

V21.04.2021

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| COVID-19 Related Requests FAQ |
| 1. Costed extensions |
| 1.1 Can a Council awardee apply for a Costed Extension? |
| Support for Costed Extensions is being provided by the Higher Education Authority. Awardees may apply for a Costed Extension through a centralized process running in their host institution. Once provisionally approved at HEI level, the HEI must provide the Council with details of the Costed Extension for final approval.  Where a Strategic Funding Partner or an Enterprise Partner is involved in an award, the partner’s agreement to the extension must be provided before the Council can approve the request for a costed extension.. The Enterprise Partner must also agree to contribute to the non-exchequer element of the award. Where the Enterprise Partner can prove they are unable to contribute financially to the non-exchequer element of the award they must agree to contribute in kind providing State Aid rules are adhered to.  When submitting requests for Costed Extensions to the Council HEIs must provide evidence of the Enterprise Partner’s agreement to contribute to the extension. \*New |
| 1. Fees |
| 2.1 Can awardees (completing projects in 2021) use any remaining balance for their research fees for the next academic year? (not just stipends as in 3.A.i) |
| Where an award ends in 2021, any remaining balance in the award budget may be reallocated to provide for a Cost-Neutral Extension but *cannot* be used towards tuition fees in 2021 or in the next academic year. Remaining balance in research fees may not be reallocated. \*Updated\* |
| 2.2 Clause 2.5 of the COVID-19 guidance documents issued by the Irish Research Council refers to fee waivers expected of HEIs. Are these expected fee waivers applicable for all NCEs? |
| The Council expects host institutions of postgraduate awardees to implement fee waivers where projects are extended as a direct result of COVID-19, and therefore payment of tuition fees is *not* eligible for inclusion in any Budget Reallocations or requests for a No-Cost Extension or Cost-Neutral Extension. \*Updated\* |
| 2.3 Can an awardee whose institution charges fees of less than €5750 per year reallocate the unused surplus into their stipend to facilitate a Cost Neutral Extension or into another category? |
| No, this is not possible. This funding is recoverable by the Council. |
| 2.4 Can an awardee reallocate unused pension monies to facilitate a Cost Neutral Extension or into another category? |
| No, this is not possible. This funding is recoverable by the Council. |
| 1. Stipends |
| 3.1 If an awardee reallocates expenses to facilitate a cost-neutral extension is their monthly stipend payment capped at €1541.66? |
| Budget Reallocations can be used to facilitate a Cost-Neutral Extension for stipends up to the maximum value of funding provided by the Irish Research Council (€1541.66 per month of Council funding). \*Updated\* |
| 1. Soft-bound thesis |
| 4.1 Can an awardee who has submitted their soft-bound thesis in April 2021 request an NCE to keep or use up any remaining monies beyond September 2021? |
| Postgraduate awardees may use their award monies until the end of the duration of the award or up until the submission of the hardbound thesis which ever happens in earlier. The Council welcomes all efforts by higher education institutions to put in place revised arrangements to enable the completion of viva voce examinations in a timely manner. Where the original end date is September 2021, the award is complete and extensions can only be provided on the grounds of COVID related delays and not for the purpose of using any remaining monies only. \*Updated\* |
| 1. Cost-Neutral Extensions |
| 5.1 What exactly is a cost-neutral extension, or what would be an example of this? |
| Unlike a No-Cost Extension, a Cost-Neutral Extension is tied to a Budget Reallocation. For example, a researcher who had planned to present at a conference or conduct research overseas and cannot do so due to COVID-19 may request to reallocate travel expenses towards salary/stipend or another budget category in order to facilitate extending their award on a cost-neutral basis. |
| 5.2 How does a Cost-Neutral Extension differ from a No-Cost Extension? |
| If you wish to request an extension to the end-date of your project with the budget unchanged, use the No-Cost Extension option.  If you are proposing a reallocation of budget with no change to the end-date of your award, use the Budget Reallocation option.  If you are proposing a reallocation of budget in order to extend the end-date of your award, tick Cost-Neutral Extension and Budget Reallocation on the relevant form.  See Question 2.3 above in relation to fees and Cost-Neutral Extensions. |
| 1. Communication between IRC and ROs |
| 6.1 All of the extension/suspension requests are being considered on a case-by-case basis. Do you know if the IRC will have a procedure for notifying Research Offices of the outcome/if a particular application has been approved? |
| The Council will put a process in place to ensure that all relevant parties are advised as to the outcome of requests. |
| 1. Eligibility |
| 7.1 Should requests for costed extensions, budget reallocations, and no cost extensions should be submitted for all current IRC awards, or just for those ending in 2021? |
| Consideration of early career researchers whose projects are due to end in 2021 is the Council’s priority at present. Awardees must consult with their HEI research office in relation to costed extensions which are administered by the HEI in a centralised way including seeking approval from the IRC.  Requests for No-Cost Extensions or Budget Reallocations must be received at least one month before the current end date of the award. Requests for Suspensions or Deferrals of awards should be submitted as soon as possible. \*Updated\* |
| 1. Budget Reallocations |
| 8.1 In order that we can assist scholars, can students indicate an overview of their account indicating amount for budget allocation? It would be difficult to provide students with a detailed breakdown at this time. |
| The early career No-Cost Extension/Cost-Neutral and Budget Reallocation Request Form does not require a detailed breakdown of the project budget. Early career researchers must state the amount they wish to reallocate and provide a rationale on the basis of research needs. See Section 2 of the form. |
| 1. Salary queries |
| 9.1 A GOIPD Fellow is applying to the IRC for an extension of their grant due to Covid 19. The fellow is a member of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme. Since 1 October 2019 no employer contributions have been deducted in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform policy. Therefore there is a surplus in the pay budget. Can we submit a no cost extension utilising these funds to extend the fellowship? |
| Pension funds provided by the Council prior to January 1st 2021 and which have not been used for pension purposes must be returned to the Council. Unused pension funds cannot be reallocated into any other part of the award budget. |