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Memo for Examiners of Theses

Guidance in relation to COVID-19 Pandemic Circumstances

**Instructions for Supervisors:**

Examiners can be informed about the desire to take account of certain factors in their assessment of theses to address delays and disruptions experienced by thesis students as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The attached form should be used to provide **guidance** to the examiners on what to take into account 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 examiner and in fairness to the student and others in the student cohort.

The form should be signed by the student, the supervisor and the HOD/HOP/HOS/Dean as appropriate and included in the information that is sent out with the thesis.

Note that for Master’s theses, the Academic Unit should include the attached form when sending out examination material. For doctoral candidates, the completed form should be submitted by the candidate when submitting their digital thesis to phd@otago.ac.nz.

Please be sure to indicate whether a student has had an extension or not. Some students will be in situations where they have to submit on time, others will prefer to. As a matter of equity, it is important to note if students have already had some special consideration through an extension.

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**Memo for Examiners of Theses**

**Guidance in Relation to COVID-19 Pandemic Circumstances**

Thank you for taking the time to examine this thesis, which has been undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For a six-week period from March 26th to April 27th, 2020, and a two week period from August 18-31, 2021, New Zealand was placed under very strict lockdown conditions (Level 4 – [Lockdown](https://covid19.govt.nz/alert-system/alert-system-overview/#alert-level-4-%E2%80%94-lockdown)), with students and staff unable to physically access University facilities, unless they were involved in research on COVID-19. Moreover, nobody was allowed to have face-to-face contact with others outside their home, and nor could they travel outside their neighbourhood, so any field work could not occur. The restrictions were partially lifted on April 27th, 2020 and September 1, 2021 (for most of New Zealand), but students and staff were not generally allowed back into University facilities until a few weeks later. In December 2021, the country went into a new COVID-19 Protection Framework, with three ‘Traffic Light’ settings. In the Red setting, which first occurred from January 25th, 2022, activities on university campuses were disrupted.

The ongoing Lockdown Levels (especially 3 and 4), and Red Traffic Light settings 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 stretched far beyond the Lockdown and Red Traffic Light periods, as they may have had to significantly revise their research plans. For example, students planning to undertake research on human participants, communities or environments were unable to travel or had to change methodologies, while others overseas at the time of Lockdown, were unable to return to New Zealand for 9 months or more. Many students also suffered from anxiety and stress-related issues, meaning their research progress was significantly delayed.

This form 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 Programme, Head of School or Dean.

Student Name: ID Number:

Programme: Date:

Considerations to be taken into account:

[*Enter key considerations here as directions to the Examiner so that they can adjust their assessment accordingly. 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, medical or health considerations etc*]

Signed, confirming this is a fair reflection of the impact of COVID-19 on this work.

Student Supervisor HoP/HoS/Dean

 Print name Print name