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Covid-19 Impact Statements for Postgraduate Researchers

# General guidance

## What is the purpose of a Covid-19 Impact Statement?

In recognition that Covid-19 may have impacted on their research, postgraduate researchers (hereafter referred to as PGRs) are invited to submit a Covid-19 Impact Statement with the electronic copy of their thesis.

A PGR will be expected to produce and submit a thesis for examination which will be of the equivalent quality and rigour to one that would have been produced under normal circumstances. There is an acknowledgement however, that for some PGRs their work will have changed from what was originally planned, in terms of the scope and type of research.

The purpose of the Covid-19 Impact Statement is for PGRs to describe any restrictions or difficulties experienced in undertaking their research as a result of Covid-19 and to provide details of any alternative arrangements made to complete the work. Such changes may include altering the scope of the research, limiting the range of any experiments or fieldwork, changes to the methods used, or not consulting certain material because of restrictions on access to physical collections and archives. Details of PGRs’ personal circumstances should **not** be included ([see Part B](#_Part_B._What) for further information).

Examiners will be asked to take account of Covid-19 Impact Statements when examining theses. If you are required to undertake a viva voce examination, the statement may help to inform questions and candidates may be invited to elaborate on the impact of Covid-19 on their research and the adjustments they needed to make.

The statement is not compulsory and should only be included where a PGR wishes to highlight the impact of the pandemic and the changes made to their research as a result. PGRs considering the submission of a Covid-19 Impact Statement should discuss this with their supervisor(s) in the first instance.

# Guidance for PGRs

## Part A. Do I have to include a Covid-19 Impact Statement?

A Covid-19 Impact Statement is optional; it is not compulsory and should only be included where a PGR wishes to highlight the impact of the pandemic and the steps taken to adjust their research activities.

PGRs who wish to include a Covid-19 Impact Statement with their thesis should, in the first instance, discuss the inclusion of a statement with their supervisor(s).

PGRs can submit a Covid-19 Impact Statement even if they have been given an extension to their submission because of disruption to their research caused by the pandemic, as it is accepted that the research direction may still have had to change.

PGRs who are required to undertake a viva voce examination, who do not submit a Covid-19 Impact Statement, will still have the opportunity to inform Examiners of any impact that Covid-19 has had on their research at the viva voce examination.

In submitting a statement, a PGR agrees that the contents will be provided to their Examination Team. Examiners will consider the statement as contextual information to support their understanding of any changes to the scope and volume of the PGR’s work, but not in relation to its quality or the [criteria for the recommendation of an award.](https://www.hud.ac.uk/policies/registry/awards-pgr/)

If a PGR decides not to submit a Covid-19 Impact Statement, that cannot be used as grounds for appeal at a later stage.

## Part B. What information should I include in my Covid-19 Impact Statement?

The Covid-19 Impact Statement should only relate to disruptions to relevant research activities caused by the pandemic and to the content of the thesis. PGRs should not disclose information about how the pandemic impacted them personally in the statement, such as personal illness, caring responsibilities or funding issues, as support mechanisms, such as an interruption to study or extension, are intended to account for such issues.

The statement, which must not exceed 750 words, will provide the Examiners with a brief summary of any planned research activities disrupted as a result of Covid-19 restrictions, and any adjustments made to planned research activities in response to these restrictions. The statement should cover some or all of the following:

* Details of any planned research activities curtailed by the pandemic because of, for example, lack of access to facilities, libraries, archives, research participants, fieldwork, etc.
* A summary of any decisions/actions taken to mitigate for any work or data collection/analyses that were prevented due to the pandemic.
* If appropriate, an explanation of how any planned research activities curtailed by the pandemic would have contributed to the research.
* Any other relevant factors on the impact of Covid-19 on research activities and the contents of the thesis.
* The statement should be signed by the PGR and Main Supervisor.

These suggestions are for guidance and do not represent an exhaustive list of impacts that a PGR may have experienced.

## Part C. When and where should I submit my Covid-19 Impact Statement?

The Covid-19 Impact Statement should be submitted at the same time as the thesis, and the PGR will be asked to indicate on the Coversheet and Candidate Declaration Form whether they are including a Covid-19 Impact Statement with their thesis. The completed Impact Statement should be submitted along with the other [Research Degree Submission Forms](https://www.hud.ac.uk/registry/current-students/pgr/thesis/submitting/) and will be sent to the Examiners alongside the thesis.

The Covid-19 Impact Statement will only need to be submitted once alongside the initial thesis submission and must not be included when the final copy is provided for the repository.

The PGR Covid-19 Impact Statement form can be found in the [PGR Handbook](https://www.hud.ac.uk/registry/current-students/pgr/thesis/submitting/).

# Guidance for supervisors

PGRs may submit a Covid-19 Impact Statement to take into account the impact of Covid-19 when undertaking their research. PGRs are encouraged to discuss the statement with their supervisory team before submitting their statement. Supervisors will be asked to sign the statement, which will then be provided to the Examiners.

Examiners will be asked to take the information provided in the Covid-19 Impact Statement into account when assessing the thesis, and considering their recommended outcome and any further work required, recognising that the Covid-19 situation is ongoing and research activity may continue to be restricted or limited for some time.

The PGR’s personal circumstances should not be discussed, as there are other mechanisms to mitigate for this, such as interruptions and extensions.

# Guidance for Examiners

The purpose of the Covid-19 statement is to provide a contextual overview to support the Examiners’ understanding of any changes to the originally planned research activities, due to unforeseen circumstances caused by the pandemic. In considering the guidance below, Examiners should bear in mind that their judgement of the substantial significance of the work should take into account what may reasonably be expected of a capable and diligent student after three or at most four years of full-time study in the case of a full-time student, or six or at most seven years in the case of a part-time student doctoral student. Or in the case of a Master’s by Research student, one year of full-time study or two years part-time.

Examiners may need to exercise academic judgement in the research scope and volume of the thesis (and/or any software or practice-based components submitted). Nevertheless, the quality of the research submitted must meet the criteria for the recommendation of an award. Examiners will decide whether, in their academic judgement, the thesis meets the criteria of the award on which it is being assessed, to ensure academic standards for the award are met, in line with the UK’s legal and academic frameworks.

The variance of research scope and volume may be discipline specific and may include:

* Consideration of the scale of research activity;
* The volume of evidence presented;
* Consideration of the breadth versus depth of the work;
* The use of different methodologies or combinations of methodologies;
* The level of originality and novelty;
* The extent to which the achievements of the candidate robustly demonstrate the standards required, through a coherent programme of research, for a threshold judgement by the examiners.

Examiners should take into account the circumstances detailed in a Covid-19 Impact Statement when considering the recommendations available to them. Examiners will be asked to consider this statement in relation to the scope and volume of work achieved by a PGR and take into account where disrupted/curtailed research activities have affected the scope and volume of work in a thesis, while assessing the PGR against the assessment criteria for the relevant research degree. Details of the assessment criteria for University of Huddersfield’s Research Awards can be found in the individual [Award Regulations](https://www.hud.ac.uk/policies/registry/awards-pgr/) for which are being examined.

Examiners must discount any information in a Covid-19 statement that does not relate to disruptions to research activities caused by the pandemic and to the content of the thesis. For example, any reference to the impact of the pandemic on personal circumstances, which could have been mitigated through other University support mechanisms such as an interruption or extension.

In their Joint Feedback and Amendments Form, the Examiners must include a summary of their assessment of how a thesis with reduced scope and/or volume as a consequence of the disruption caused by the pandemic meets the academic standards of the required award.

Where Examiners require corrections, or a resubmission, they must take into account any allowance made by them on the limitations in volume and scope of the thesis due to the pandemic. Examiners must consider what corrections are necessary to meet the criteria for the award and must not require additional work aimed only at addressing where research activities have been curtailed by Covid-19 restrictions.