

Kent Covid Impact Information March 2021

1. Introduction

1.1. From the start of the pandemic, research students have been advised to adapt (where possible) their research activities to address and manage disruptions caused by Covid-19 restrictions. Staff have also been advised to show leniency and understanding in their roles as internal examiners without lowering the quality of the theses being examined.

Kent is now extending mitigation in relation to such disruption to allow students to include a statement in their dissertation on the impact of Covid-19 disruptions on their PhDs.

1.2. Examiners will consider this statement in relation to the scope and volume of the research student's work whilst maintaining the requirements for the award of research degrees (see our [Research Degree regulations](#)). The quality threshold for the award must remain unchanged and there must be no compromise in the integrity of the examination or the award.

1.3. This policy covers all research degrees and is in force for submissions made from 1 April 2021 until a date to be determined.

1.4. Adjustments to research projects are a common part of study, but the pandemic has in many cases created significant ongoing changed circumstances. Research students will reflect on the impact of the pandemic on the design and conduct of their research, including through discussions that form part of the annual progress review process. Any redesigns to the project will form part of the narrative of the work and should be included in the research design section of the dissertation. Suspensions and extensions may also be appropriate ways of mitigating the impact of the pandemic but will not always be sufficient on their own. Even where redesigned research activities are discussed in the dissertation and/or where suspensions or extensions have been granted, research students may wish to provide an additional and separate statement to their examiners on how the impact of Covid-19 restrictions has changed their project.

1.5. The focus of the policy is on assessment and the inclusion of a statement in a dissertation submitted for examination. Divisions may have discipline-specific advice for students in place that aligns with, and complements, this policy.

2. The decision to include a Covid-19 statement

2.1. Any research student who submits a dissertation in the timeframe permitted by this policy may include a Covid-19 statement in the format set out below. A statement is not compulsory and should only be included where a research student wishes to highlight the impact of the pandemic and the steps taken to adjust their research activities.

2.2. Research students should discuss the inclusion of a Covid-19 statement in their dissertation with their supervisors, but the decision to include the statement ultimately rests with the student.

3. Covid-19 statement format

3.1. The Covid-19 statement must be included in the dissertation immediately after the abstract on separate pages. The statement is required for the examination copy but should also remain in the final copy deposited with the Library, whether electronic or hard copy.

3.2. The statement, which must not exceed 800 words, will form a summary of any planned research activities disrupted by Covid-19 restrictions and the extent to which it was possible to adapt the work in those changed circumstances. The following may be included:

3.2.1. 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. Information on any curtailed training should be included only insofar as it relates to the impact on research activities and on the dissertation.

3.2.2. An acknowledgement of the anticipated contribution and value to the dissertation if those research activities had not been curtailed and what was possible to include in the dissertation in the circumstances, including where alternative choices were made to adapt the work and whether there are any weaknesses that could not be overcome.

3.2.3. Any other relevant factors on the impact of Covid-19 on research activities and on the contents of the dissertation.

3.3. Issues arising from illness, disability, bereavement, or any exceptional circumstances not related to disruptions to research activities caused by the pandemic must not be included, as there are other mechanisms to address those issues such as extensions.

3.4 There is no format for the form other than it needs to be under the required word length and its title should be **Covid-19 Impact Statement** and it needs to be signed and dated by both the student and a member of the supervisory team.

4. Guidance for examiners on Covid-19 statements

4.1. Examiners must maintain academic standards in relation to the criteria for awards as set out in our [Research Degree regulations](#). Where a Covid-19 statement is included in a dissertation there can be some flexibility in the consideration of the scope and volume of the work produced, but not on its quality or on the thresholds for the award.

4.2 The examiners' consideration of the scope and volume of the work produced in the dissertation may take into account where curtailed research activities have reduced what was possible in the period allowed. The dissertation must however still satisfy the standards required for the award.

4.3. 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 dissertation.

4.4. The recommendation from examiners is a matter of academic judgement and therefore it is their decision on what allowance to give to any limitations in the volume and scope of the dissertation due to the impact of Covid-19. Examiners must consider closely the result of pandemic-related disruptions in the production of the dissertation and decide whether in their academic judgement the dissertation meets the criteria for the award of the research degree.

4.5. The examiners' joint final report must incorporate a brief overview of their consideration of a Covid-19 statement and their determination of the impact on the scope and volume of the dissertation within the context of maintaining the academic standards required for the award.

4.6 Any corrections, or a resubmission, required by the examiners must take into account any allowance made by them on the limitations in volume and scope of the dissertation 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.