, and in this case you will be informed and the viva scheduled for a time when standard examination procedures can be used or another alternative, such as re-appointment of examiners.

Funding, visas and travel

Will I continue to receive my studentship stipend if I work remotely?

All PGRs in receipt of a University stipend will continue to be paid as normal. If you have had an Interruption of Registration and your stipends have been interrupted as a result and you return from your Interruption during the period when you will be working remotely, contact PGRCurrentStudentEnquiries@tees.ac.uk to ensure that stipends payment can be rescheduled. You should also use this email address if you do not receive your stipend for any reason.

If you are in receipt of funding from outside the University, you should check with your funder. If you are also a Graduate Tutor, your funding will not be affected however please contact your Head of Department for further details.

I am worried about my visa status, what should I do?

Students with questions about their visa or immigration status should contact the International Student Advisors at International.Compliance@tees.ac.uk

I receive a stipend, will I be entitled to sick pay if I am ill?

In the case of short-term, self-limiting illnesses lasting less than four weeks, the expectation is that the period of absence is accommodated within the Registration period. For PGRs in receipt of stipends, these will continue to be paid during a short-term illness. Normally, for periods of sickness longer than three months, you should apply for an Interruption of Registration and in such cases you may need to have the stipend payment stopped.

The terms and conditions for other funders may vary with respect to sick pay, so you should also check your funder's terms and conditions.

I'm on/due to go on a placement/to an international conference/external training. What should I do?

Speak to your supervisor to discuss the best course of action. *Non-essential travel should not be undertaken.* This applies to all conferences and other external events until further notice.

I am an overseas student and need to follow my Sponsor's instruction to leave the UK temporarily. What shall to do?

Speak to your supervisor and make sure that you fill in all forms to approve that you are leaving the UK as currently done. Make sure you keep in touch and conduct your research according to your plans and milestones.

Should you choose to remain in the UK, please be assured that the University will continue to fully support you in your research through this challenging time and that core services remain operational.

However if your circumstances are such that you now wish to return to your home country and complete your PhD remotely, the University will, subject to any change in Home Office guidance, allow a 60 day authorised leave of absence period to cover the remainder of the semester. If you are planning on returning home, please contact your Academic School to notify them of this by completing a Notification of Absence form and include your flight details.

In making a decision, please be aware that you may need to apply for a new CAS and be responsible for new visa fees on later return to the UK. It is therefore important that you contact the University by email at International.Compliance@tees.ac.uk before booking any return travel to the UK.

There may also be other matters you need to consider for example your current living arrangements and you should contact the University Accommodation Team if residing in University accommodation or your private landlord to understand your responsibilities under your tenancy arrangement

Should you need any further support on any of the matters outlined above, please contact:

For UKVI related issues International.Compliance@tees.ac.uk

For University Accommodation queries Accommodation@tees.ac.uk