

**Coronavirus: impact on research,  
Research Office statement, 17 March 2020**

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Coronavirus and the measures taken to control its spread are likely to have a disruptive impact on research activity. This note sets out the Research Office's approach to managing this impact.

Please seek to manage, and where possible progress, your projects in accordance with this guidance. Please be patient in waiting for a response to any queries you submit.

The situation is expected to continue to change and our advice will be updated as required.

A separate statement will be issued for research which requires approval from the Health Research Authority.

**International travel for research-related activity**

You will be aware of the current disruption to travel to, from or within a number of countries as a result of restrictions designed to limit the spread of coronavirus. Due to these restrictions and the highly uncertain nature of restrictions that may yet be introduced in different locations, the Research Office is changing policy on international travel on all projects with budgets managed under the GRS cost centre. This applies to all internal research awards, PGR bursary awards and awards from certain external funders. You may need to alter your project work plans as a result.

***For travel yet to be booked***

From 16 March 2020 the Research Office will not:

- Review and approve new travel requests (e.g. conferences, RIF awards) that would take place in the next three months (this includes conference applications for the 15 March deadline)
- Approve any expenditure incurred after 16 March 2020 for previously or newly approved projects (e.g. accommodation, travel, conference registration fees etc.)

***For travel already booked***

For costs already incurred, and reflecting the VC's advice on Friday, reiterated yesterday, advising postponement of non-essential, non-routine business travel:

- please engage with your travel agents/airlines etc to identify their cancellation policy. Where this policy allows you to cancel without incurring costs, or with minimal costs, please cancel.
  - If these cannot be cancelled, or you incur a high charge to do so, please contact the RO as soon as possible.
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This policy will be in place until **16 June at the earliest**, irrespective of the date of travel or the international travel destination. We may need to extend this period further in response to conditions nearer that date. During this period we will not sign Permission to Travel forms (required to gain University insurance cover) for any international travel. You must not travel overseas (including to Northern Ireland) on University business without insurance cover provided by the University. You must not travel on University business using personal insurance cover.

For project-related travel, or if a conference is postponed, it may be possible to reschedule and transfer your bookings to a later date: this is at the discretion of the airline/hotel etc. but many are relaxing their requirements.

The Research Office will issue a survey shortly for internal award-holders to capture information on the projects affected.

### **Domestic travel for research-related activity**

For domestic travel please continue to monitor announcements from the University and Public Health England and similar agencies in devolved administrations.

### **Managing internal funding awards**

For **internal funding** awards, the Research Office will provide extensions to the end dates of projects, allowing you more time to spend your funding award, where an impact on progress can be demonstrated. We will not enter into discussions with individual award-holders about the length of these extensions until there is greater certainty on travel conditions. It is most likely that we will do this as part of our annual monitoring process in June/ July 2020.

If inability to travel to events, workshops, etc. has an impact on the work of any staff employed specifically to work on the project (e.g. research assistants), you should seek to eliminate or minimise that impact as far as possible by adjusting your project workplan.

If you intend to begin recruitment of staff to work on your project, please delay this. If you have already entered the recruitment process but not yet made an offer of employment, please delay this. If you have made an offer of employment please contact the Research Office or HR to discuss.

All currently live employment contracts will be honoured, of course, but new posts or changes to contracts should not be initiated unless it is clear that the current restrictions on travel and fieldwork (please see below) will not compromise the postholder's work.

### **Managing external funding awards**

For **awards from external funders managed under the GRS cost centre**, the Research Office will work with you to manage the impact on projects. This applies to funding awards from research councils, European Commission, British Academy, Leverhulme Trust and a number of other funders.

A number of funders have already made public statements about their approach to this issue, indicating a willingness to extend projects on a no-cost basis and/or consider the extent to which force majeure events have occurred. Please note that it will be necessary to demonstrate that action was taken to minimise impact e.g. finding alternative ways to work.

If inability to travel to events, workshops, etc. has an impact on the work of any staff employed specifically to work on the project (e.g. research assistants) you should seek to eliminate or minimise that impact by adjusting your project workplan.

If you intend to begin recruitment of staff to work on your project, please delay this. If you have already entered the recruitment process but not yet made an offer of employment, please delay this. If you have made an offer of employment please contact the Research Office or HR to discuss.

All currently live employment contracts will be honoured, of course, but new posts or changes to contracts should not be initiated unless it is clear that the current restrictions on travel and fieldwork (please see below) will not compromise the postholder's work.

For external awards not managed in the GRS cost centre you should:

- Continue to monitor and follow advice from Public Health England and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Continue to monitor University policy here: <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/announcements/coronavirus/>
- Contact the relevant administrator or your funder to discuss.

Please note, these conditions may change as the situation develops and we will keep you updated: the most recent notice is always the relevant one.

### **Fieldwork**

Many researchers will be carrying out research and some of this will be with people who are classified as vulnerable, including the elderly and people with certain health conditions. In such circumstances, you will need to postpone your data collection. There may be circumstances where this will require reconsideration of the research and/or a significant review of the work-plan.

Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) should refer to guidance from the Graduate School (to be issued on Tuesday 17 March).

**17 March 2020**