Allocation of Phase 2 extension funding – Final Report of the Governance Committee Feb 2022 (based on data updates to an Interim Report approved May 2021)

1. Introduction

The value of the UKRI Covid-19 Doctoral Extensions Phase 2 Grant was £1,507,565 and was awarded between 1.4.21-31.3.22.

The majority of the Grant was allocated in Round 1 (Lent term 2021) except for ~ £130k remaining by May 2021. Remaining funds were offered in a second round in ET 2021 to ensure that all funds were allocated to students. This is the final report for the scheme for internal purposes. Reporting to UKRI will occur by June 2022.

2. Governance

The Phase 2 Grant was overseen by the UoC UKRI Phase 2 Governance Committee, a new dedicated Committee, chaired by the Senior Pro VC for Education (Prof Graham Virgo). The application and assessment process followed the Governance Plan provided to UKRI (see Appendix 1 – Governance Plan for more details).

3. Applications received

A total of 402 applications were received over all rounds, of which 375 were considered eligible and taken forward to Doctoral Training Partnership recommendation and central moderation. The application process was online and went smoothly.

4. Decision making process

Doctoral Training Partnerships were asked to assess applications and make a recommendation on the length of extension based on the criteria set out in the Governance Plan.

The majority of applications (313) were further reviewed by the Governance Committee as follows:

Types of Governance Committee Moderation

a) Academic moderation was carried out by an independent academic in all cases where
   - material had been sent directly to the Committee from applicants
   - the DTP had recommended less than requested/more than requested or had recommended over 3 months

b) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion moderation was carried out on over 90% of applications where illness, a disability, health and wellbeing concerns or caring issues were raised and in all cases where the academic recommendation was less than the period requested by the student.

c) Dipstick testing and Educational Quality moderation was carried out by a non-disciplinary member of the committee during the main round (Lent 21). This provided assurance that moderation had taken place consistently across subject areas and was therefore not deemed necessary for the later smaller round. Applications were also reviewed where concerns had been raised with regard to educational quality (e.g. issues with supervision or access to facilities); such cases were followed up appropriately.

When reviewing DTP recommendations, moderators took the following factors into account:

- Any material sent directly to the Committee, which the DTP had not seen,
- The strength of the case made by the student and DTP, including evidence of mitigations and adaptations made to their projects,

- E, D + I factors such as ill health, disability or caring responsibilities to ensure these had been fully taken into account,
- Parity with similar applications in the same or other subject areas where these were subject to academic disruption only.

Any changes took account of both Academic and E, D +I moderation. In some cases a 2nd opinion was required for academic moderation to reach agreement on the length of award to make.

Overall, 62 applications were approved for an extension that differed from the DTP recommendation within a range of +/- 3 months, however, most changes were for +/- 1 month. See Appendix 2, Table 1 for the changes took place and the % of applications that were affected from each Research Council.
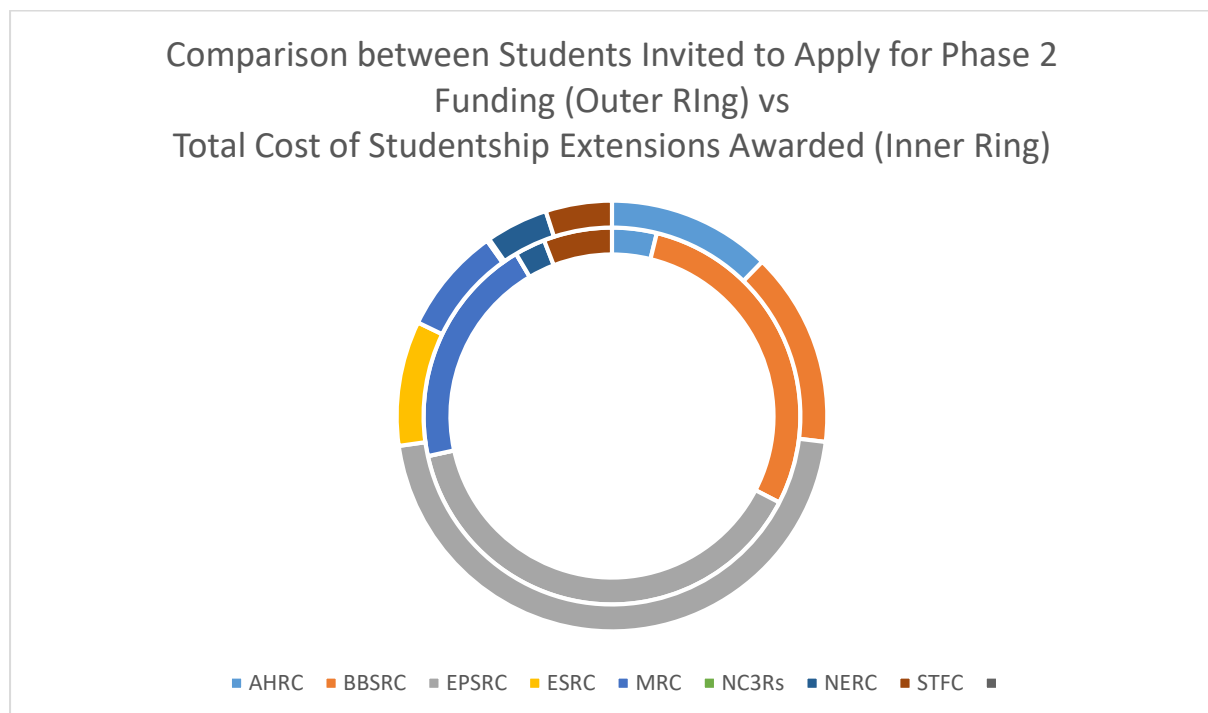
5. Distribution of the Grant by subject

There was no prior allocation of the grant to subject areas; allocation depended on student need in the various subject areas and the availability of local underspend to meet this need.

The proportion of the grant going to the different Research Council areas is compared with the eligible population of students in each area below in Graph 1 (the total number of students invited to apply was 1025).

The graph shows that the following councils received a higher proportion of the grant compared to the size of their eligible student population: BBSRC and MRC, whilst the other councils received a lower proportion, namely AHRC, EPSRC, ESRC, NERC, STFC. This primarily reflects the lack of availability of underspend within the BBSRC and MRC grants, such that all students were supported from the Phase 2 grant rather than local underspend. In other subject areas, local grant underspend was sufficient to support all of the extensions. Further detail of underspend used is provided in Appendix 2: Phase 2 Grant allocation by Source of funds and Research Council.

Graph 1: Allocation of Phase 2 Grant by RC compared to number of eligible student

Comparison between Students Invited to Apply for Phase 2 Funding (Outer RIng) vs Total Cost of Studentship Extensions Awarded (Inner Ring)

■ AHRC ■ BBSRC ■ EPSRC ■ ESRC ■ MRC ■ NC3Rs ■ NERC ■ STFC ■

6. Partner Funding:

To fulfil the extensions granted, £130k was sought from Partner funders, primarily by DTPs. In the main round, the vast majority of partner funders agreed to make their contribution to extensions by mid May 2021. This allowed the Student Funding team to confirm the dates and value of extensions for over 50 students within 6 weeks of their original offer letter.

7. Reserve funding

There remained around a small sum of reserve funding after the allocation in Lent term. This was retained for the following purposes in order of priority:

i. Contingency funds for appeals (which were not needed in the event)
ii. Funding for late applications for students known to have missed the initial round, referred by their DTPs (6 applications were received in April 21)
iii. Funding in a later round for other eligible students (57 students applied in a second round in ET 21)

8. Length of funding extensions and distribution of funding periods across Research Councils

Students were advised that the usual length of extension was 3 months, however they could apply for over 3 months in exceptional circumstances. Over 60% of awards were made for 3 months or less. 189 of the student applications (47%) students were for 4-6 months and 102 received the maximum period of 6 months. See Appendix 3 Table 1 for a full breakdown of extension lengths.

Where students had indicated a personal factor such as ill health, disability or caring responsibility, DTPs and moderators were supportive and usually granted the full amount requested. Students did not need to provide evidence of illness, disability or caring responsibilities, as was previously agreed by the Committee – their applications were taken at face value. Of those students granted the longest extensions, almost 80% cited personal factors in addition to academic disruption.

However, it was more finely balanced to judge longer extensions when requests for purely academic reasons (e.g. lack of access to labs). It was apparent that where the assessors at DTP level had a close relationship with, and high level of knowledge of their students (e.g. in single department units of assessment), assessors were able to draw on other evidence aside from the application itself, such as whether supervisor reports had mentioned any delays to the project; this sometimes led to less generous recommendations where student claims were not supported by other documentary evidence. On the other hand, where assessments were taken at a higher aggregate level, such as a DTP or collection of CDTs (where award management is usually devolved to departments), recommendations were based solely on the application presented and often gave the student the benefit of the doubt (e.g. where there was insufficient knowledge to judge the extent of possible mitigation). Over all however, students were awarded an extension that was consistent with a 'levelling up' between subject areas (rather than levelling down).

The Governance Committee provided advice to DTPs undertaking Phase 3 extensions to consider other documentary evidence (e.g. supervisor reports) when considering further applications for extended funding where this was due to academic disruption factors only.

9. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring

We are satisfied that the allocation of the Phase 2 Grant was not to the detriment of any group with a Protected Characteristic. The following is a summary of our findings from the E, D and I monitoring of the allocation. For more information, see Appendix 4 – E, D + I monitoring.

- There were more male than female recipients but this reflects the composition of the eligible population of Research Council funded students at Cambridge
- There was a positive effect for students with a disability who were more likely to apply for an extension compared to the general population. This aligns with the priority given to this group in the UKRI conditions for the scheme.
- The majority of recipients were of white ethnicity (78%) which is reflective of the eligible population. However, students of other ethnicities as a whole applied for and received a slightly longer extension on average than white students.
- Students with caring responsibilities received a longer extension on average than other students. This also aligns with the priority given to this group by UKRI.
- There was no bias found in terms of age (taking the age of 30 as a threshold)

10. <u>Conclusion</u>

The Governance Committee are content that the allocation of the Phase 2 Grant has been fair, transparent and in accordance with UKRI eligibility criteria and guidance. They wish to express their thanks to the UKRI Phase 2 Co-ordinators in DTPs, CDTs and Schools for their support and collaboration in this scheme, which delivered funded extensions to over 360 UKRI students in a smooth and timely manner in 2022.

Appendix 1 - Governance Plan – UKRI COVID-19 Phase 2 Doctoral Extensions (UoC)

Organisation name	Cambridge University
Allocation (£)	£1,507,564.91
Principal investigator	Sally-Ann Gannon

Section 1: Overall framework and governance
Please confirm agreement to the framework and governance YES
If you will be implementing a different process, please specify here: N/A
Section 2: Assurance on equality of assessment In this section, we are asking you to state the mechanism by which your organisation will ensure that decision-makers are able to make fair comparisons

> **A. Governance Committee**
>
> The Cambridge Covid-19 Phase 2 Award will be managed under the auspices of the University's General Board of the Faculties that holds responsibility for the oversight of the University's academic activities. A dedicated Governance Committee will be established for the Award, which will report to the University's Postgraduate Committee initially, and then onwards to the University's General Board Education Committee and the University's General Board of the Faculties. The Governance Committee will be the ultimate decision-maker for the Awards.
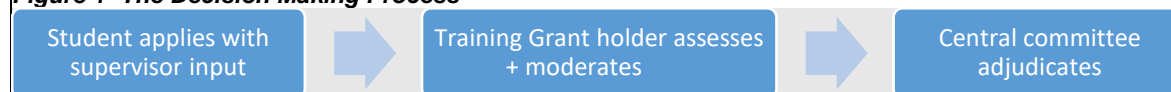>
> The C2GC will be chaired by the Senior Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) and its membership will be impartial between the various training grant interests. The academic membership of the Committee will be determined in order to include the appropriate range of academic disciplinary expertise necessary to oversee the award. The committee will also include representatives from the Disability Resource Centre, the University's Equality Diversity & Inclusion Section, the Educational Quality and Policy Office, Student Operations and the Communications Office.
>
> The Committee will operate under terms of reference designed to ensure that grant funds are allocated in accordance with the terms and conditions of the scheme and that the allocation process is fair, open and transparent. The terms of reference will include specific responsibility to ensure that funding is allocated in an inclusive and equitable manner, ensuring that any bias is mitigated and the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are considered and supported throughout. The Committee will define principles for the allocation of funding in advance; these principles will be informed by best practice in inclusion and access and will undergo an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).We will seek data on the relevant protected characteristics to allow for rigorous monitoring of the EIA. All members of the Governance Committee will be required to have undertaken the University's Equality Essentials and unconscious bias training, should they not already have done so. Training Grant Holders who will be involved in the assessment process will receive similar guidance.
>
> **B. Decision-making Process**
>
> We will hold a single gathered field in Spring 2021, inviting all eligible students to apply. We believe that fair comparisons can best be made by using a gathered field approach. We will draw on practice from the University Hardship scheme, which allocates a fixed amount in a gathered field. We will also use strategies employed by the University's PG Funding competition, where student scores from Departments are moderated and 'dip-stick' tested to produce a ranked list of students on a large scale. We will provide guidance for those assessing applications to ensure an even playing field from the outset including: transparent selection criteria, E,D+I principles, and best practice for moderation across subject areas.
> .
> *Figure 1 -The Decision Making Process*

Student applies with supervisor input	⇒	Training Grant holder assesses + moderates	⇒	Central committee adjudicates

> 1. ***Students*** will apply and provide information on:
>
>   a) The impact of Covid-19 on their research and the outcome of the adaptations/mitigations that they undertook or can undertake. The supervisor will be asked to comment on this section.
>   b) If and how their ability to adapt/mitigate is impacted due to disability, long term illness, neurodivergency or caring responsibilities or other personal circumstance (this can be provided confidentially if necessary)
>   c) The length of extended funding requested in light of a) and b) above.

2. ***Training Grant holders*** will assess applications and confirm eligibility; they will also be asked to make <u>recommendations</u> to the central Committee based on:

   a) Moderation – to calibrate the length of funding extensions requested between students facing similar disruption to research facilities, however, this will not extend to personal circumstances.
   b) Prioritisation – to place students within bands of Severe – High – Moderate – Low, which measures the '*degree of <u>difficulty in adapting the project to complete within the funded period</u>*'. Guidance will be provided to Training Grant holders on how these terms are defined

3. **The *Governance Committee*** disciplinary members will undertake moderation between Training Grant Holders within their disciplinary area to ensure recommendations have been made in a consistent way between subject areas. Non-disciplinary members will then sample these moderated recommendations across the gathered field so that we can be confident that we have a consistent set of requests for all applicants and our funds will be targeted at the most deserving according to the criteria. Training Grant holder recommendations will be considered along with all the other evidence provided.

C. <u>Allocation of Funding</u>

The Governance Committee will determine the appropriate distribution of funds to students through the prioritisation of students in the following way:

- <u>Priority Group 1</u>: Students who have had particular difficulty in adapting their research projects sufficiently due to disability, long term illness, neurodivergency or caring responsibilities, and students with a funding end date between 1 April – 30 September 2021 (to be subdivided for reporting purposes)

- <u>Priority Group 2</u>: Students who have tried to make adaptations and mitigations but due to the nature of their research will unavoidably need longer to complete (for example those who lacked access to equipment when labs were closed or could not undertake fieldwork).This group will be prioritised by urgency (i.e. proximity of the funding end date after September 2021).

- <u>Priority Group 3</u>: all other students. We will distribute any residual funding to this group once Priority groups 1 and 2 above have been catered for.

Students would then be prioritised within these groups within bands that describe the "*degree o<u>f difficulty in adapting the project to complete within the funded period</u>*' of Severe – High – Moderate – Low.

We would expect to be able to provide some level of funding to all students in Priority Group 1. Requests for longer than 3 months would be considered only where the impact post-mitigation is deemed to be 'significant' or where there are exceptional personal circumstances.

We are fortunate to be able to target the entire UKRI Covid-19 Phase 2 grant towards stipend extensions as tuition fees or continuation fees are not charged by Cambridge when a student extends beyond the normal period of doctoral study. We will approach our Training Grant holders to access underspend where available so that we can make the central grant go further. We will also expect our Training Grant holders to approach co-sponsors to match any extensions granted so as not to disadvantage students with multiple funders. We will consider all other possible sources of funding available, including the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) and University funds for hardship, in order to maximise the number of students that can be supported. There may inevitably be students who cannot be supported financially and we will refer them to alternative sources of support both within the University and its Colleges, and through their relationship with their Training Grant holder.

Appendix 2 – Effect of Moderation and Phase 2 Grant Allocation by Research Council

Table 1: Effect of moderation on length of funding extensions offered

**Variance between GC moderation and
DTP recommendation**

Academic subject area	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3	Total Changes	Total Apps	% changed
AHRC							0	14	0%
BBSRC				12			12	99	12%
EPSRC (CDT/incorp/CASE/iCASE)				9	9	3	21	84	25%
EPSRC (DTP/DTG/CASE conversion)	1	1		16	2	1	21	87	24%
ESRC					1		1	9	11%
MRC		1		2			3	51	6%
NERC							0	10	0%
STFC			1	1		2	4	21	19%
Total	1	2	1	40	12	6	62	375	17%

Table 2. Phase 2 Grant allocation by Source of funds and Research Council at 03.11.21

Funding Council	Allocation from Phase 2 Grant	Other UKRI Grant Contribution (i.e. Underspend)	Partner Funding Contribution sought	Total Cost of Studentship Ext.
AHRC	£57,740	£9,553	£23,418	£90,711
BBSRC	£433,585	£3,821	£45,176	£482,583
EPSRC - CDT	£245,671	£165,235	£0	£410,906
EPSRC - DTP	£342,206	£53,344	£879	£396,429
ESRC	£0	£45,095	£4,851	£49,946
MRC	£300,293	£14,852	£55,137	£370,282
NERC	£39,614	£0	£1,911	£41,524
STFC - IoA	£11,464	£0	£0	£11,464
STFC - DAMTP	£15,528	£3,821	£0	£19,349
STFC - Physics	£61,464	£0	£0	£61,464
Total	£1,507,565	£295,722	£131,371	£1,934,658

Appendix 3 - Allocation of grant by duration and reasons

Table 1. Number of extensions offered by value and months

	1 Month	2 Months	3 Months	4 Months	5 Months	6 Months	Total
Value of UKRI Phase 2 Contribution	£1,301	£42,945	£622,981	£131,630	£104,925	£603,783	£1,507,565
Value of Other UKRI Contribution	£0	£5,203	£111,308	£23,916	£9,553	£145,741	£295,722
Value of Partner Funding	£0	£0	£35,267	£22,415	£15,713	£57,976	£131,371
Total Value of Extensions	£1,301	£48,148	£769,556	£177,961	£130,192	£807,500	£1,934,658
Number of Awards	1	18	203	31	20	102	375

Table 2. Number and % of Students who cited the following reasons for requesting extensions (based on the UKRI reporting template)

Extension Research from UKRI Report	# Students	% Students
Lack access to research resources and facilities	363	90.30%
Interruption of data collection and/or fieldwork	299	74.38%
Increased caring responsibilities	49	12.19%
Health and wellbeing affected	293	72.89%
Other - Additional Impact arising from a disability	114	28.36%
Other - Redeployment on COVID19 related research	16	3.98%
Other - Self-isolation has undermined ability to progress doctoral research	106	26.37%

Table 3. Number of Students who applied for 6 months extensions and the reasons for requesting extensions (academic, non-academic or both)

Students who requested 6 Month Extensions per council	# Students who mentioned academic reasons only	% of Students	# Students who mentioned non-academic reasons only	% of Students	# Students who mentioned both	% of Students
AHRC	AHRC	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	5
BBSRC	BBSRC	7	19.44%	0	0.00%	29
EPSRC*	EPSRC*	10	12.66%	3	3.80%	66
ESRC	ESRC	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	5

MRC	MRC	5	21.74%	0	0.00%	18
NERC	NERC	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	2
STFC	STFC	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	5
Total	Total	22	14.19%	3	1.94%	130

Appendix 4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring

Summary of EDI Data

The Student Funding team looked at a number of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) measures as part of the evaluation of extensions that were awarded to students. The significant areas where there were thought to be a danger of underrepresentation in the allocation of funding were Gender, Disability and Race.

1. **Gender**

Analysis of awards based on Gender showed that around 60% of applicants and students awarded extensions were male. This is reflective of the number of UKRI funded PhD students at the University where 61% of the active students in JeS are male, with a particular bias in EPSRC funded students.

Based on University level data there is no clear difference in the length of extensions requested and subsequently awarded between male and female students. We asked Doctoral Training Partnerships to ensure that their recommendations were equitable between the genders.

Table 1: Gender balance of applications, length of extension requested and granted

Gender	Number of Students Applied	Ave Length of Extension Requested	% Of Applications	Number of Students Awarded Extensions	Average Length of Extensions Awarded	% of Extensions Awarded	% of Months Awarded (total for the group)
Male	240	4.33	59.70%	223	3.66	59.47%	58.57%
Female	158	4.12	39.30%	148	3.77	39.47%	40.00%
Other	4	5.25	1.00%	4	5.00	1.07%	1.43%
Total	402	4.26		375	3.72		

2. **Disability**

EDI data based on Disability shows that 21% of applications were made by students with a declared disability. This is compared to a rate of 18% of declared disability within the eligible population. This shows that students with a disability were more likely to apply for a funded extension. This aligns with the priority given to these students by the UKRI within the scheme rules.

Students with a disability were also more likely to apply for a longer extensions and subsequently the average extension awarded was longer than a student without a declared disability.

This support is in addition to that given to students who were required to shield or had conditions which were exacerbated due to the pandemic, where extended sick leave was available

Table 2: Disability declared among applicants, awarded extensions and length of awarded extensions

Known Disability	Number of Students Applied	Ave Length of Extension Requested	% Of Applications	Number of Students Awarded Extensions	Average Length of Extensions Awarded	% of Extensions Awarded	% of Months Awarded (total for the group)
Yes	83	4.53	20.65%	80	4.11	21.33%	23.58%
None	319	4.18	79.35%	295	3.61	78.67%	76.42%
Total	402	4.26		375	3.72		

The data available on CAMSIS makes no specific reference to severity of a student's disability so it is not possible to determine any underlying relationship between students with more severe disabilities and the length of extensions they were awarded. There however seems to be no difference between disabled students in general and those who said they had two or more impairments.

3. Ethnicity

Details on Students who had applied for and were subsequently awarded extensions, based on Race and broken down into Research Council and have been reviewed by Dr Miriam Lynn (Equality and Diversity consultant UoC) in further detail, who was content there was no observable bias.

Total University wide results show that White students applied in greater numbers making up around 78% of applications, which is reflective of the number of students who receive UKRI funding. The average length of extension requested and subsequently awarded for white students was 3.66 which was slightly shorter the average extension awarded.

Table 3: Ethnicity of applicants and students awarded extensions

Ethnic Group as per CAMSIS	Number of Students Applied	Ave Length of Extension Requested	Number of Students Awarded Extensions	Average Length of Extensions Awarded
White	314	4.18	294	3.66
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	2	6.00	1	6.00
Asian or Asian British - Indian	12	4.58	11	4.45
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	4	4.50	4	3.75
Chinese	13	5.08	10	3.00
Arab	3	3.00	3	3.00
Other Asian background	6	4.67	5	4.00
Other Mixed background	7	3.71	7	3.43
Mixed - White and Asian	12	4.92	12	4.42
Mixed - White and Black African	2	4.50	2	5.00
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	3	3.00	3	3.00
Other Ethnic background	2	4.50	2	3.00
Black or Black British - African	4	5.25	3	4.33
Information Refused	18	4.39	18	4.22
	402	4.26	375	3.72

4. Pregnancy, Maternity leave, Caring Responsibilities

We also tried to assess whether students who were Pregnant or had been on Maternity leave could be susceptible to under representative. This unfortunately was not something that could be measured easily. The University does capture the number of children students have but it doesn't make any note about whether the pregnancy was during a PhD.

In general, maternity and pregnancy was only mentioned a small number of times in the applications received, while analysis of the students who specified that they had additional caring responsibilities in their application, showed that they received on average a 4.7 month extension. This was notably longer than the average extension awarded of 3.72 months.

5. Age

We also assessed whether Age had any bearing in the length of extensions offered. We found that only 8% of applicants were over 30 and there was no obvious discrepancy between the amount of months applied for or awarded within these students.

6. Part Time Students

Finally, we also assessed whether Part Time students were under-represented through the Phase 2 extensions process. Our analysis found that the number of UKRI students involved in part time study is insignificant with only 18 students across the institution, of which 3 students were successful in applying for an extension.

7. Conclusion

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion adviser to the Governance Committee, Dr Miriam Lynn was satisfied that the allocation of the Phase 2 Grant was not to the detriment of any group with a Protected Characteristic. The following is a summary of our findings:

- There were more male than female recipients but this reflects the composition of the eligible population of Research Council funded students at Cambridge
- There was a positive effect for students with a disability who were more likely to apply for an extension compared to the general population. This aligns with the priority given to this group in the UKRI conditions for the scheme.
- The majority of recipients were of white ethnicity (78%) which is reflective of the eligible population. However, students of other ethnicities as a whole applied for and received a slightly longer extension on average than white students.
- Students with caring responsibilities received a longer extension on average than other students. This also aligns with the priority given to this group by UKRI.
- There was no bias found in terms of age (taking the age of 30 as a threshold)
- There was no bias found in terms of full time versus part time students