



The impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on research

Guidance for Blood Cancer UK grantholders

We are closely monitoring developments related to the coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak and following the emerging guidance from government bodies. We are aware that Universities and research organisations across the UK have now suspended the majority of on-site laboratory research activities, with the exception of high priority COVID-19 research. We also understand that the crisis will have a significant impact on the Blood Cancer UK portfolio of clinical trials, with the implementation of new measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of people taking part, or due to the secondment of staff the NHS frontline service delivery or national research efforts related to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Although it will take time to fully understand the implications of the COVID-19 outbreak on our funded research, we will continue to explore ways in which we can support our grantholders to minimise the impact, with the aim of achieving the original objectives of the grant as far as possible.

We encourage grantholders to investigate ways of continuing to progress their research where feasible, such as remote working and reordering of work packages, or to consider delaying staff recruitment until the research activities can resume. However, we understand that progress on many research projects or trials will be suspended or delayed and so we are offering increased flexibility across our funding portfolio to help support grantholders with the management of their awards.

- We will continue to pay the cost of employing research staff funded on our grants and follow the terms and conditions of the Host Institution for staff or students who are unwell, need to self-isolate or have caring responsibilities for someone affected.

Our current policy is that the Host Institution bears the cost of paid leave entitlements consistent with its own employment policies.

- As a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), we welcome publication of new guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) about the use of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) for higher education providers and urge organisations currently hosting Blood Cancer UK-funded research, as employers, to access this support where appropriate as this will help protect medical research in the longer term and make the best use of your Blood Cancer UK grant.



- We will support any local decision to move research personnel to front line duties and work with teams to explore ways for research projects to be reinstated in due course. Our expectation is that the NHS will cover the salaries of these staff members while working on the COVID-19 response. Please keep a record of any affected staff member(s), the duration of redeployment (start/end dates) and the salary contributions recoverable from the NHS.
- Our usual policy is for grants to be activated within three months of the date indicated on the Award Letter. However, for recent grants awarded from February 2020, we would expect the start date to be delayed until the laboratory facilities at the host organisation have reopened and the experimental research can commence, unless there is a strong justification for starting the grant earlier.
- If some essential aspects of the grant can no longer proceed as planned, we will consider requests to put awards into abeyance for a period so that payments and activities on a grant can be paused.
- We will be flexible on the use of underspend and virements between budget headings, including to cover any exceptional costs incurred by the COVID-19 outbreak to keep the research activities going.
- We are willing to consider no-cost extensions to awards using available unspent funds on the grant, to cover delays caused by the suspension of research.
- If the suspension of research is prolonged, we may be able to consider requests for costed extensions or supplements on a case by case basis. We can only consider such requests when the full impact of COVID-19 on the research activity is understood and there is clarity about which expenses can be covered by insurance policies held at the host organisation, or if other sources of research funding support have been made available in response to the crisis.
- We will also be monitoring the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the research we fund through our progress reports and may seek additional information from grantholders about the current status of their grant. We can be flexible with deadlines for submission of progress reports if there is limited access to support from research services or reduced staff capacity. However, please get in touch as soon as possible to notify us of significant changes to clinical trials, such as suspending patient recruitment or substantial changes in protocol.



All requests to put a grant into abeyance, extensions and variations must be made in writing to the Blood Cancer UK research team (research@bloodcancer.org.uk). Confirmation of the remaining unspent grant balance at the time of writing should be included in the request. We understand that each project may be affected in different ways and are happy to discuss your situation and any issues in more detail.