

## COVID-19 Info for Research Students: Update #8 (8 May 2020)

Kia ora Graduate Research Students

We hope this week's update finds you well and optimistic about the opportunity to return to some normality (or a new form of it) under the Alert Level 2. The announcement of the conditions under Alert Level 2 made yesterday provides us with more flexibility than many of us expected. AUT is considering what buildings and facilities we will re-open and we will communicate these decisions relevant to graduate research students in next week's update. In the meantime, kia kaha (stay strong), mānawanawa (be patient) and noho ora mai (stay well).

### **Preparation for COVID-19 Alert Level 2**

New Zealand's COVID-19 Alert Level is still at Level 3. Under Level 3 it is expected that graduate research students and AUT staff continue to work from home/remotely whenever possible. The move to Alert Level 2 date will be announced by the government on Monday 11 May, but the move to Alert Level 2 for educational institutions will not occur earlier than Monday 18 May.

While Alert Level 2 will allow for universities to re-open campuses, there will be a requirement to maintain social distancing, maintain strict protocols in terms of personal hygiene (eg. washing hands thoroughly and regularly; coughing/sneezing into elbows; cleaning of surfaces and equipment) and to ensure that any use of buildings/facilities is managed carefully so that contact tracing is possible.

This will likely mean that access to graduate study rooms, laboratories and other facilities used by graduate research students will require swipe card access. We will need to strictly adhere to these requirements (no sharing of cards or propping open of doors).

Permission to access AUT facilities for students and staff under Alert Level 2 will be clarified next week.

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](#)).

### **Access to Campus Facilities Including TechCentral During Alert Level 3**

During Alert Level 3, which will continue for at least the next week, specific approval is required to gain access to any AUT campus facilities. This includes TechCentral. If you wish to use the computers and WiFi available in TechCentral (south, city and north campuses) you must make a booking via the AUT app.

All staff and students intending to access AUT facilities (including TechCentral) must download the AUT app from the [AppleStore](#) and [Google Play](#) onto their smartphone. In the AUT app, select My AUT from the main menu, followed by Bookings.

You will get a confirmation email which includes a link to cancel or change your booking. You will be given the option to add your booking to your Office 365 calendar.

When you arrive on campus you will be required to check into, and check out from, the areas you have booked by scanning a QR code using the AUT app on your smart phone.

To maintain physical distancing and provide for future contact tracing, no one will be allowed access without a booking. If you don't have a smart phone, you can email [studenthub@aut.ac.nz](mailto:studenthub@aut.ac.nz) to make alternative arrangements.

### **AUTEC Approval Amendments/Return to Data Collection Under Alert Level 2**

Guidelines for Alert Level 2 do allow for people to resume interacting with one another with appropriate physical distancing (one metre). AUTEC will provide guidance for researchers next week with regard to permissions and protocols for resuming research with human participants.

For those who wish to amend their current AUTEC approved research, please consult with your primary supervisor and complete an EA2 application form to seek approval from AUTEC. The form is available to download from [here](#).

### **Winter Graduation**

As a result of COVID-19 social distancing requirements, AUT has made the decision to cancel the 2020 Winter Graduation ceremonies. Students who have been identified as being eligible to graduate in July will receive further communication about arrangements for awarding their qualification directly from the Graduation Office. The award of your qualification will not be delayed by the cancellation of the 2020 Winter Graduation Ceremony. You will be invited to take part in a future ceremony which will allow you, whanau, friends and colleagues to celebrate your achievement.

For more information go to the [AUT Graduation website](#) or contact the Student Hub at [studenthub@aut.ac.nz](mailto:studenthub@aut.ac.nz).

### **International Students**

#### Immigration NZ – international PhD students able to commence overseas

The NZ Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has announced that it will temporarily allow new international PhD students to commence their enrolment and studies while overseas (normally they are required to relocate to New Zealand) and still only pay domestic tuition fees. AUT will process all [applications for admission to the PhD](#) using the usual process and will consider requests to commence enrolment while outside New Zealand on a case by case basis.

For new students who have been accepted into the AUT PhD programme, you should liaise with your proposed Primary Supervisor with regard to the suitability of commencing your enrolment while offshore or deferring starting your enrolment until you are able to relocate to New Zealand.

#### New student visa applications/processing delays

Immigration New Zealand have started processing applications for some visa categories for applicants who are already in New Zealand. These include:

- Full fee paying student visas
- Post study work visas
- Partnership category temporary visas (including reassessments)

However, the assessment of these applications or requests may take longer than usual. Please click [here](#) for updates from Immigration NZ regarding visa processing.

#### Current student visas extended

Holders of a work, student, visitor, limited or interim visa with an expiry date of 2 April to 9 July 2020 inclusive who were in New Zealand on 2 April 2020 have had their visas automatically extended to 25 September 2020. Please click [here](#) for further details.

## **Doctoral Scholarships**

### March 2020 round of AUT Doctoral Scholarship applications

Owing to the current COVID-19 pandemic and the difficulty for applicants to provide all the required information all shortlisted applicants from the March 2020 round have combined with applications for the July 2020 round. All applications for AUT Doctoral Scholarships will be considered on their merits and using the standard selection criteria as advertised.

### Extensions to existing AUT Doctoral and VC's Doctoral Scholarships

If you have applied or wish to apply for an extension to your existing AUT Doctoral or VC's Doctoral Scholarship, please note that these will only be considered towards the end of your scholarship tenure.

## **2020 3MT Master's and Doctoral Competition**

In line with national and international decisions regarding the 2020 round of 3MT (3 Minute Thesis) competitions, the GRS is currently in the process of investigating how we might run this year's 3MT competition in an online format. Further details to be announced shortly.

## **Reminder re Request to Complete HEA survey of Graduate Research Students**

The Graduate Research School has recently launched the 2020 Graduate Research Survey. It is run through the HEA (Higher Education Academy), an independent non-profit organisation based in the UK. If you have received an invitation by email to participate in the survey, we would appreciate you taking the time to give us your feedback. The survey helps us understand your experience as a graduate research student at AUT and we use this to improve what we do for you. If you are currently enrolled in thesis/exegesis of 90 points or more and have not received an email invitation please contact [grs@aut.ac.nz](mailto:grs@aut.ac.nz) and we will send you the email with the link to the survey again.

## **Staying Connected**

The Graduate Research School is continuing to offer a number of "[Stay Connected](#)" opportunities. Please click here for further details. 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. The next scheduled session is scheduled for 10-11am Wednesday 13 May. [Click here to gain access through Zoom](#)

## **Shut Up and Write (SUAW) Zoom Sessions**

SUAW sessions are now available via Zoom. The online drop-in sessions are scheduled on Mondays 9:30 – 11:45am. [Access through Zoom](#)

## **Continued development on SDW and Thesislink.**

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](#).

Noho ora mai rā 🙌

The Graduate Research School team