

The rapidly evolving situation with COVID-19 brings significant challenges for everyone, including our researchers and other award holders. At this time, we know that everyone's immediate focus should be on the safety and well-being of themselves, those that they are responsible for and their families.

We recognise that COVID-19 is likely to have a substantial impact on the research and researchers we are supporting, and other activities we have agreed to fund across Moorfields Eye Hospital and the UCL Institute of Ophthalmology. **Although the full effects will take some time to become clear, we intend to address the issues that arise as sympathetically and flexibly as possible.**

Our current position for current grant holders is as follows.

1 General considerations

We would ask that now and in the coming months, grant holders

- Take time to review progress and outstanding work needed for completion of the grant.
- As this is an ever changing situation, we would encourage you take stock of the situation at a time when the full extent of the impact on your grant is better understood.
- Review your grant for unspent funds and where virements within and across budget lines will assist in covering costs incurred due to COVID-19 impact.
- For grants which are in the early stages or have an appropriate stop point, grant holders are encouraged to consider if they can delay recruitment of staff or put the award into abeyance for a period.

2 Continued pay of salaries and stipends

If access to where you carry out your research (or the work of your awarded grant) is shut down for a period of time MEC will continue to pay the salaries and stipends of staff and students funded on grants for the same duration.

3 No cost extensions

We will not unreasonable decline any no-cost extension. We would expect that you approach us with this request when you are in a position to be clear about the length of an extension involved. No cost extensions requests can be made [via email](#) and at that time please include details of the number of months extension required.

4 Costed extensions

If suspension of research is prolonged and costed extensions are required, requests will be considered on a case by case basis. We would expect that you approach us with this request when you are in a position to be clear about the length of an extension and the cost involved. We will then advise you of the process to follow.

5 Re-deployment of clinical staff to the NHS

For clinical academics seconded back to the NHS, our expectation is that the NHS will cover your salary whilst working on the COVID-19 response. We will continue to pay salaries, recognising that these costs may be subsequently recoverable from the NHS. The appropriate people are asked to please keep a record of any affected staff member(s), the duration of redeployment (start/end dates) and the salary contributions recoverable from the

NHS. No cost extensions can be requested where required when you return to your research.

6 Virements of budgets

We will be flexible on the use of underspend and budget virements to cover any exceptional and additional costs incurred by the COVID-19 pandemic to keep your research activities going now or once full research activities have resumed. Requests can be made [via email](#) after you review your grant and remaining budget.

7 Putting grants into abeyance

We will consider requests to put grants into abeyance - where we suspend your grant if you want to pause all payments and activities on the grant. Please note that if a grant is in abeyance no salaries or other costs can be incurred on the grant during the time it is in abeyance. Once the abeyance period has ended, the grant is given a corresponding no cost extension.

8 Delay the start date of a grant

If a grant has not yet started and the start can be reasonably delayed, grant holders can delay the start for up to six months. You do not need to request this delay but just return a completed [grant activation form](#) with the revised actual start date when it is known. If a delay of more than six month (but less than 12 months) is considered necessary, a request can be made in writing and these will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Our ongoing grant making

Our current grant making programmes remain open with the exception of the research travel grants scheme which has been modified to provide funding for virtual conferences. Please see the [research conference grants page](#).

At this time, we expect future deadline and decision making committees to remain as scheduled but we will review this if any pandemic-related restrictions are reintroduced.