

GUIDANCE FOR AWARDEES ON COVID-19 RELATED IMPACTS

ON IRC-FUNDED AWARDS

The purpose of this document is to set out the provisions for IRC-funded awards due to complete in 2023 and 2024 and which may have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

**1 Introduction**

The IRC recognises that research awards with particular components faced significant disruption and interruption as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. These include awards for which fieldwork and access to facilities, patients, other research subjects, artefacts or manuscripts are a key part of the research.

At the outset of the pandemic, the IRC adopted a number of measures to assist researchers on existing awards and enable the continuity of research, including:

* Requests for No Cost Extensions were facilitated for awards disrupted due to COVID-19.
* Project leaders were encouraged to propose budget re-allocation requests to support delivery of project objectives in line with broad timelines.
* Budget re-allocation was also permitted to extend the project duration for early-career researchers contracted to the projects.
* The IRC facilitated its awardees to avail of HEA costed extensions and provided cost neutral extensions where appropriate.

The IRC also encouraged new awardees to put in place and implement mitigation plans (in consultation with supervisors and mentors where appropriate) to minimise the impact of COVID-19 and facilitate achievement of project objectives and deliverables within the overall lifetime of the award.

Nonetheless, the IRC acknowledges that there may still be circumstances in which an awardee may require additional time to complete the research project as originally approved as a result of the impact of COVID-19.

This document sets out the provisions for IRC awards which are to conclude in 2023 and 2024 and which may have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

**2 Awards due to complete in 2023**

In accordance with previous guidance provided by the IRC, awardees with projects impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and scheduled to conclude in 2023 can submit a budget reallocation request and/or apply to the IRC for a no cost extension.

* **Reallocation of existing budget**

Requests can be submitted to the IRC to reallocate the budget for research expenses, including towards stipend/salary to **support a short-term extension** to support the delivery of project objectives where projects were disrupted due to COVID-19. Budget reallocation may be deployed to extend the project duration for early-career researchers contracted to a project.

The IRC 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 fees is not eligible for inclusion in any budget reallocations. Reallocation of any unspent balance relating to fees is not permitted.

Unspent funds relating to pension provisions cannot be reallocated.

Where a budget reallocation request is required by an award holder for reasons unrelated to Covid-19, this request can be processed by the award holder’s HEI as per the Terms and Conditions of their award.

Budget re-allocation requests should be completed in accordance with the IRC’s [budget reallocation policy](https://research.ie/funding/information-for-existing-awardees/). Only budget reallocation requests submitted using the relevant form available [here](https://research.ie/funding/information-for-existing-awardees/) on the IRC website will be considered.

Requests for budget reallocations made **less than two months before** the current end date of the award will not be considered.

* **No Cost Extensions**

Where a project has faced unavoidable interruption due to COVID-19, requests can be submitted to the IRC, seeking a no cost extension to extend the end date of the project.

Requests for no cost extensions made **less than two months before** the current end date of the award will not be considered.

No cost extension requests should be completed in accordance with the IRC’s [no cost extension policy](https://research.ie/funding/information-for-existing-awardees/). Only no cost extension requests submitted using the relevant form available [here](https://research.ie/funding/information-for-existing-awardees/) on the IRC website will be considered.

Awardees seeking to request a no cost extension and a budget reallocation should do so using the no cost extension form available[here](https://research.ie/funding/information-for-existing-awardees/) on the IRC website.

***Awardees funded by external strategic funding partners (SFPs) or co-funded by enterprise partners (EPS scheme)***

The IRC may consult with the relevant strategic funding or enterprise partner in determining approval for any changes to awards which they fund or co-fund.

**3 Awards due to complete in 2024 or beyond**

Consistent with recommendations of other national research funders, awardees in this category should not seek accommodations from the IRC for future years until the final year of the award.

4 Progress Reports for existing IRC awards

Progress reporting deadlines will be maintained as normal. The IRC continues to implement the following measures:

* Electronic signatures will be accepted.
* Delays and/or changes to planned activities and variances in expenditure must be included in the submitted progress reports.

ENDS

20 April 2023