

MEMORANDUM

Reg. no
STYR 2021/375

Date 2021-02-09

Clarification of regulations and guidelines for handling the extension of doctoral students' study time at the Faculty of Science due to the corona pandemic (Covid-19)¹

Doctoral students with doctoral studentships, industrial doctoral students and admitted scholarship doctoral students who have been delayed in their doctoral studies due to reasons related to the corona pandemic may be entitled to an extension. The extension is independent of the department's financial situation and the doctoral student always has the right to receive an individual examination on the basis of being able to complete the doctoral program with satisfactory quality. This document describes the regulations that apply and how such matters are handled, and has been developed in consultation with LTH.

Introduction

The Corona pandemic has in many ways presented the Faculty of Science's staff with new and demanding challenges. For many, the transition from campus teaching to distance education has meant a lot of extra work and many practical and pedagogical challenges. The Faculty's doctoral students, like the other staff, have been affected by this situation. In the current situation, the question has been asked whether the doctoral students' study time and funding can be extended as a result of delays due to the corona pandemic.

Extension of study time

The Higher Education Ordinance chapter 6, section 29 stipulates that there must be an individual study plan, ISP, which contains a timetable corresponding to four years of full-time studies for each doctoral student. The study period can be extended when there are special reasons. The following reasons for extension are given as examples of special reasons: Sick leave, military service, parental leave or commission of trust within trade unions and student organizations. This is not an exhaustive description. Other reasons may also lead to the need to extend the study period.

¹ This memorandum has been drafted in cooperation with LTH.

Lund University's Research Education Board has on 28 May 2020 written a memorandum on what at Lund University should be given special consideration when assessing whether there are special reasons for extension due to Covid-19 (STYR 2020/1001). In the committee's memorandum, Lund University joins the Swedish Employers' Agency, which makes the assessment: "that if a doctoral student has not been able to perform the tasks incumbent on the doctoral student due to circumstances that can be linked to covid-19, it should be possible to extend the total employment period. doctoral student with reference to covid-19 as "a special reason". Although the statement concerns an extension of the employment period, the rules for extending the study period are formulated in the same way.

The reasons mentioned in the Higher Education Ordinance are those in which the doctoral student is wholly or partly not on duty in his / her employment as a doctoral student. The Faculty's management believes that against this background, it is not relevant to extend the doctoral students' study and funding time on a standard basis due to covid-19. Each doctoral student's situation must be assessed separately when deciding whether an extension is relevant with reference to covid-19. This assessment must be at the same level as the Higher Education Ordinance, i.e. the obstacles that the doctoral student has encountered in his / her doctoral studies due to covid-19 must be of a nature that has significantly hindered or made impossible the doctoral student's work and studies according to the ISP, and which could not be compensated for by changing planning or changing working methods.

Rules regarding extension of doctoral studentships

According to the extension provisions contained in the Higher Education Ordinance, one can be employed as a doctoral student for a total of a maximum of eight years. Although, the total full-time employment period as a main rule may not be longer than what corresponds to full-time postgraduate education for four years (HOE chapter 5, section 7), it is possible to be employed for a longer period of time if there are special reasons. The rules for extending the period of employment due to special reasons are the same as the rules for extending the period of study, which have been described above.

Admitted doctoral students with scholarship funding

Admitted doctoral students who are wholly or partly funded by scholarships, may have the right to become employed at the Faculty of Science after the end of the scholarship period if the doctoral education is delayed due to the corona pandemic. The application for an extension is carried out in the same way as for employed doctoral students. The assessment of whether there are special reasons is the same as for employed doctoral students.

Industrial doctoral students

For industrial doctoral students, it is important to contact their employer about what applies to them. They often already have a permanent employment and the question then is whether the employer can finance an extension of the doctoral program. The department concerned shall extend supervision and other resources to secure the industrial doctoral student's doctoral education, if there are valid reasons for the extension. The application for an extension is carried out in the

same way as for employed doctoral students. The assessment of whether there are special reasons is the same as for employed doctoral students.

Handling and application for extension

1. In order to prepare for the extension decision, the main supervisor and the doctoral student need to continuously document, on the basis of the appendix attached below, how the corona pandemic has contributed to any delays and what measures have been put in place to compensate for delays. This documentation should be entered in the ISP, where updates and delays are usually entered.
2. When the study funding period is coming to an end, a special follow-up of the ISP should be made (preferably 6 months before). If it demonstrates the above-mentioned reasons for extension, the department representative¹ shall, after consultation with the director of studies for the postgraduate subject, compile a summary over which special reasons are invoked and in what way the corona pandemic has significantly hindered or made impossible the doctoral student's postgraduate education. It must also be clear what changes and measures have been taken to handle the situation and how long an extension is requested. The summary must also account for the supervision resources and other resources required during the extension.
3. The summary of special reasons for extension due to the corona pandemic shall be attached to the ISP, which is the basis for extension of the doctoral student position.
4. The summary thus forms the basis for the head of department's decision to extend the study period in the ISP and any decision on employment due to the end of other study funding, as well as decisions on extension of employment, made by the head of department or the person to whom the head of department has delegated the decision-making powers.

¹ At LTH this is the task of the main supervisor

Appendix

Corona-related obstacles (known examples from doctoral student survey Dec 2020)	From - to (months)	Degree of obstruction (mild, moderate, severe)	Implemented counter- measures	Lost time after counter- measures
<i>Travel obstruction</i>				
<i>Obstacles to conducting research</i>				
<i>Barriers to scientific networking / conferences</i>				
<i>Supervisor unavailable</i>				
<i>Doctoral student teaching extra time consuming</i>				
<i>FU courses not available</i>				
<i>Social work isolation</i>				
<i>Disorders in the home environment</i>				
<i>Incomplete workplace introduction</i>				
<i>The administration is difficult to reach</i>				
<i>Stress due to uncertainty about lost time will be replaced</i>				
<i>Other reasons</i>				

Examples that can be used for discussion of obstacles in postgraduate education.

The basic principle must be to use and document all possibilities to ensure that postgraduate education as a whole is not delayed (e.g. changed planning, change of working methods,...) ”.