



COVID19 update for holders of NICHS research grants

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is being felt across the breadth of society. We know that this is a deeply challenging time for the people who use our services, our staff, and for our research grant recipients.

The intention of this position paper is to inform research grant holders of our position with regards to maintenance of grants, and how we will support you, in what are fast-changing circumstances. This is a “live” document, and subject to change

[NICHS position in summary](#)

[Position in detail](#)

[Actions for current grant holders](#)

NICHS POSITION IN SUMMARY [\[back to top\]](#)

- The immediate focus is on safety and well-being.
- We acknowledge that studies may be suspended, face delayed starts, and might not be completed within the agreed timescales.
- We aim to support grant holders in a sympathetic and flexible way, allowing for the restrictions we operate in as a charity, and evolving circumstances due to COVID.
- Our default position is to offer no-cost extensions where needed. We will review extension requests on a case by case basis.
- We encourage researchers to explore alternative solutions to ensure projects are ongoing.
- We require researchers to agree any changes to their agreed contract, and to keep us informed.
- The 2021 SRC research grant process will go ahead as scheduled. This will be reviewed and changed where circumstances dictate.

The health and well-being of the researchers we fund, and their research participants, is our priority at this stage.

We agree that everyone's immediate focus should rightly be on their safety and well-being, that of their families, and those that they are responsible for. We do not want anyone to be exposed to any unnecessary risk, and encourage you all to adhere to Government, and other official advice. So, first and foremost, be safe and keep well.

We understand that COVID-19 is likely to cause serious disruption to our funded research studies.

We are aware that our Universities and hospital trusts will be issuing guidance regarding suspending ongoing studies, if they have done already – we encourage you to adhere to this advice. We are also aware that clinical staff involved in studies may be called to clinical work related to the recent outbreak. As a result, we acknowledge that studies may be suspended, face delayed starts, and that and might not be completed within the agreed timescales.

We want to reassure you that we want to support you (research grant holders) as best we can. Although the full implications will take some time to become clear, we intend to address the issues that arise as sympathetically and flexibly as possible. We will try to do this as best we can, as a charity with limited resources, and given the uncertain impact of COVID on us as an organisation.

NICHS POSITION ON RESEARCH GRANTS DURING COVID19

[\[back to top\]](#)

Ultimately, the aim of pausing / delaying a study will be to release staff time for frontline care and/or to protect public health. This is likely to delay the research contract end date with implications for research deliverables and for funding flows to contracted organisations.

Please note that for currently funded research projects:

Project continuation

- Where possible, we ask that you explore alternative solutions, such as remote working, teleconference meeting or re-ordering parts of your study that can be done remotely.

Extensions

- We will review extension requests on a case-by-case basis. Our default position is that extensions are no-cost. Funds allocated to our annual research grants are fixed. As such, we can only consider cost extensions in extreme circumstances, and additional financial support cannot be guaranteed.
- Everyone's circumstances will be different, but our default position is that we will guarantee up to an additional 6 months' extension with a review after 3 months. We hope that this will be should be enough time to ascertain the impact on your project in the majority of cases,

Pausing a study

- We will review any requests to pause a study on a case by case basis.
- Funding will not be withdrawn as a result of delayed starts due to COVID-19. Similarly, funding will not be withdrawn where a project is paused.
- Once the situation is clearer we will discuss contract variations for studies that have been forced to delay start / pause on a case by case basis.
- For grants which are in the early stages or have an appropriate stop point, we are happy for you to delay recruitment of staff or put the award into abeyance for a period.
- If it is feasible to carry on the recruitment process, then you should do so, but you should delay the formal start date. Contact us to discuss / agree amended start date. As previously noted, our default position is that we cannot offer cost covered extensions.

Financial impact

- We realise that budget impact of changes to your study may not be known for some time. As such, we request regular feedback / updates from PIs to allow us to support you as best as we can.
- As a charity funded by voluntary donations, we have limited flexibility in our funding allocation, particularly in light of the uncertain impact of COVID19. We are happy to discuss your circumstances on a case by case basis, should you feel there are strong reasons to do so, but please note that our default position is that all extensions/ or amendments to your study are to be made at no additional cost.
- We understand that this has implications for staffing and wages. If you feel that a project needs to be paused as a result, please contact us.
- We can only continue payments for ongoing work. If a project is paused, all payments will be paused accordingly. Again, we are happy to discuss your circumstances on a case by case basis, should you feel there are strong reasons to do so, but please note that our default position.

Reporting

- Where possible, annual / cyclical returns should be completed.
- Where studies are being significantly impacted by COVID-19, we will not require routine monitoring reports (e.g. ResearchFish reports) until after the

award has returned to the original contracted delivery. If you feel that this is the case, please contact us to agree a deferment.

- Please note, we that whilst we will not penalise projects that do not provide a return, these are required, as part of contractual agreement. As such, they should be completed at a later, agreed date.

SRC grant activity

- The 2021 SRC research grant process will go ahead as scheduled (June 2020). This will be reviewed and changed where circumstances dictate. A specific call for COVID19 related research is being considered. Further details will be issued once available.

Restarting projects

- Studies that restart will require a contract extension and again, they should contact us.

Terminating projects

- The aim should be to restart paused studies and fulfil contracts. Where this might prove difficult, or where researchers think that they are in difficulty completing the project / honouring their contract, they should contact us asap.

ACTIONS FOR CURRENT GRANT HOLDERS [\[back to top\]](#)

Grant holders should contact us to

- (a) Provide an update on the current status of the project
- (b) To discuss and agree next steps (within the terms of this position paper).

(Please refer to email issued to all current grant holders)

Contact us

In the first instance, please contact:

George Quinn

Research & Impact Manager

NICHHS

GQuinn@nichs.org.uk

