Dear PhD students and supervisors,

We wanted to get in touch to update you with some Graduate School guidance for COVID-19, something we know you will all be thinking about. This is a long email, so please take time to read it, and follow up with us if you have questions.

Our priority is your wellbeing. The main take home message is: if you have any queries at all, please contact grad.biol@ed.ac.uk.

Below, we have outlined a few of the likely implications of the pandemic for postgraduate research students.

**Illness and self-isolation**

Please follow current guidance on this, which can be found here: [https://www.nhsinform.scot/self-help-guides/self-help-guide-coronavirus-covid-19](https://www.nhsinform.scot/self-help-guides/self-help-guide-coronavirus-covid-19). If you will self-isolate because you or a member of your household have relevant symptoms, or because you have an underlying medical condition, or are diagnosed with Covid-19, please ensure you inform your supervisor and copy in grad.biol@ed.ac.uk.

We expect that, while you are not on campus, you will, if well, be able to focus on the reading and writing aspects of your thesis research. If you need guidance on where to focus that effort, please contact your supervisor.

We are aware that many of you are studying away from family and for that reason we recommend that you make sure now that you have contact details of your immediate colleagues in case you need help while self-isolated, and please contact grad.biol@ed.ac.uk if you need support, whether that be practical or emotional. The Graduate School team can provide support by email, phone or over Skype/equivalent and we are happy to do that.

**Working remotely**

We expect to receive more detailed guidance about this from the Principal imminently, and if need be will send a follow up email. However should you plan to work remotely, please make sure you discuss this with your supervisor, and make a plan to get some reading/writing type research underway where possible. Your supervisor, and wider research group, should plan to interact regularly by email, phone, skype or equivalent to ensure you remain supported even if not physically in the building.

We recognise that potentially your studies will be impacted by either hold-ups in experimental plans, limited research support services, difficulties regarding fieldwork/collaborative lab visits/PIPS, CASE or Innovation Placements and future closures. You should discuss any impacts with your supervisor first of all. If the effect is substantial, you may wish to explore whether an interruption of studies or an extension request is justified; please contact grad.biol@ed.ac.uk if you have any questions about this. Guidance on both options can be found here, under the header Research Students: [https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/CSCE/AcademicAffairs/SitePages/Authorised-interruption.aspx](https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/CSCE/AcademicAffairs/SitePages/Authorised-interruption.aspx)

Both these options mean that your expected submission date is delayed to account for these problems. We are exploring the implications for stipend of these options now, and hope to be in a position to update you very soon.
Planned travel

The University is keeping information on this updated here: https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/covid-19/travel-advice-and-self-isolation. Only essential travel should be undertaken.

We also recognise that some of you may prefer to leave Edinburgh to be closer to family. Please make sure you have discussed this, and plans for your work while away, before leaving Edinburgh. You should also contact grad.biol@ed.ac.uk.

Visa advice can be found here: https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/immigration. For Tier 4 students, supervisors should continue to record engagements on EUCLID which can be held via Skype or email.

Graduate School Events

We are in the process of postponing or exploring the possibility of moving events online for all Graduate School events due to run before the end of June 2020. We know this will be disappointing in some cases, and we do aim to either reschedule or run elements of training online where possible in the longer term. This will include both training events, and events such as symposia.

Should you be concerned about the impact of a postponement on your studies, please discuss with your supervisor.

Stress and concerns

We know this is a stressful time for you. University support services, including the Student Counselling Service, and online mental health support remain available: https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-counselling. We also recommend the online advice from Mind: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/.

We want to reiterate that you can contact the Graduate School team at any time, you’ll get the quickest response if you email grad.biol@ed.ac.uk, and if it works better for you we can then arrange a phone or Skype call.

with best wishes from,

Clare Blackburn, Director of the Graduate School and the Graduate School Team