

Note for Examiners of Doctoral Theses

Explanation of COVID-19 Impacts

The Doctoral Research Committee recognises the impacts of Covid-19 on research, particularly for doctoral candidates, and we appreciate the efforts made by supervisors and candidates to ensure timely completion of the doctoral thesis. We know that in some cases this has meant the project has needed to be changed in some way, including its final presentation. For students whose work has been impacted, we invite supervisors to provide a note for examiners explaining the circumstances.

Instructions for Supervisors:

The note is designed to enable you to communicate to examiners your desire for them to take account of certain factors in their assessment of a thesis to address delays and disruptions experienced by a thesis student as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The attached form should be used to provide **an explanation** to the examiners on what to consider in their evaluation. It should detail how the project was altered or how the final product of the thesis has been affected as a result of the disruption. Statements should be clear and succinct for the benefit of the examiners and in fairness to the student and others in the student cohort.

The form should be signed by the student, the supervisor and the Head of Academic Unit, or nominee, and included in the information that is sent out with the thesis.

For doctoral candidates, the completed form should be inserted into the front of the thesis before the abstract by the candidate when submitting their digital thesis for examination in the [Student Portal](#). At the completion of the examination, the amended form which excludes any confidential comments to the examiners, should be included in the appendices.

Please be sure to indicate whether a student has received a suspension of studies due to Covid-19 and/or an extension, as it is important to note if students have already had some special consideration.

Note for Examiners

Explanation of COVID-19 Impacts

Thank you for taking the time to examine this thesis, which has been undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic. The New Zealand Government's response to Covid-19 includes a system of Alert Levels which have impacted upon researchers. Our University's pandemic plan applied the Government's expectations to our research environment to ensure the health and safety of our researchers, however, research was impacted by restrictions and disruptions, as outlined below.

For a six-week period from March 26 to April 27 2020, New Zealand was placed under very strict lockdown conditions (Level 4 – [Lockdown](#)), with students and staff unable to physically access University facilities, unless they were involved in essential research related to Covid-19. All field work ceased and data collection with humans was restricted to online methods, if appropriate. The restrictions were partially lifted on April 27, but students and staff were not generally allowed back into University facilities until May 13.

Ongoing disruptions have also been encountered for some students due to uncertainties over the potential for future Covid-19-related restrictions on activities, and a Covid-19 cluster outbreak based in Auckland in New Zealand on 12 August 2020 led to the imposition of rolling Level 2 ([Reduce](#)) and Level 3 ([Restrict](#)) conditions until 23 September 2020. Auckland campus based students remained on Level 2 until 7 October 2020. This Alert Level system continues to be utilised throughout 2021.

These changing Alert Levels have meant that some research students had experimental, clinical, laboratory, field work, and/or data collection or analysis interrupted, and consequently may have had to adjust their research plans. For some students, the impacts of Covid-19 stretched far beyond the lockdown period in April/May 2020, as they may have had to significantly revise their research plans.

Overseas travel is not permitted by the University and restrictions have been placed on the New Zealand borders which are closed to non-New Zealand citizens and permanent residents. This meant that international students who were based offshore at the time of lockdown, were unable to return to New Zealand. A small number of offshore students were provided permission to return to New Zealand in early 2021. Many students have also suffered from anxiety and stress-related issues, and have had financial impacts, meaning their research progress has been significantly delayed.

This form, as completed by the supervisor and student, outlines the extent that the research has been affected by Covid-19 conditions.

Please consider the factors listed below in your assessment of the work.

This statement has been prepared by the candidate's supervisor in consultation with the student and has been endorsed by the relevant Head of Academic Unit.

Student Name:

ID Number:

Supervisor Name:

Date:

Thesis title:

Considerations to be taken into account. Note: This statement will remain in the final copy of the thesis which will be available from the Massey University Library following the examination process. *[Enter key considerations here for the examiners. This can include but is not limited to change of scope, scale, topic, focus; limitations in relation to data collection, access to necessary literature or archival materials, laboratories, field sites; disruptions as a result of lockdown and various alert levels, medical or health considerations etc]*

Confidential for Examiners Only: *[Please enter any other considerations which are confidential for examiners only and should not be placed in the final thesis version submitted to Library following the examination process]*

Signed, confirming this is a fair reflection of the impact of Covid-19 on this research.

Student

Supervisor

Head of Academic Unit (or nominee)