



[REDACTED]

14 April 2020

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Freedom of Information request: FOI2020/00062

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 2 March in which you requested the following:

Your request:

I am interested in information on all EPSRC funded PhD studentships (funding period, PhD period) in electronic format if possible

However, I am interested in all the years you have available within your own database PhD length may not be available for those who started in say 2017, but studentship length will I am interested in the 'funding gap' and how that is affecting the mental health of students

Our response

I can confirm UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) hold the information relevant to your request.

A table providing the information you have request can be found at [Annex 1 - UKRI FOI2020/00062: EPSRC PhD Studentships, funding period and completion periods, 2012-2019](#). Data is provided from 2012 onwards, as significant changes to data collection were introduced at that point and data prior to 2012 is not directly comparable.

The data in the table is calculated from information provided by universities in annual updates and throughout the lifetime of a PhD studentship. The funded period is calculated from when the student receives their stipend, the expected submission period is calculated the start date of the studentship (including any reported periods of absence) and the submission period is calculated from the annual report on students who have finished within the last 12 months.

Please note the following in regard to the information provided:

UKRI expects that doctoral projects are designed and supervised in such a way that students are able to submit their thesis within the funded period, as defined at the outset of the project. This expectation was made more explicit in 2018 and we are therefore in a period of change as the majority of our data on funding and submission periods is for students who started and completed before this time.

Since this change was introduced the expected submission period is more in line with the funding period. Due to the long duration of studentships, beyond the decreasing difference between funding period and expected submission date, we have yet to see further impacts of the changes to the terms and conditions in 2018.

Since 2018, UKRI funded students must have projects that are designed to allow them to write up during the funded period. UKRI does recognise that whilst the last year/months of the funded period can be stressful, particularly if the project has not been managed/supported well

throughout its lifetime, a significant period of 'writing up' without stipend support is more likely to be stressful on a student and create mental health issues.

An expectation to undertake doctoral activities, such as writing up, without funding is likely to disadvantage some students more than others, hence the change in policy.

The following are extracts from the EPSRC Grant Conditions for studentships (available from EPSRC's website at the following link <https://epsrc.ukri.org/skills/students/guidance-on-epsrc-studentships/terms-and-conditions/>):

EPSRC Centres for Doctoral Training provide 4-year studentships

"GAC 02: As stated in the UKRI guidance, it is expected that projects are planned in such a way that it is possible (and generally expected) for a student to write up within the funded four-year studentship."

EPSRC Doctoral Training Partnerships allow Universities to offer 3- or 4-year doctorates, or intermediate periods, as appropriate to the needs of individual projects. The funded period and duration of the doctoral project should be agreed with the student at the outset.

2018-2019

Universities may offer 3- or 4-year doctorates or intermediate periods, as appropriate to the needs of individual projects. The funded period and duration of the doctoral project should be agreed with the student at the outset.

2020-2021

TGAC 02: Duration

The funded period of a studentship award must be at least three and no more than four years in duration, but the research organisation may determine the duration within these limits. The funded period and duration of the doctoral project should be agreed with the student at the outset. As stated in the UKRI guidance, it is expected that projects are planned in such a way that it is possible (and generally expected) for a student to submit within the funded period, as agreed at the outset of the project.

Industrial CASE awards provide 4-year studentships

The training grant guidance states:

"Subject to any Specific Conditions, the duration of Doctoral Studentships must be within any parameters specified by the awarding Council. Councils expect doctoral projects to be designed and supervised in such a way that Students are able to submit their thesis within the funded period, as defined at the outset of the project. Provision can be made to extend the funding period in specific cases e.g. parental leave. "

If you have any queries regarding our response or you are unhappy with the outcome of your request and wish to seek an internal review of the decision, please contact:

Head of Information Governance

Email: foi@ukri.org or infogovernance@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see UKRI's complaints policy: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/complaints-policy/>

Yours sincerely,


Information Governance
Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
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Annex 1: UKRI FOI2020/00062: EPSRC PhD Studentships, funding period and completion periods, 2012-2019

Academic Start Year	A full-time student who started in October would be expected to finish between	Average funding period of all students (1)	Average expected time between starting and submitting for all students ()	Average time between starting and submitting (for all students who have completed)	Percentage of students who have completed	Percentage of students currently active	Percentage of students who terminated their studies
2012/2013	October 15 -October 16	3 years / 6 months	4 years / 2 months	4 years / 0 months	92.4%	0.1%	7.5%
2013/2014	October 16 -October 17	3 years / 6 months	4 years / 3 months	4 years / 0 months	91.2%	0.5%	8.4%
2014/2015	October 17 -October 18	3 years / 7 months	4 years / 3 months	3 years / 10 months	90.8%	1.8%	7.4%
2015/2016	October 18 -October 19	4 years / 0 months	4 years / 3 months	3 years / 8 months	69.9%	24.2%	5.9%
2016/2017	October 19 -October 20	3 years / 7 months	4 years / 6 months	2 years / 4 months (2)	10.6%	83.8%	5.5%
2017/2018	October 20 -October 21	3 years / 8 months	4 years / 2 months	#N/A (3)	0.6%	95.9%	3.4%
2018/2019	October 21 -October 22	3 years / 8 months	4 years / 2 months	#N/A (3)	0.5%	98.7%	0.8%
2019/2020	October 22 -October 23	3 years / 6 months	3 years / 6 months	#N/A (3)	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%

Notes:

(1) will include part time students

(2) the majority of students will not have finished yet

(3) we will not have the requested data on students until the Autumn of the third year after the start date