

COVID-19 Guidelines for Higher Degree by Research Candidates

For HDR candidates who are directly impacted by COVID-19, the University is committed to providing a support package which includes access to leave, extensions to candidature and, for recipients of University-managed stipend scholarships, extensions to scholarship support. Candidates are not confined to accessing only one of the options detailed in this guideline, and if eligible can apply for more than one. As we are seeking to provide solutions tailored to individuals, each application will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Candidates who have been impacted by COVID-19 and are unable to progress their research, can access the provisions detailed in this guideline to support them through this challenging time. Reasons for accessing support provisions can include, but are not limited to:

- travel restrictions
- lack of access to, or loss of data
- lack of access to resources or facilities
- cannot undertake fieldwork to complete their research
- have carer responsibilities
- are unwell.

We encourage you to continue your research wherever possible, and your supervisor and Faculty will support you through this. However, if this is not possible, Graduate Research and your Faculty can help you access the options below that are appropriate for your individual circumstances.

Support provisions	Who can apply for this	Any conditions or limitations	How to apply	Full details
Leave - compelling and compassionate leave	Domestic and International candidates enrolled in research only	<p>Candidates in receipt of stipend scholarship have access to limited paid leave.</p> <p>If you are enrolled in coursework units you cannot take leave mid-semester.</p> <p>If you are an International candidate, on a student visa, the assessment and approval of the UC International Student Support Service (ISSS) is required.</p> <p>Visa restrictions may apply to international candidates.</p>	Application for Leave from Candidature form	1.1 – 1.10

Leave – sick leave	Domestic and International candidates	Candidates in receipt of stipend scholarship have access to limited paid leave. If you are an International candidate, on a student visa, the assessment and approval of the UC International Student Support Service (ISSS) is required.	< 10 days per annum by negotiation with Primary Supervisor 10+ days, or for any period if in receipt of stipend scholarship - Application for Leave from Candidature	2.1 - 2.8
Leave – recreation leave	Domestic and International candidates	20 days per year	No application required	3.1 - 3.2
Variation – change of enrolment load (full-time to part-time)	Domestic and international offshore candidates	Cannot change enrolment load mid-semester.	Unit Registration form	4.1 – 4.7
Extension – candidature	Domestic and International candidates	Up to a maximum of six months. If you are an International student on a student visa, the assessment and approval of the UC International Student Support Service (ISSS) is required.	COVID-19 HDR Candidature Extension form	5.1 – 5.10
Extension – scholarship	Domestic and International candidates in receipt of a University-managed stipend scholarship	Up to a maximum of six months	COVID-19 HDR Candidature Extension form	6.1 – 6.5
Leave – intermission	Domestic and International candidates	Six-month suspension of enrolment must commence at beginning of a semester. Normally limit of two intermissions during candidature. Scholarship recipients may not be eligible for intermission. If you are an International candidate on a student visa, the assessment and approval of the UC International Student Support Service (ISSS) is required.	Application for Leave from Candidature form	7.1 – 7.8
Other University support				8.

1. Compelling and compassionate leave

- 1.1. Domestic candidates who are **not** in receipt of a stipend scholarship, and who cannot progress their research for one or more of the reasons stated above, may be eligible to take compelling and compassionate leave.
- 1.2. Compelling and compassionate leave is considered a temporary suspension of studies and your maximum submission date and milestones will be adjusted by the by the period of leave approved.
- 1.3. While on compelling and compassionate leave you will still be enrolled in the course and have access to the UC library and other services, but your day count will stop, and you will not be expected to continue your research.
- 1.4. Candidates enrolled in coursework units are not permitted to take leave mid-semester and will remain enrolled and need to negotiate any required adjustments with individual unit convenors.
- 1.5. Applications for international candidates for compelling and compassionate leave are assessed and approved by International Student Support Service.

Scholarship Recipients

- 1.6. HDR candidates who are in receipt of a University-managed stipend scholarship (e.g. RTP Stipend Scholarship) and who cannot progress their research for one or more of the reasons stated above will be permitted to utilise the scholarship's additional sick leave provisions (up to 60 calendar days over the duration of the scholarship) for compelling and compassionate leave; this means you can continue to receive your stipend payment while on leave for a maximum of 60 calendar days.
- 1.7. Applications for leave for international candidates are assessed and approved by International Student Support Service.
- 1.8. Access to paid compelling and compassionate leave will take into consideration any paid sick leave already accessed by the scholarship recipient, and further paid leave will be reduced by that period.
- 1.9. Stipend recipients who have exhausted their paid leave entitlement can access unpaid compelling and compassionate leave if required.

Applying for compelling and compassionate leave

- 1.10. To apply for Compelling and Compassionate Leave you must:
 - 1.10.1. Complete an *Application for Leave from Candidature* form with supporting documentation, which details the impact of COVID-19 on research/progress, carer responsibilities, or health. You may be asked to provide additional information if the details of your request are unclear.
 - 1.10.2. Submit the completed form and supporting documentation with your Primary Supervisor's approval to your Faculty Associate Dean Research (ADR). The Faculty ADR will progress the form through the appropriate approval process.
 - 1.10.3. Applications for compelling and compassionate leave from international candidates will be forwarded to International Student Support Service for consideration.

2. Sick leave

- 2.1. If you are unwell (as a result of COVID-19 or otherwise) you are eligible to take up to 10 days sick leave each calendar year without effect on the length of your candidature (milestone due dates and maximum submission date will not be adjusted).
- 2.2. Sick leave extends to responsibilities such as caring for a sick child, spouse or parent, and includes mental health and wellbeing impacts.
- 2.3. For periods of sick leave of 10 or more continuous days, you must apply formally for leave, using the *Application for Leave from Candidature* form, so that your maximum submission date and milestones can be adjusted.
- 2.4. Candidates in receipt of a stipend scholarship must apply formally for sick leave using the *Application for Leave from Candidature* form even if it is less than 10 days.
- 2.5. Scholarship recipients' access to paid sick leave will take into consideration any paid sick leave already accessed previously during candidature and any compelling or compassionate paid leave accessed for COVID-19 reasons, and further paid leave will be reduced by that period.
- 2.6. Scholarship recipients who have exhausted their paid leave entitlement can access unpaid leave if required.

Applying for sick leave

- 2.7. To apply for sick leave of less than 10 days, liaise directly with your Primary Supervisor and Faculty. No approval is required, unless you are a scholarship recipient, in which case see 2.8 below.
- 2.8. To apply for sick leave of 10 or more continuous days or for any period if you are in receipt of a stipend scholarship:
 - 2.8.1. Complete an *Application for Leave from Candidature* form with supporting documentation; and
 - 2.8.2. Submit the completed form and supporting documentation with your Primary Supervisor's approval to your Faculty Associate Dean Research. The Faculty ADR will progress the form through the appropriate approval process.
 - 2.8.3. Applications for sick leave from international candidates will be forwarded to International Student Support Service for consideration.

3. Recreation leave

- 3.1. All HDR candidates are entitled to take up to 20 working days recreational leave per year without effect on the duration of their candidature (milestone due dates and maximum submission date will not be adjusted).
- 3.2. Recreation leave does not need to be formally approved but requires the agreement of your Primary Supervisor.

4. Change of enrolment load (full-time to part-time)

- 4.1. Domestic candidates and international candidates studying offshore (not on a Student Visa) who are not in receipt of a stipend scholarship can change their study load from full-time to part-time, or vice versa, with the approval of their Faculty.
- 4.2. A change to enrolment load cannot be processed mid-semester.
- 4.3. International candidates studying in Australia on a Student Visa are required to maintain a full-time study load.

Scholarship recipients

- 4.4. An exception can be made to the RTP Stipend Scholarship Conditions of Award to allow domestic or international offshore scholarship recipients who have been impacted by COVID-19 to change their enrolment load from full-time to part-time if progress continues to be impacted by COVID-19. Please be aware that part-time scholarships are subject to having income tax withheld – more info [here](#).
- 4.5. Domestic or international offshore candidates who are in receipt of other University-managed stipend scholarships (not RTP Stipend Scholarships) should seek advice from their Faculty regarding their eligibility (a) to change enrolment to part-time and (b) to retain their scholarship if they do so.

Applying to change enrolment load

- 4.6. If you *are not* in receipt of a stipend scholarship and wish to change your enrolment load you must:
 - 4.6.1. Complete an *HDR Unit Registration* form indicating the change of unit details (full-time unit to part-time unit).
 - 4.6.2. Submit your HDR Unit Registration form with your Primary Supervisor's approval to your Faculty HDR Convenor.
- 4.7. If you *are* in receipt of an RTP Stipend Scholarship and wish to change your enrolment load you must:
 - 4.7.1. Complete an *HDR Unit Registration* form indicating the change of unit details (full-time unit to part-time unit).
 - 4.7.2. Submit the completed form and supporting documentation which details the impact of COVID-19 on research/progress, carer responsibilities or health, to your Primary Supervisor and Faculty ADR. The Faculty ADR will progress the form through the appropriate approval process. You may be asked to provide additional information if the details of your request are unclear.
- 4.8. If you are in receipt of a non-RTP stipend scholarship refer to 4.6.

5. Extension to candidature

- 5.1. Candidates who have been unable to progress their research for one or more of the reasons detailed above will be able to apply for an extension to candidature, up to a maximum of 6 months.
- 5.2. Applications for extension to candidature will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and will take into consideration the stage of your course, the nature and duration of impact, any leave taken, capacity for your project to be revised or reframed in response to COVID-19 restrictions, adjustments or strategies utilised to date or to be implemented to address impacts, and any other relevant factors.
- 5.3. Candidates approved for an extension to candidature will be permitted to enrol for up to one additional semester beyond your maximum submission date (overtime enrolment) without financial penalty; they will be exempted from paying tuition fees for that period (excluding SSAF).
- 5.4. Candidates who have been provisionally approved for an extension to candidature are required to contact their Faculty
- 5.5. International candidates should note that an extension to candidature may also require an extension to visa.
- 5.6. At this stage, COVID-related candidature extensions submitted after 31 December 2022 will not be considered. Noting, the University will continue to monitor the impacts and restrictions associated with COVID-19.

Applying for an extension to candidature

- 5.7. Complete a *COVID-19 HDR Extension* form with supporting documentation, which must detail the impact of COVID-19 on research/progress, carer responsibilities or health, and include the period of impact and expected delay in progress. You may be asked to provide additional information if the details of your request are unclear.
- 5.8. Submit your *COVID-19 HDR Extension* form with your Primary Supervisor's approval to your Faculty Associate Dean Research. The Faculty ADR will progress the form through the appropriate approval process.
- 5.19. Applications for extension of candidature from international candidates will be forwarded to International Student Support Service for consideration.

6. Stipend Scholarship extensions

- 6.1. Candidates currently in receipt of a University-managed stipend scholarship who have been unable to progress their research for one or more of the reasons detailed above will be able to apply for an extension to their scholarship, up to a maximum of 6 months.
- 6.2. Applications for extension to stipend scholarship will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and will take into consideration the stage of your course, the nature and duration of impact, any leave taken, capacity for your project to be revised or reframed in response to COVID-19 restrictions, adjustments or strategies utilised to date or to be implemented to address impacts, and any other relevant factors.
- 6.3. At this stage, COVID-related stipend extensions submitted after 31 December 2022 will not be considered. Noting, the University will continue to monitor the impacts and restrictions associated with COVID-19.

Applying for a stipend scholarship extension

- 6.4. Complete a *COVID-19 HDR Extension* form with supporting documentation, which must detail the impact of COVID-19 on research/progress, carer responsibilities or health, and include the period of impact, expected delay in progress and **details of your scholarship** (the details required are listed on the form). You may be asked to provide additional information if the details of your request are unclear.
- 6.5. Submit your *COVID-19 HDR Extension* form to your Faculty Associate Dean Research. The Faculty ADR will progress the form through the appropriate approval process.

7. Intermission

- 7.1. All HDR candidates are eligible to apply for intermission during their candidature. Intermission is a voluntary suspension of studies for a period of six months.
- 7.2. If you are an International student on a student visa, the assessment and approval of the UC International Student Support Service (ISSS) is required for an intermission. International candidates should note that approval of an intermission may also require an extension to visa.
- 7.3. The total period of intermission from your course should not exceed twelve months, except in exceptional circumstances. If you have already taken twelve months intermission, your application for a further intermission will be considered as a policy exemption.
- 7.4. While on intermission your enrolment and day count will be stopped, your maximum submission date will be adjusted. You will not have access to the UC library and other services during intermission and you will not be expected to continue your research.

Scholarship recipients

- 7.5. Candidates who are in receipt of an RTP Stipend Scholarship and approved for intermission will not receive stipend payments while on intermission.
- 7.6. Candidates who are in receipt of other University-managed stipend scholarships (not RTP Stipend Scholarships) should refer to their scholarship conditions of award and seek advice from their Faculty regarding their eligibility to apply for intermission.

Applying for intermission

- 7.7. To apply for intermission, you must complete an *Application for Leave from Candidature* form with supporting documentation to your Faculty Associate Dean Research (ADR). The Faculty ADR will progress the form through the appropriate approval process.
- 7.8. Applications for intermission from international candidates will be forwarded to International Student Support Service by HDR Support for consideration.

8. Other University support

We understand that our onshore international students are significantly impacted by the current situation. You may be dealing with the loss of a job, residential tenancy concerns, or change to working on your research project from home.

We urge our international students to advise us of your needs or concerns by sending an email to welfare@canberra.edu.au. These cases will be handled individually, according to the needs of each student/HDR candidate.

The University of Canberra has a range of support options available to students and HDR candidates. These are listed on the UC [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) Student support website](#).

Access to financial support

Given the financial impact of COVID-19, we know that our students and HDR candidates need support and assistance during this time.

The University has set up a fund to help International students experiencing hardship (UC Student Empowerment Fund), the [International Student Support Services](#) at internationalstudent@canberra.edu.au will be able to give you advice about your visa and finances. We may be able to consider options like fee waivers or small loans.

In addition, the University has provided [links to other website and resources](#) to help students and HDR candidates access financial support, materials and practical advice to navigate this difficult time.

Assistance with groceries

The UCX Food Pantry has partnered with Canberra Relief Network to provide relief hampers for students. Hampers consist of a variety of non-perishable food items and some essential toiletries. Each student/HDR candidate is entitled to one hamper per month, as each hamper is designed to meet the needs of a family of four for a week. Registration for this is ESSENTIAL and should be done before 12pm on Mondays. [Register](#) online.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Many HDR candidates may be feeling anxious about their health, and that of their family or loved ones, their candidature, finances, or may be experiencing mental health issues. The [Medical and Counselling Centre](#) remains open, and provides e-health consultations via online video and telephone throughout the COVID-19 crisis. All doctors and counsellors are available for telehealth appointments from Monday, 30 March 2020.