**Covid-19 impact statement guidance**

**Guidance for Students**

We recognize that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the research of many of our doctoral students. As a result, some students may have had to adapt their projects considerably and this may be a source of anxiety as students approach final submission.

We are introducing an optional Covid-19 thesis impact form which students can submit with their thesis and RDCom10 candidate’s declaration form. The Graduate School will send the form along with the submitted thesis to the examiners once their appointment has been confirmed. This will enable students to provide information to their examiners outlining how the pandemic has affected their research and the content of the final thesis. The criteria for our doctoral awards remain the same and students completing this form should understand that it cannot be used as a plea for leniency. Equally, students who chose not to complete this form cannot use this as the basis for later academic appeal.

The form is also not intended to capture the personal impact of the pandemic. We appreciate that many students have been personally affected by Covid-19 and have put in place measures to support students in these cases, such as through interruptions or extensions to their period of study and through the provision of additional hardship funding. We anticipate, therefore, that the impact of illness or other personal circumstances should already have been addressed prior to thesis submission through these interventions.

We do recognize, however, that there are some personal circumstances which may also impact upon research design, for example if a student was shielding and therefore unable to access specialist spaces. We would advise candidates affected in this way to address this in general terms in their declaration and, for their own protection, to avoid disclosing sensitive personal information as far as possible.

Your statement should focus on how your research and thesis have been affected by the pandemic.

For example, you should highlight if Covid-19 restrictions meant that some research was delayed as a result of closure of specialist spaces such as labs, studio spaces, libraries or archives or as a result of restrictions on research travel/fieldwork, face-to-face research or public performance.

You should also outline if restrictions have resulted in your thesis being reduced in scope as a result of lack of availability of anticipated data.

It is a normal part of the research process for adjustments to be made to the focus, methods and or design of a project as the research progresses. Nonetheless, it may also be helpful for your examiners to understand how you had intended to conduct your project prior to the pandemic in order to make clear the adjustments that you made to the original project design in response to Covid-19 restrictions. This may include changing methodology/datasets, project timetable and/or project focus in light of the pandemic.

Guidance for supervisors

Supervisors should review and sign the student’s Covid 19 thesis impact form to confirm that it provides an accurate summary of the adjustments that the student has had to make as a result of the pandemic. Supervisors should also ensure that students do not disclose sensitive personal information on their form as the intent of the form is to capture the impact of Covid-19 on the research project rather than on the student’s personal circumstances. In discussing the form with their students, supervisors should ensure that students are aware that the purpose of the form is to provide contextual information, not to request that examiners exercise leniency in considering the research project.

Guidance for examiners

Examiners are expected to review the Covid impact form submitted by the candidate and they may wish to discuss it with them during the viva. Examiners are also reminded that the purpose of the form is contextual – to explain how the pandemic may have impacted the scope and length of the thesis. It does not change our criteria or expectations regarding the nature and quality of doctoral theses.