Dear Student,

I wanted to write to you in this uncertain time to assure you that everyone in the University, including the Postgraduate Research Student Office in the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, is working hard to support you and your supervisors.

I know that you are receiving a lot of information from different sources, and that some key matters are still being decided at the University or national level, but I wanted to update CAHSS students on some of the areas which I know are of greatest concern to you.

**Information and communication**

The current viral pandemic has exerted extreme pressure on all affected countries, including the University sector, and the University of Edinburgh’s response to this is being kept under review, and is evolving as more information is received.

Please check <https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/covid-19>) fairly regularly as it is being updated (eg. general information for current PhD students will be added soon).

In addition, you should check for updates on the CAHSS postgraduate web pages: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/research-students/postgraduate-research-student-office>.

The CAHSS College Office staff are working remotely but can be contacted via email at cahss.pgadmissions@ed.ac.uk for any enquiries related to PG Admissions, or cahss.pgrexams@ed.ac.uk for assistance with any PGR matter relating to current student progress.

Your supervisors are also receiving advice directly both from CAHSS and from Postgraduate Directors and you should ensure that you keep in remote contact with them and let them know, for example, whether you need to take sickness leave for a couple of weeks, or need to apply for an interruption of studies for a longer period, particularly if you have caring responsibilities. In addition, please let them know if you are studying away from the University.

**Tier 4 Visa holders**

[The Student Immigration Service](https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/immigration) will be able to provide the most up to date advice and guidance relating to absences directly linked to Covid-19 and the impact on visas, so please do contact this team if you are at all concerned.

Students with Tier 4 Visas can apply for Authorised Interruption of Studies: 'The Home Office recognises the current situation is exceptional and has agreed that decisions on whether to withdraw a student from their studies are for sponsors to make. What this means is that if you will be interrupting your studies for over 60 days due to the Covid-19 outbreak, there may be no impact on your Tier 4 visa at this time. To ensure we are aware of your circumstances, you must email the Student Immigration Service, studentimmigration@ed.ac.uk and provide details of your authorised interruption of study.'

For further guidance see <https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/covid-19/current-students> and see <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/immigration/covid-19-important-information-about-your-visa>

**Extensions and finances**

I know that many of you are especially concerned that the self-isolation mandated by current guidance may lead to a significant interruption to research, even in the absence of acute sickness. Winding down or closure of research facilities may have a similar impact on research progress.

Therefore, some students may need to extend their studies. Unless the requirement for an extension is urgent, it would be better for any extension requests to be delayed until the long-term consequences have become clearer. Students are encouraged to record clearly the effects of the coronavirus on their research so that this can be clearly demonstrated if an extension is requested.

I know you are also worried about fees and funding implications of extensions to study. Both the University and research funders are currently formulating their own policies, and CAHSS will follow suit as the landscape becomes clearer. Some funders’ guidance is emerging and available through the Edinburgh Research Office at <https://www.ed.ac.uk/research-office/covid-19-research>

**Progression and assessment**

Annual progression reviews:

Schools are working to ensure that these can go ahead on schedule in a modified form and remotely.

Submission of Thesis:

All thesis submissions (examination copy and final award) **should be made electronically only**. You should not submit any printed versions, unless there are special arrangements for your specific degree programme (eg Musical Composition). Please contact cahss.pgrexams@ed.ac.uk for assistance.

Viva voce or final oral examination:

Given current uncertainty, postponement of oral/viva examinations, or delay in their organisation, may occur. However, oral examinations by video link may be offered and implemented **if you and all other parties are in agreement**. Your supervisor will talk to you about this option.

Graduations:

The University has taken the difficult decision to suspend all graduation ceremonies due to take place this summer.  This is obviously very disappointing news but we want to reassure you that this will not stop you getting your degree.

There are three options available to you:

* to defer to an in-person ceremony in Winter 2020 or Summer 2021
* to attend a virtual graduation
* to receive your certificate and not attend a ceremony

It is hugely disappointing not to have the opportunity to celebrate your achievements with you but we hope you understand that this is an unprecedented situation we are all facing. We hope you are keeping safe and well and please do keep in touch if you have any questions or concerns.

**Students with caring responsibilities:**

We are aware that some students will have caring responsibilities that will make it difficult to undertake work during the coronavirus lockdown. There is currently little direct information for anyone in this position on the University Coronavirus webpages. However, if you have concerns about the impact of caring responsibilities on your studies, please discuss this with your supervisor to identify any strategies for managing the current situation and be assured that, as usual, an Authorised Interruption of Studies can be granted in such circumstances.

We appreciate how difficult this situation is for everyone. The College Office Team is here to support you. Stay safe and please contact us if you have any concerns.

Best wishes,

Stephen

**Prof. Stephen Bowd**

Dean of Postgraduate Education

**Important links**:

* ***Edinburgh University updates:*** <https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/covid-19>
* For any matters related to coronavirus (Covid-19) that are not addressed on these pages please email covid19@ed.ac.uk
* ***Health and Safety Information:***[www.ed.ac.uk/health-safety](http://www.ed.ac.uk/health-safety)
* ***Health and Wellbeing:*** [www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing](http://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing)
* ***Information from funders:*** <https://www.ed.ac.uk/research-office/covid-19-research>
* This is a page launched by Edinburgh Research Office that will be updated as they receive information from funders.
* ***Library:*** <https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/library-museum-gallery/covid-19>.
* ***UK Government Website***: [UK Government website (https://edin.ac/2J8TKDd)](https://edin.ac/2J8TKDd)