



# CSC Exceptional Welfare Extension Policy and Procedure Guidance

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## Introduction

This is a guidance document that supports Commonwealth Scholars who wish to request an extension of their award using the CSC Exceptional Welfare Extension Policy and Procedure. We ask that scholars read the full policy and procedure before submitting their [request form](#).

This guidance covers the definition of exceptional welfare circumstances, the grounds under which extensions can be requested, how to complete the request form and the type of evidence that you need to submit.

### Premise of the policy and procedure

We hope that Commonwealth Scholars can enjoy their time in the UK and complete their studies without hinderance. However, from time-to-time scholars are affected by serious welfare problems that happen outside of their control and have a significant disrupting effect on their studies. The purpose of this policy is to provide a procedure to allow scholars to extend their scholarship to make up for some of the time lost to this disruption.

The maximum amount of time that an award can be extended under this policy is 13 weeks. The 13-week extension limit is to allow scholars to make up time lost for the sudden and immediate impact of unforeseeable and unpreventable situations. Extension of a scholarship should not be seen as a solution to long term and ongoing circumstances.

We will support, and expect universities to support, scholars to complete their programmes as close to their original scholarship end date as possible. If a scholar is expected to be delayed or effected by their welfare circumstances for longer than 13 weeks, then they must inform the CSC as soon as possible. In such cases we may recommend other support to help scholars meet their expectations with undertaking their studies. For example, scholars affected by long term or ongoing illness may be eligible for additional financial support under our disability policy. The purpose of this financial support is to allow scholars with disabilities and long-term medical conditions to purchase equipment and services to mitigate for any disadvantage their circumstances cause. There is a specific section further down in this guidance relating to disability and long-term conditions.

There may be other services and support mechanisms and solutions that can be suggested to scholars, including taking a temporary interruption of studies.

Scholars should also be committed to working on their studies full-time whilst receiving a full-time stipend. Whilst studying part time might be allowable to mitigate a serious illness or other circumstance for a short period, time lost for scholars working part time beyond 13 weeks will not be considered for an extension. Scholars should also speak with their university's visa and immigration teams if their course leaders suggest moving to part time study.

Only periods where a scholar is in the UK and on award (or within the [overseas travel allowance](#) of an award) will be covered by this policy. If a scholar leaves the UK beyond their maximum travel allowance, their award will be suspended until they return to the UK. A stipend will not be paid for this period of suspension, nor can an exceptional welfare extension of award be considered for this period). Scholars should let their university know if they plan to be outside the UK for any period.

Grants of leave under the exceptional welfare extension policy will only be granted where a scholar's university have agreed to extend the registration period of a scholar to complete their programme. However, every request put to the CSC is considered on its own merit. An agreement by the university to extend a scholar's period of registration does not necessarily mean that a request submitted under this policy will be granted by the CSC.

## **Other CSC policies and allowances**

The CSC has a range of other policies and allowances that scholars can utilise in certain circumstances. These include the following

- [Maternity and Paternity policy](#) – for scholars who require leave for maternity and paternity reasons
- [Compassionate policy](#) – for scholars who need to take leave due to a recent bereavement
- [Disability Allowances](#) – provide financial support to scholars to purchase equipment and services to mitigate the disadvantage of a long-term condition or disability
- [Annual leave allowance](#) – PhD awards allow for four weeks annual leave (either in the UK or abroad). Scholars can use this time for holidays, short breaks, or other personal reasons. Master's and split site scholars have a 2-week allowance.
- [Writing up period](#) (PhD scholars only) – We expect universities and PhD supervisors to plan and support scholars to complete their PhDs in 3 years. If there are some minor academic delays, or a scholar needs further time for writing up they can request a six-month extension of their award during which they will receive a half-rate stipend.

Request for exceptional welfare extensions are not usually considered for circumstances covered by the above policies.

## **Notifying the CSC, timing of extension requests, and retrospective requests**

To ensure that we can provide scholars with the best advice and support we expect scholars to notify us when their studies are affected by any disruption, especially if it is likely they are going to request an extension. Scholars should make every effort to seek alternative solutions to requesting an extension and the CSC and universities' Student Services can provide advice and support on this.

Requests for exceptional welfare extensions must be completed on the [form found on the CSC website](#). The form must be submitted within two weeks of the welfare circumstance being resolved or within two weeks of the 13<sup>th</sup> week of welfare circumstance having passed. Forms that are submitted later than this may not be considered at all.

Scholars should notify the CSC if they are disrupted by welfare circumstances as soon as possible. Generally, the longer the delay in notifying the CSC of a disruption the less likely a request for extension will be accepted. For example, a PhD scholar who requests an extension close to the end of their award for circumstances dating back to their first or second year will very likely have their request rejected.

We are very keen to ensure that all appropriate support can be given to scholars when they are facing difficulties, which is why we expect scholars to notify us as soon as possible when they are facing difficulties. Scholars should not be requesting extensions later in their awards in lieu of seeking support and guidance at the time of difficulty.

## Definition of exceptional welfare

During your award it is likely that you will experience numerous minor disruptions, such as minor illnesses, unwell children, transport or IT problems. The length of time allocated to complete a master's or PhD programme generally allows for these minor disruptions and all students (whether sponsored or not) are reminded to plan and factor some of these things in.

The Exceptional Welfare and Policy Procedure will therefore only consider providing extensions in genuinely exceptional circumstances. For this policy exceptional circumstances are those that meet these three criteria:

- Unforeseeable
- Unpreventable
- Having a significant impact on a scholar's studies or PhD progress

In essence the procedure is in place to support scholars affected by sudden and immediate circumstances that have a serious impact on their life and studies. Scholars can submit a request form to request an extension of their award to cover the disruption caused by a sudden and immediate serious circumstance.

It is important that all three criteria are met to be eligible for the exceptional extension policy. There may be times where a scholar has a serious circumstance but would not meet the criteria for this policy if the circumstances was foreseeable, or preventable. A scholar who doesn't take reasonable steps to mitigate the impact of their circumstances might also have their request refused or a shorter extension granted.

As explained above, extensions are only granted for up to 13 weeks, to help scholars deal with the sudden and unexpected nature of exceptional circumstances. Longer term solutions should be considered, including taking a temporary interruption of an award, where a disruption is likely to last for more than 13 weeks.

## Grounds for exceptional welfare extension

As well as meeting the definition of exceptional welfare, requests under the exceptional welfare extension policy must meet the grounds for exceptional welfare extensions.

### **The grounds that are usually considered for exceptional welfare extensions are:**

- Serious ill-health lasting for longer than 4 weeks, including physical and mental health illness (for PhD and split-site scholars)
- Development or worsening of a long-term illness or disability, including mental health and chronic conditions
- Failure of university to implement recommended and agreed disability support plan or of the CSC to provide agreed disability allowance and support
- Serious complications in pregnancy and maternity not already covered by the CSC Maternity and Paternity Policy
- Serious ill health in a first degree relative with significant impact on life, such as taking on unexpected caring responsibilities
- Victim of violent or sexual crime with significant disruption on life and studies
- Domestic abuse or family breakdown with significant impact on life and studies

All grounds above will usually need to be verified with independently documented evidence.

### **The grounds in detail**

#### **Illness**

There is no list for what is or isn't considered a serious or non-serious illness for this policy. A serious illness is one that newly develops, and which lasts for more than 4 weeks and is likely to mean that the scholar cannot work on their studies for any time during their illness. Some scholars may try and continue with some of their work or studies during their illness. This can be considered for an exceptional welfare extension where the total amount of time that a scholar is disrupted by is at least 4 weeks.

For long term illnesses, the most an award can be extended by is 13 weeks. This is to help scholars overcome the initial disruption that a new diagnosis can cause, until a treatment plan or a study support plan with reasonable adjustments to study can be put in place. If a scholar needs significant treatment over a longer period and cannot commit to their studies during this time, then they may be offered the option to take a suspension in their studies until the treatment has been completed.

It is not unexpected that most scholars will have some sort of minor illness or illnesses during their award. Minor illnesses which last less than 4 weeks in total will not be considered as serious enough to be considered for an extension under this policy and scholars should plan for and anticipate some minor disruption due to illness during their award.

#### **Disability and long-term illnesses**

Requests from scholars because of having a long term or ongoing illnesses or disabilities that are managed by medication, therapy, a treatment plan, or reasonable adjustments will not usually be considered for an exception extension. The definition of a long-term condition would not usually meet the definition of exceptional welfare (i.e. being unforeseeable)

However, you will be able to use this policy where you have experienced a worsening or unexpected and unusual flare up of your condition. PhD scholars who have provided evidence of their disability which is also considered a chronic condition can request an additional 4-week extension each year if they need to. They do not need to provide any evidence or documentation to support a request on this basis.

If your university has a disability support plan in place, then the university will make reasonable adjustments to help you with your studies. The purpose of reasonable adjustments is to remove all disadvantages that students with disabilities have when accessing their education, compared with

students who do not have a disability. Likewise, the CSC can provide a disability allowance to scholars with a disability to support their day to day living needs. These funds help provide for equipment and services to scholars to remove any disadvantage compared with scholars who do not have disabilities.

If for any reason the university does not fully implement the support plan or the CSC does not provide any confirmed disability allowance, then a scholar may use this exceptional welfare extension policy to request an extension of their award.

### **Maternity and Pregnancy**

Most maternity and pregnancy related issues are not covered by this policy as we have a dedicated policy that allows for PhD and split site scholars to take a leave of absence.

However, where there have been serious complications with a pregnancy which has had caused serious disruption to a scholar during a period when they had anticipated to still be studying, a request for an exceptional welfare extension can be made under this policy.

### **Ill health in a first degree relative**

Where a first degree relative has a serious illness, a scholar may need to take some time off if they need to care for that relative. A first degree relative is a parent, sibling, or child. Scholars can choose to use some of their personal annual leave entitlement, especially if they need to travel home, to do this. If a scholar does not need to travel home, they can make a request using this policy where the sudden change of circumstances has seriously disrupted their studies. These grounds might also include a situation where a partner who usually does childcare for a scholar's child, or children, becomes ill and the scholar needs to take on more childcaring responsibility.

As with the other grounds, the use of this policy should not be seen as the long-term solution to these issues. The maximum extension in these cases will still be 13 weeks. However, for the maximum grant the Commission may wish to see what mitigating action the scholar has taken to make alternative arrangements for the care of the first degree relative. If the scholar's care responsibilities mean that they cannot commit fully to their studies beyond a 13-week period, then they may be advised about a possible interruption of studies.

If a scholar needs to travel home because a first degree relative is receiving end of life care, then they may use the compassionate policy to request a compassionate airfare and compassionate extension.

Unfortunately, there may be occasions where a scholar will need to take some time off to care for a sick parent, child, or sibling. It is expected that most relatives will suffer minor illnesses occasionally and a parent may need to take a day away from their studies, for example, if a child is sick and cannot attend school. If the length of sickness does not exceed 4 weeks, we would expect scholars to anticipate and plan for these possible interruptions.

### **Victim of violent or sexual crime**

If a scholar is a victim of a violent or sexual crime then they can submit a request for an exceptional welfare extension of their award using this policy. We would encourage scholars who have experienced this sort of crime to make a report to the relevant authorities as soon as possible. If they do not know where to get support from, they can contact the CSC welfare team.

### **Victim of domestic abuse and family breakdown**

If a scholar is a victim of domestic abuse or faces an irrevocable breakdown of their family unit then they can request an extension of their award under this policy. Scholars may wish to take a break from their studies whilst they deal with the consequences of this sort of experience then we will support them to do so. If a scholar wishes to continue their studies, then they can also get further advice and support from the CSC welfare team on matters such as family allowances, and their visa and immigration status.

In addition, there are some circumstances that we would not consider as grounds for an exceptional welfare extension. These are:

### **Grounds that are not usually considered for exceptional welfare extensions**

- Academic delays such as difficulties with data gathering and analysis, issues or complaints regarding a university supervisor, academic support from the university, or general lack of progress with thesis or taught modules
- Lack of access to university resources
- Field work delays that fall within reasonable consideration of risk assessment
- Attending courses, conferences, or writing papers, articles and journals that are not core to a scholar's final PhD thesis
- Minor illnesses for less than 4 weeks duration
- Bereavement (please see compassionate air fare and extension policy)
- Maternity and paternity leave (please see maternity and paternity policy)
- Disabilities where support plan and additional provision has been provided
- IT difficulties, such as lack of access to IT equipment, or failure to back up documents
- Late arrival to the UK or late enrolment on programme due to family issues, such as delays to dependants' visas, or making arrangements for school and housing
- General domestic and family problems
- Financial difficulties
- Employment or extra-curricular commitments

### **Academic delays, including delays to fieldwork**

Academic delays are not usually considered as grounds for exceptional welfare extensions. The CSC only accepts placements of scholars onto one-year master's programmes, and a maximum of 3 years for PhD programmes. Universities are aware of this at the time of placing scholars on their programme. Supervisors are strongly encouraged to ensure that PhD programmes can realistically be delivered in 3 years. Supervisors, and scholars, have a responsibility to manage their workload to meet these targets.

Aspects of the programme should be risk assessed, including when going on fieldwork, to better understand the potential for delay, but most importantly to plan for any mitigations if there are problems or delays with data gathering and analysis, as well as logistical problems, such as travel and access.

General lack of progress, reported by either a scholar or a supervisor, with any taught modules or a scholar's thesis will also not be considered as grounds for extension. If a scholar has a complaint about the level of supervision or support from a supervisor, or university in general, then they should raise this through the university's complaint procedure and make a claim for costs incurred for lost stipend.

Where a scholar feels that they have been delayed due to a lack of access to necessary equipment or resources, then a scholar should raise this through the university's complaint procedure and make a claim for costs incurred for lost stipend.

We expect all scholar's academic focus to be on the programme for which they have been awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship. Any delays caused by attending courses, conferences, or by contributing to papers, articles, and journals not core to a scholar's final PhD thesis will not be considered as a ground for an exceptional welfare extension.

All PhD scholars can request a 6-month writing up extension at half rate stipend to help complete any outstanding academic requirements prior to completing their award. There is more information about this in the scholar handbook.

## **Bereavement**

Sadly, each year we have scholars who are affected by bereavement. The exceptional welfare extension policy and procedure does not deal specifically with requests for extension for bereavement. Scholars should instead read our compassionate policy which covers extensions and airfares for bereavement purposes.

## **IT and technical difficulties**

Problems that scholars have with IT and technical equipment will not be considered for an exceptional extension. Scholars should ensure that they mitigate for any potential IT problems by backing work up properly and planning ahead and have alternative options in place for any potential equipment failure that may occur.

## **Late arrivals and start to award due to family circumstances**

We expect scholars to make every effort to arrive on time to start their programmes. Where a scholar has been delayed, we would expect them to work with their university to make up for any lost time, if they have been allowed to arrive late. In some circumstances we can offer a deferral of award, such as in cases of pregnant scholars and scholars who have recently given birth. In some cases, we can allow for scholars to start later if there is an agreement with their university, though this does not change the overall length of the scholarship award offered to the scholar.

Late arrivals and starts, or disruptions at the start of the award due to family issues, such as delays to dependants' visas, accommodation or school arrangements will not be considered as grounds for exceptional extension. Scholars should ensure that they make suitable arrangements and plan well in advance for family members, taking into account that delays to things like visa processing are a real possibility. There is no requirement for family members to travel altogether to the UK and scholars may need to consider travelling in advance of their family members to start their awards. In fact, our dependants FAQs suggests scholars should travel in advance of other family members if they haven't secured accommodation before arrival to the UK.

## **General domestic and family issues**

Most accommodation and family issues will not be considered as grounds for an extension under this policy. Minor illness of family members will not usually be considered as grounds, as explained above. Most childcare issues will not be considered as grounds for an exceptional extension. If scholars bring child dependants with them then it is their responsibility to ensure that their care arrangements are adequate and catered for. There is some information in our dependants FAQs that provides some advice on this matter.

General problems with housing and accommodation will not be considered as grounds for extension under this policy. If a scholar has any accommodation issues they should speak with their university student services for advice.

Exceptions can be made where a scholar has been a victim of domestic abuse or there has been an irrevocable breakdown of their family unit. Other exceptions might be made in cases where a house fire has caused complete destruction of a scholar's property.

## **Financial difficulties**

Scholars receive a stipend and allowances that should be sufficient to cover their full living costs in the UK. These stipends and allowances should only be used to support scholars' time studying in the UK. Stipends are not intended to cover scholar's costs in their home country, including supporting family members.

Family allowances are also available to scholars on PhD awards and are only intended to be a contribution to the full costs of family members living in the UK.

As such, requests for exceptional extension based on financial difficulties will not be considered under this policy. Many universities may have policies relating to hardship and emergency funding and scholars could investigate these policies at their university.

## **Employment and extra-curricular commitments**

Scholars are expected to be fully committed and focused on the studies for which their scholarship has been awarded. The CSC is happy for scholars to undertake secondary employment and extra-curricular activities so long as they do not interfere with their studies. Any requests for an extension of a scholarship will not have grounds where the basis of the request is due to disruption from secondary employment or extra-curricular activities.

## **How to use the exceptional welfare extension policy and procedure**

### **Notifying the CSC**

To submit a formal request for an exceptional extension scholars must complete the CSC Exceptional Welfare Extension form. However, scholars should have already notified the CSC of any welfare concerns they have been facing. This is to ensure that scholars can get the advice and support during the time that they are facing the issue. Scholars should either notify their Programme Officer (PO), or the CSC Senior Welfare and Immigration Officer (SWIO), at the earliest possible opportunity. The PO or SWIO will be able to give advice about their current situation and advice about using these procedures.

There is more information at the top of this guidance about timings of requests. In short, scholars will need to complete the Exceptional Welfare Extension form within two weeks of their exceptional circumstance being resolved, or within 2 weeks of the 13<sup>th</sup> week of the period effected by an exceptional circumstance having passed, whichever is the earliest. Requests submitted after this time may not be considered for extension.

### **Completing the Exceptional Welfare Extension form**

To complete the [Exceptional Welfare Extension form](#) you will need provide your name and contact details, the details of your programme and the details of your supervisor.

You can submit a request based on multiple grounds. If they are all covering the same time period, you can use the same form to include details of all grounds you are making a request under. Where you have multiple grounds that overlap the same time period you can only make one request for an exceptional extension.

There are three open text boxes on the form which you can use to explain the basis of your request. The first box allows you to explain in detail what the circumstances are that you are facing during your award. The second box allows you to explain what the impact on your studies have been. The third box allows you to provide any details of action you have taken to mitigate against the disruption.

#### **Explaining the details of your circumstances**

Scholars should be mindful when completing the form that CSC staff and Commissioners who may view this form are not medical experts. Scholars should therefore make sure that they include as much useful information and detail as possible. If you are using medical or technical terms, then please make sure you provide some explanation as to their meaning. Scholars can also use this box to provide any other background or contextual details that may be useful.

#### **Explaining the impact on your award and studies**

This is probably the most important part of the form as the main purpose the Exceptional Welfare Extension policy is to determine to what extent your studies have been disrupted by the circumstances you have presented.

Scholars should be as explicit as possible about the impact that their circumstances have had on their studies. Do not assume that simply explaining what the circumstances are will be enough for the CSC to determine the level of disruption caused and length of extension could be granted. Scholars should be as specific as possible about the dates and times that they have been affected by their circumstances and any specific disruption they have faced. For example, scholars

completing this form should provide the dates of any absences from their studies due to their circumstances, or any dates where they may have been working at reduced hours, or a reduced rate.

If a scholar has been working at a reduced rate they should explain to what extent their capacity is reduced to and what the specific impairment or reason for this is.

Scholars should be mindful that this procedure is for exceptional circumstances and so when completing this part of the form they will need to demonstrate how any impacts are exceptional, beyond a normal or expected amount of disruption, for example from illness.

If a scholar is making a request based on multiple or complex grounds, they may want to consider outlining the impact or providing details of their circumstance in the form of a timeline. If it is easier for the scholar to do so, they may want to include this as a separate document attached with the form.

### **Providing details of mitigating action**

This is another important part of the form as the CSC will want to know about the measures scholars have taken to either mitigate the circumstances they have faced or limit the impact of them. For example, where a scholar has had an illness or injury, there might be an expectation that they have asked their university or department about any adjustments to their programme or facilities that can be made to remove barriers or obstacles that an illness or injury creates.

Again, scholars should try and provide as much useful detail as possible and try and be specific about the support that they have asked for or had put in place, and any impacts this has had.

As mentioned previously in this guidance, the exceptional welfare extension policy and procedure should not necessarily be seen as the last and only option for scholars who have faced various welfare issues. Where the CSC feels that other options and actions were available and not pursued, this may affect the outcome of their decision. This is not to say that the CSC expects that every circumstance can be mitigated for and every case is looked at on a case-by-case basis.

### **Evidence**

There is a section on the form where you are asked to confirm that you can submit evidence with your request. This includes confirmation from your university that they can extend your programme. You should list the evidence that the CSC staff member who reviews the form should expect to find with your submission. There is more guidance about submitting evidence lower down in this guide.

### **Signing the declaration**

Scholars must sign the declaration at the bottom of the form for your request to be considered. The declaration explains that you have completed the form accurately and to the best of your knowledge. If it is determined that a scholar has deliberately tried to mislead in this form, then their request could be refused and procedures under the CSC code of conduct initiated.

On some occasions it will be necessary for the CSC to follow up with a scholar for more information or details. Scholars also confirm that they are happy with this when they sign the declaration.

## **Evidence**

All exceptional welfare requests should be supported with documentary evidence. Evidence should be from an independent and verifiable source and should cover the full period of the circumstance for which a scholar is making an exceptional welfare extension request. When considering requests for exceptional welfare extensions and deciding on outcomes, the CSC will rely heavily on the details outlined in submitted evidence.

Good evidence will help demonstrate how your circumstances will have had an impact on you and the disruption it has caused to your studies. It's for this reason that we want to encourage scholars use these procedures early and notify us as soon as they need support. A contemporary piece of evidence, such as a doctor's note, will more likely be able to provide clear details of a scholar's

current situation. A letter from a doctor confirming that a scholar was ill more than a year ago, with no details, will not carry as much weight as a contemporary document.

As with completing the form, evidence that is more specific and explicit about a scholar's circumstance and its impact will be more useful. The CSC will be looking at the evidence to determine what impact a scholar's circumstance has had on their studies and not for any recommendations of the author as to how long an extension a scholar needs.

### **Medical Evidence**

Medical evidence must be provided in English by a qualified doctor or medical practitioner on letterheaded paper or stamped with an official stamp.

Medical evidence should be contemporary to the time of the circumstance that the scholar is submitting a request form for. Retrospective medical evidence, where a scholar was seen after a period of illness has passed, that states the scholar had previously been ill is less likely to lead to a successful request for exceptional welfare extension. The evidence should also cover the period for which the scholar is submitting their request form for.

As much as possible, medical evidence should cover the relevant bullet points below:

- Scholar's full name
- Date
- Evidence of provider's full name, role, organisation and signature
- Name of the condition or disability
- Date of diagnosis
- Period of time that scholar has been seeing the practitioner for this condition
- Length of time that the practitioner expects the condition to last
- Main symptoms of this condition which could impact on scholar's life or studies
- Current treatment and medication being undertaken
- Side effects of any treatments or medication, if applicable
- An assessment of how the circumstances affects a scholar's ability to attend or undertake studies. E.g. do they need any time off, should they work reduced hours, would they benefit from any additional support or reasonable adjustments

Contemporary doctors' notes are usually the best form of evidence for illness and injury. If a scholar has taken a leave of absence for injury or illness, then a simple fit note that covers the period of absence is usually sufficient. If the scholar didn't take a leave of absence and is submitting a request for exceptional extension whilst still attending classes or working on their thesis then a more detailed letter might be needed.

Scholars should remember that CSC staff who review these documents are not medical experts and so medical evidence should be clear and explicit. Submitting documents that only contain information such as test results, tables, figures, and graphs, without any explanation will not usually help a scholar's submission. Likewise, submitting appointment confirmation letters only really help demonstrate that a scholar had an appointment on a particular day.

### **Non-medical evidence**

Non-medical evidence must be provided in English by an appropriate, independent, and verifiable person on letterheaded paper or stamped with an official stamp.

As much as possible, non-medical evidence should cover the relevant bullet points below:

- Scholar's full name
- Date
- The evidence provider's full name, role, organisation and signature
- A description of the nature and severity of scholar's circumstances
- An assessment of how the circumstances affects scholar's ability to attend or undertake their studies
- Precise details of when the circumstances started and ended/is expected to end

### **University evidence**

Letters of support are welcomed from the university and should follow the instruction above. Where a scholar has taken a leave of absence from their university then they would need to provide a letter confirming their dates of absence with their Exceptional Welfare Extension form.

In every case, where a scholar has been granted an extension of their programme under this policy and procedure the CSC will need a letter from the university confirming that they will also extend the registration period of the scholar in line with the extension of the scholarship. Ideally a letter from the university confirming the extension of their programme will be submitted with their Exceptional Welfare Extension form, but it can be submitted or requested later.

### **Specific evidence for master's scholars**

All master's scholars who are making a submission under the Exceptional Welfare Extension policy will need to include evidence that they have successfully been granted an extension of their programme by using their university's own internal extenuating/mitigating/exceptional (or similarly named) circumstances procedure. A formal letter, email, or a screenshot of a portal clearly linked to the scholar will be sufficient to meet this requirement. Extension of master's awards cannot be granted where a master's scholar has been granted an unofficial extension by their supervisor.

### **Evidence in sensitive or traumatic circumstances**

The CSC understands that it can be difficult or distressing to provide evidence relating to sensitive or traumatic experiences, such sexual assault or being the victim of a violent crime. If there are compelling reasons why a scholar cannot provide evidence as part of their exceptional welfare extension request, then they can contact the CSC welfare team at [welfare@cscuk.org.uk](mailto:welfare@cscuk.org.uk).

## **Outcomes of Exceptional Welfare Extension Requests**

A small panel of senior CSC staff will review and assess all requests submitted under this procedure. The panel will look at the form and evidence submitted to determine whether each request meets the definition of exceptional welfare and falls within one of the grounds for exceptional welfare extension.

If the panel feels that a scholar's request demonstrates a truly exceptional circumstance, they will then assess the details of the request to determine the extent of the circumstances impact on the scholar's studies. They will look at the scholar's submission but will rely heavily on the evidence to verify the circumstances. For example, if a scholar has requested an extension of 13 weeks for ill health reasons but have submitted a doctor's note that has signed them off for 4 weeks only, then the panel will most likely decide to grant an extension period closer to what the evidence suggests they have missed. The panel will also consider what other actions a scholar has or has not taken to mitigate the impact of their circumstances.

If the panel feel that they need further information, then this will be requested from the scholar.

Once the panel has assessed the scholar's request form and evidence, they will make decision to either grant the request in full (up to 13 weeks extension), partially accept the request for a shorter period than requested, or refuse the request outright.

The scholar will be notified as soon as possible once a decision has been made and will receive a formal letter confirming the extension and the new end date of their award.