

COVID-19 Info for Research Students: Update #5 (17 April 2020)

Kia ora Graduate Research Students

Here we are, three weeks and some down the track with the Level 4 “lockdown” and hopefully soon to transition to Alert Level 3. This Update #5 outlines some important further support for you as we work to find ways to help you continue to make progress with your graduate research degree aspirations.

Remember, our teams at the Graduate Research School, Faculty and School Postgraduate Offices and your supervisors are here to help you. Please email us at grs@aut.ac.nz if there is anything we can do for you.

New Zealand COVID-19 Alert Levels

It appears likely that New Zealand’s COVID-19 Alert Level 4 will be lifted sometime in the next week. Under Level 3 we will continue to have restrictions around gatherings of people, social distancing protocols and restrictions on travel (amongst other things). This will inevitably further disrupt and delay graduate research student’s ability to gather data, access laboratories and meet with others. However, we may be able to approve some graduate research students accessing campus facilities (such as laboratories) when it is safe to do so and where access to these facilities is critical for you to be able to continue to progress. We will advise you what you are able to, and not able to do, as soon as we have clarity on these matters.

You can find the latest information on COVID-19 from New Zealand’s [COVID-19 information website](#) and via AUT’s [COVID-19 update page](#) (and doctoral candidates can also access the [AUTi COVID-19](#) intranet page).

Implementation of a Fees-free Research Project/Dissertation/Thesis Extension Paper

AUT has approved the enrolment of current graduate research project/dissertation/thesis students (who are enrolled in a research project, dissertation or thesis paper of 30 points or greater in March/April 2020) into a COVID-19 extension paper for a maximum period of up to 90 days from the expiration of their current research project/dissertation/thesis enrolment paper. Students will not have to pay tuition fees for this extended enrolment. Details are as follows:

- The enrolment into an up to maximum three-month (90 day) tuition fees free paper (equivalent to your currently enrolled research project/dissertation/thesis paper) will occur on completion of your current enrolment at the request of your primary supervisor.
- You should work with your supervisors in amending your time-lines for submitting your research project/dissertation/thesis for assessment/examination.
- Your primary supervisor needs to approve and submit the extension request (and time-frame) to your Faculty Postgraduate Office (FPO). They do this by sending an email to the FPO in the two weeks prior to your current research project, dissertation or thesis paper enrolment ending.
- All AUT services (e.g. supervision, library, laboratory, ICT services, computing work-station) will remain available (within the COVID-19 Alert Level permissions) to you over this extension paper enrolment period.
- Current AUT funded doctoral scholarship students may apply to have their scholarship extended for the period of their enrolment extension. These applications must be made via the AUT Scholarships Office and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. An application form will be made available next week.
- International students are still obligated to pay for their compulsory health insurance over any extension period.

Financial Support Options

Financial hardship grant: AUT's Student Hub manages a short-term financial hardship grant which can be made available via application for deserving students. Graduate research students (domestic and international) are eligible to apply. For more specific advice and information of potential sources of financial support for students please email: studenthub@aut.ac.nz

NZ citizens and residents: "Kiwis" have a range of government support available to them via [Work and Income/ Te Hiranga Tangata](#). These include such things as help with living expenses and other forms of financial support.

Extensions to student allowances: (recently announced by the New Zealand government) only apply to domestic (New Zealand citizens and permanent residents) undergraduate students.

Extensions to student loans: (which can be accessed by graduate research students) announced by the New Zealand government only apply to domestic (New Zealand citizens and permanent residents) students.

Essential services work restrictions for international students lifted: The maximum hours full time international students are permitted to work on their student visas has been lifted for work considered as "essential services" such as supermarket work and work in the healthcare sector. International students employed in these roles may work full-time.

Stay Connected

The Graduate Research School is offering a number of "Stay Connected" opportunities. These will be offered via Zoom and are as follows:

Coffee with Annalise: If you have any questions related to research support, or you just want company to chat about your day over coffee, drop in for a chat with GRS staff member Annalise Davidson.

The online drop-in sessions are scheduled on:

- Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10:30am-11:00am*
Group sessions
[Access through Zoom](#)
- Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2:30pm-3:00pm*
One-on-one sessions
[Access through Zoom](#)

**Sessions may change subject to demand*

Korero with the Dean: Prof Mark Orams, Dean of the Graduate Research School will be offering online "drop-ins" for graduate research students and supervisors for Q&As. Further details on dates and times will be available next week.

Graduate researcher's wellbeing: Emiliana Faapoi, Postgraduate Student Support Advisor with the Graduate Research School, will be offering one-to-one sessions for graduate research students who are feeling anxious and isolated during this challenging time. Further details on dates and times will be available next week.

Online Resources and Learning Opportunities

The Graduate Research School is continuing to develop and offer online resources for graduate research students and their supervisors on the [Student Digital Workspace \(SDW\)](#) and [Thesislink](#). Have a look, you may find these resources helpful.

Communicating With Your Supervisors

We encourage you to stay in regular communication with your supervisors (a minimum of a weekly “catch-up” is recommended).

Enquiries, Questions and Concerns

If you have any specific concerns, questions or issues you would like help with, please email the GRS grs@aut.ac.nz and we will do all we can to help you.

Noho ora mai rā

Graduate Research School Team