

Impact of Covid-19 restrictions on Postgraduate Research (PGR) Studies: KCL Covid-19 Impact Statement Policy

Context and purpose

King's College London recognises the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on PGR students. Students are expected to adapt their research activities to mitigate, as far as possible, the disruptions caused by Covid-19 restrictions. Nevertheless, the impact of disruptions on the research may merit explanation in the thesis. Examiners should consider the student's *Covid-19 impact statement* in relation to the scope and volume of the research student's work whilst always upholding the academic requirements for a research degree award (see the [KCL Academic Regulations for the criteria for thesis and award](#)). The quality threshold for the award remains unchanged and there must be no compromise in the integrity of the examination or the award, but examiners are invited to consider aspects of the research design and execution where effort was made or was intended, but which subsequently had to be discarded because of COVID-19, and the effect on the work of that mitigation.

This policy is active for any thesis submissions where students were active during the time of the pandemic and covers the following research degrees:¹

- Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- Master in Philosophical Studies (MPhilStud)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Doctor in Health Care (DHC)
- Doctor in Theology and Ministry (DThM)
- Doctor in Professional Studies (DrPS)
- Doctor in Education (EdD)
- Doctor of Medicine (Research) (MD(Res))
- Doctor in Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy)

Option to include a Covid-19 impact statement

The College recognises that the pandemic is likely to have had multiple impacts on the type and quantity of PGR students' work, as well as on their mental health and well-being. Any PGR student affected by the pandemic who submits a thesis may include a Covid-19 impact statement in the format set out below. A statement is not compulsory and should only be included where a PGR student wishes to highlight the impact of the pandemic and the steps taken to adjust their research activities.

The Covid-19 impact statement can be submitted (i) as a cover note submitted to the examiners to accompany the thesis, or (ii) as part of the thesis itself between the abstract and the author's declaration.

PGR students should discuss the inclusion of a Covid-19 impact statement with their supervisory team and draft the content together², but the decision to include the statement ultimately rests with the student. Equally, if submitted as part of the examined thesis itself, the student will decide if the statement will be included in the final version of the thesis deposited with the library.³

¹ This policy also applies to students whose examination outcome is 12 or 18 months to revise and resubmit their thesis for re-examination.

² If the student and supervisory team do not agree on the content of the Covid-19 impact statement, the matter should be mediated via local PGR leads.

³ If the statement is included as part of the thesis it will not form part of the overall word count

Content of the Covid-19 impact statement

The Impact Statement should not exceed 800 words and could include the following information:

- Details of how disruption caused by Covid-19 has impacted the research, for example, an inability to collect/analyse data as a result of travel restrictions, restricted access to research facilities/material (e.g., biological service units, labs, patients/hospitals, libraries, archives)
- A description of how any planned work that has not been conducted would have fitted within the thesis' narrative (e.g., through method development, development of analytical skills or advancement of hypotheses)
- A summary of any decisions / actions taken to mitigate for any work or data collection/analyses that were prevented by Covid-19.

The Impact Statement should not include the following information:

Issues arising from illness, disability, bereavement, or any exceptional circumstances not related to disruptions to research activities caused by the pandemic⁴.

Examiners' Notice:

Examiners will be provided with the Covid-19 mitigation notice as below if the student submits a Covid-19 impact statement:

Examiners should consider the submitted Covid-19 impact statement in relation to the scope and volume of the research student's work but should always assess the thesis and the student at the oral examination using the criteria as set out as in the [KCL Academic Regulations](#). Examiners should consider whether the quality of the ideas and work meet academic standards while taking account of any potential limitations on the research conducted due to Covid-19 restrictions. The quality threshold for the award remains unchanged and there must be no compromise in the integrity of the examination or the award, but examiners are invited to consider aspects of the research design and execution where effort was made or was intended, but which subsequently had to be discarded because of COVID-19, and the effect on the work of that mitigation.

⁴ The statement should focus on changes to the thesis as a result of Covid-19. Whilst a range of personal circumstances may have influenced the impacts, these do not need to be described. In addition, such factors may also have been addressed through other mechanisms, such as King's Inclusion Plan (KIP), exemptions and interruptions of studies.