

PhD Student Supplemental Funding for Unavoidable Timeline Extensions Due to COVID-19 Related Research Delays

The impact of the COVID-19 related disruptions on dissertation progress is unique across students. Consequently, Graduate Programs at Western are looking at each PhD student's individual situation. Programs are working with students to support adaptations to their dissertation plans and will be reviewing these plans through students' annual reports (via Pathfinder). In exceptional cases where adaptations to dissertation plans are not feasible and/or insurmountable delays lead to unavoidable extension of the student's completion timeline, programs will provide supplemental funding for a limited time (normally not exceeding one term) for students who meet the following eligibility criteria.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Supplemental funding will be provided to students whose academic progress has been exceptionally and unavoidably delayed due to circumstances directly related to the pandemic.
- To be eligible to receive supplemental funding, students must meet all of the following criteria.
 1. The student was making good progress with their dissertation prior to COVID-19 and data collection or access to necessary sources has been significantly impeded due to pandemic-related impacts (e.g., labs closures; fieldwork cancellations; inability to access materials, archives, or library sources). This disruption will have been documented using Pathfinder (or an alternative reporting method implemented by the Program).
 2. Additional work is needed before writing of the dissertation can be completed (e.g., additional data collection is necessary; access to essential research material must be obtained).
 3. The revised research timeline extends beyond the normal, funding-eligible timeline to completion and is outlined in the student's Pathfinder report.
 4. All other academic activities that could feasibly be completed by the student during the COVID-19 disruption (e.g., writing sections of the dissertation; preparing publication manuscripts; coursework; comprehensive exams; required program milestones) have been completed, or are currently in active progress.
 5. The student will not be receiving external funding (e.g., scholarship funding) during the extended timeline.
 6. The Supervisory committee validates that all reasonable efforts have been made to enable the student's timely progress and that conditions (1) through (5) have been met.
 7. The Graduate Program Chair and the Faculty Associate Dean-Graduate endorse the extension, and the Dean of the Faculty (or designate) approves the supplemental funding.

Process for Decisions Regarding Supplemental Funding for Timeline Extensions:

- Eligibility for supplemental funding will be reviewed at the Program level and approved at the Faculty level. Faculties/Departments/Programs will be responsible for the process of determining eligibility, the decisions regarding awarding of the funding, and the cost of the supplemental funding.
- Programs will consider eligibility for supplemental funding at the time when students' annual reports are reviewed. No application for supplemental funding will be required; rather when students submit what would normally be their last annual report within their funding eligible period, programs will consider their eligibility for supplemental funding. The academic progress of students at earlier stages of their studies will be reviewed annually, but eligibility for supplemental funding will not be considered until students are in the final stages of their funding eligible timeline.

Supplemental Funding Amount for Timeline Extensions:

- Students who meet all the eligibility criteria will receive funding from their supervisor or Graduate Program that is minimally equivalent to the cost of tuition (not including ancillary fees) for one academic term. This funding may be in the form of bursary, Graduate Fellowship, internal scholarship (eg, WGRS), or employment.

Questions:

- *Because the timing of annual reports and reviews of academic progress vary across programs, the process and timing of decisions about eligibility will vary across programs and Faculties. Please direct questions about the PhD Student Supplemental Funding to the Associate Dean—Graduate Studies for your Faculty, or to your Graduate Program Chair.*