



FACULTY
OF SOCIAL
SCIENCES

MEMO

Reg. No.
STYR 2021/780

2021-03-18

Faculty Office

Guidance for managing extensions of doctoral studentships at the Faculty of Social Sciences due to the Covid-19 pandemic

Background

For some doctoral students, the Covid-19 pandemic may entail obstacles that make it difficult to complete the research studies programme within the stipulated time (four years of full-time studies).

The present document is intended to provide guidance in handling any extensions to doctoral studentships, as support for doctoral students, supervisors, directors of studies and heads of department. The ambition is also to ensure a consistent approach to managing extensions at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Regulations

Pursuant to Chapter 5 Section 7 of the Higher Education Ordinance, the total period of employment for doctoral students may exceed the prescribed four years (full-time) if “special grounds” exist. Such grounds include approved leave due to illness, parenthood, military service or elected office in employee organisations and student organisations.

In a memorandum on 28 May 2020, Lund University’s research programmes board agreed with the assessment of the Swedish Agency for Government Employers that the period of

employment for a doctoral student could, under certain circumstances, be extended with reference to Covid-19 as special grounds.

As the pandemic affects the research studies of doctoral students to varying degrees, the management of the Faculty of Social Sciences does not consider it appropriate to grant a general extension of doctoral studentships on these grounds. Whether or not an extension is appropriate is a matter to be assessed in each individual doctoral student's situation. The assessment must be aligned with the Higher Education Ordinance, i.e. the obstacles encountered by the doctoral student in their research studies due to the pandemic must be such that they substantially impaired or prevented the doctoral student's studies as set out in the individual study plan, and could not be compensated through measures such as planning adjustments or changes to working methods.

Doctoral students with a form of finance other than a doctoral studentship

Doctoral students employed by an organisation other than Lund University must contact their employer to find out what applies in their case. They often already have permanent employment; the question then becomes whether their employer can finance an extension of their research studies. The department concerned is to extend supervision and other resources to ensure the doctoral student's research studies, if there are valid reasons for extension. Applications for and assessment of extensions are conducted in the same way as for doctoral students employed by the University.

Admitted doctoral students who are fully or partially financed through scholarships can be employed after the expiry of the scholarship if their research studies have been inevitably delayed due to the pandemic. Applications for and assessment of such

extensions are conducted in the same way as for doctoral students already employed by the University.

Guidance

Supervisors, doctoral students and directors of research studies are encouraged to contribute actively to adapting the doctoral students' study programme to the prevailing situation, e.g. so that certain parts of the programme can be postponed while others are brought forward, or by investigating the possibility of pursuing other types of studies that are not equally affected by the ongoing pandemic and its associated restrictions. The situation requires a large dose of flexibility in relation to the doctoral students' third cycle studies.

Documentation

Continuous documentation in the individual study plan of all changes to the research studies programme and effects on the doctoral student's work is important, so as to provide a basis for any future decisions on extension. However, an approved study plan with documentation of reasons justifying extension does not, per se, constitute a decision on extension of a doctoral studentship.

The documentation in the individual study plan can be included under the following headings, for example: "Existing and planned leave/assignments justifying extension" or "Deviations from previous study plan". The following is to be documented in the individual study plan:

- Reasons for delay and how the reasons relate to the Covid-19 pandemic
- What measures have been put in place to compensate for delays and how the doctoral student and supervisor have re-planned/tried to re-plan the study programme
- Estimated duration of delay, stated in whole weeks or months. If the delay is estimated in individual days, state the delay in the number of working days.

As support for the doctoral student and supervisor in correctly documenting any delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, please see the appendix (at the end of this document).

Management and applications for extension

1. When the doctoral student is approaching the end of their doctoral studentship, a special follow-up of the individual study plan is to be conducted (preferably one year ahead). The follow-up involves the doctoral student, the supervisor, director of research studies and the head of department.
2. The study plan is to contain details of the special grounds on which the doctoral student wishes to base their application for extension, and the way in which the pandemic essentially hindered or prevented the completion of their study programme. The plan is also to specify the changes and measures introduced to manage the situation and the duration of the desired extension.
3. After the follow-up of the individual study plan, the doctoral student sends the study plan (approved by the head of department) to the faculty office for processing. The study plan constitutes the basis for the decision on extension of the doctoral studentship, to be taken by the dean.

For the head of department and the director of studies

Before the head of department (equivalent) approves an individual study plan for a doctoral student, the director of research studies at the department is to review and approve the study plan. Before approval of the study plan, it is important that the director of studies and/or the head of department review the plan and above all the parts that deal with deviations from previous study plans and the reasons for these deviations. Before a study plan is approved, any claims for extension of the doctoral studentship are to be checked for compliance with the requirements on documentation (see above).

Claims for extension are processed after an individual assessment on the principle that the doctoral student is to be able to complete their research studies programme at the same level of quality. The costs of any approved extension of a doctoral studentship are carried by the department.

If the head of department/director of studies makes a different assessment of the claim to extension than that made by the doctoral student, this is to be clearly documented in the individual study plan. This is done by the director of studies justifying the department's assessment of the duration of an appropriate extension and documenting this in the ISP in the field entitled "Comments from the director of studies" under the "Comments" heading.

Basis for discussion

There are a series of circumstances related to the pandemic which can make research studies more difficult or prevent and delay them, but not all of these entitle the doctoral student to an extension. Below are a few examples that can be used as a basis for discussion on delays in research studies.

Some of the situations mentioned here can generate extension of a doctoral studentship for reasons other than those related to the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, the extension could be justified by parental leave, care of a sick child, annual leave, sick leave or teaching duties (departmental duties).

Examples of circumstances that may generate extension of a doctoral studentship:

- Time to re-plan a doctoral student project. For example, restructuring of a project, new ethics applications, establishment of contacts with new research subjects.
- Cancelled and postponed fieldwork, nationally and internationally, due to restrictions, closed organisations, or organisations that do not allow fieldwork (e.g. schools, elderly care, prisons, hospitals) for example.
- Cancelled opportunities to participate in observations and/or interviews due to cancelled field activities (for example cancelled meetings, conferences, exhibitions, concerts, etc.).
- Closed research infrastructures and archives for collecting material
- Closed research infrastructures for analysis of collected material
- Experiments that cannot be conducted or have been delayed
- Cancelled/interrupted research trips and stays abroad
- Obstacles to working due to quarantine
- Obstacles to working due to extended absence of a supervisor

Examples of circumstances that do not usually generate extension:

- Cancelled conference or course
- Obstacles to scholarly networking
- Difficulties in the family/home situation. For the care or nursing of children, parental leave or leave to care for a sick child is to be taken.
- Increased teaching workload or more time to adapt to digital teaching. This is regulated within the framework of departmental duties.
- Difficulties in contacting the administration.
- General worry and/or stress. If the worry or stress is so severe that it affects the ability to work and leads to sick leave, the doctoral studentship is extended through sick leave.

Template for doctoral students and supervisors for documentation in the ISP.

Circumstances related to the Covid-19 pandemic	Period	Counter-measures implemented	Time lost after counter-measures (weeks, months)
<i>Time to re-plan a doctoral student project, e.g. restructuring of a project, new ethics applications, establishment of contacts with new research subjects.</i>			
<i>Cancelled and postponed national and international fieldwork due to e.g. travel restrictions, closed organisations, or organisations that do not permit fieldwork (such as schools, elderly care, prisons, hospitals).</i>			
<i>Cancelled opportunities to take part in observations and/or interviews due to the cancellation of activities in the field (e.g. cancelled meetings, conferences, exhibitions, concerts, etc.).</i>			

<i>Closed research infrastructures and archives for material collection.</i>			
<i>Closed research infrastructures for analysis of collected material</i>			
<i>Experiments that cannot be conducted or have been delayed</i>			
<i>Cancelled/interrupted research trips and stays abroad</i>			
<i>Obstacles to work due to quarantine</i>			
<i>Obstacles to work due to extended absence of a supervisor</i>			
<i>Other reasons</i>			