

# Government to protect UK research jobs with major support package

- Research jobs and ground-breaking projects impacted by coronavirus to be protected by 2 new government support packages
- new research funding scheme opens this autumn to cover up to 80% of a university's income losses from a decline in international students
- around £280 million to enable universities to continue their cutting-edge work, such as research into antibiotics resistance and the effects of coronavirus on society

Thousands of highly skilled researchers, scientists and technicians working at UK universities will receive greater job protection thanks to 2 significant support packages announced by Business Secretary Alok Sharma today (27 June).

From this autumn, research-active universities across the UK that have been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic will be able to access long term, low interest loans, supplemented by a small amount of government grants, covering up to 80% of their income losses caused by any actual decline in international students.

This funding will be available to bolster those universities who are taking their own steps to make efficiencies, in line with the rest of the economy, to protect their research bases. In addition, some universities may also be losing funding from charities and businesses, which goes towards vital medical research. The package will be made available to fund research and high priority projects, such as medical research, in order to support universities to continue to be at the cutting edge of innovation.

Around £200 million in new government investment will be made immediately available to support researchers' salaries and other costs such as laboratory equipment and fieldwork. This will allow universities to retain research talent and protect innovative, ground-breaking projects across the country. UK Research & Innovation will also redistribute up to a further £80 million of existing funding to support research and development (R&D) in our universities.

The 2 support schemes will ensure universities facing difficult financial decisions, in line with the rest of the economy, can offer job security to up-and-coming researchers and are able to progress their cutting-edge work, such as research into the effects of coronavirus on our wider society, antibiotics resistance, and new tech solutions to tackle plastic waste and climate change.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

The brilliance of our talented researchers and scientists has been

absolutely critical not only to our medical response to coronavirus but also as we begin to emerge from this pandemic and support the UK's economic recovery.

The support we are putting in place will give our world-leading universities a lifeline by protecting jobs to ensure our best minds can continue discovering new innovations that will benefit us all for generations to come.

Some of the ground-breaking projects benefiting from today's investment will include:

- research into antibiotics resistance, ensuring life-saving drugs and treatments remain effective
- the development of innovative new technologies to tackle climate change, including advanced computing and quantum technology
- solutions tackling the waste caused by the manufacture and use of plastics around the world; and
- work to gain a greater understanding of the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on our wider society, such as the impact of lockdown on people's mental health

R&D investment is critical to the UK economy – every £1 spent delivers £7 in economic and social benefits from helping to attract investment, boosting productivity and creating new jobs.

Science Minister, Amanda Solloway commented:

Coronavirus has shown us all the importance of the UK's world-class R&D ecosystem. It has also highlighted the inspirational dedication of our brilliant scientists and researchers.

This package will protect thousands of highly skilled jobs and ensure the UK's research community continue their vital work to solve some of the most pressing challenges facing our society today, like tackling climate change, unlocking medical discovery and unleashing game-changing new technologies.

Providing financial support for the UK's world-leading research institutions impacted by the coronavirus pandemic is a priority for the University Research Sustainability Ministerial Taskforce, co-chaired by Science Minister Amanda Solloway and Universities Minister Michelle Donelan.

Established in May, the Taskforce is identifying what support is needed to retain research talent and ensure the long-term sustainability of UK's world-class research and development sector.

Universities Minister, Michelle Donelan said:

Our world leading universities and the scientific research they undertake are a truly vital part of the UK's society and our economy and will continue to be so as we start to recover from coronavirus.

We understand the difficulties universities are facing right now, which is why we announced a range of measures last month to ease financial pressures, and now I am delighted we are able to offer universities further financial support to protect vital research.

Professor Duncan Wingham Executive Chair of UKRI's Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) said:

UKRI is acutely aware of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Almost everyone in our research and innovation community is either facing major interruptions to their work, or a major transition to work on the coronavirus pandemic.

The purpose of today's announcement is to help sustain UKRI grant-funded research, research talent and the capability of UK research organisations all of which will underpin the post-pandemic, national recovery. This is vital support for UKRI funded research but will not address all the challenges the sector faces. UKRI continues to work closely with the government on how best to support recovery.

Climate researcher Dr James France from British Antarctic Survey said:

This is very welcome news because my NERC research grant was due to end soon. The disruption caused by coronavirus means that it has been a struggle for me, and colleagues in a similar position, to complete projects on schedule.

This package will give us breathing space to finish our current work on greenhouse gases and climate change properly. I am relieved that we'll have time to publish the results before I need to be looking for my next position.

Christine Lockey, a Post Doctoral Research Assistant in Chemistry at the University of Warwick said:

Today's announcement means that I will be able to complete important research projects, including my work on membrane protein biophysics and immune receptors in cells, that would have otherwise have been significantly affected by the loss of research time due to coronavirus and the associated loss of funding. The package announced today will safeguard my future research career and allow

me to continue to progress in my chosen scientific field.

The announcement follows the commitment by the government at this year's budget to increase public investment in R&D to £22 billion each year by 2024/25, putting the UK on the path to increase investment to 2.4% of GDP by 2027.

The government has already committed to supporting university research and last month brought forward £100 million of university research funding by a year to provide immediate financial support.

The University Support Package of loans and grants will cover up to 80% of their income losses caused by an expected decline in international students, compared with overseas student revenue in 2018/19. The package will support up to 100% of non-publicly funded research. Further details, including the conditions attached to the funding, will be available in due course.

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## [Downing Street statement on Glasgow incident: 26 June 2020](#)

Press release

A statement from Downing Street on the Glasgow incident.



The PM has this afternoon spoken with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon about the incident in Glasgow.

He has also held a meeting with the Home Secretary and senior police officers, in which he was updated. The Prime Minister thanked the Chief Constable of Police Scotland, Iain Livingstone, for the exceptional bravery of his officers at the scene.

The PM's thoughts remain with the injured and their loved ones.

## [“Blame game” to end as Divorce Bill receives Royal Assent](#)

- Landmark Bill will ease the impact of unnecessary conflict on couples and their children
- Couples will face a new minimum wait of six months before divorces are granted
- Changes to take effect next year following implementation period

New laws to spare divorcing couples having to apportion blame for the breakdown of their marriage took a step closer this week, as a Bill seeking to reduce family conflict gained Royal Assent.

Currently, one spouse has to make accusations about the other’s conduct, such as ‘unreasonable behaviour’ or adultery, or otherwise face years of separation before a divorce can be granted – regardless of whether a couple has made a mutual decision to separate.

The new laws will instead allow a spouse, or a couple, to apply for divorce by making a statement of irretrievable breakdown. This aims to end the needless “blame game” between couples and parents.

Crucially, a new and extended minimum timeframe of six months from the initial application stage to the granting of a divorce will also be created. This will offer couples the time to reflect and turn back, or where reconciliation is not possible agree important arrangements for the future – such as how best to look after their children.

The changes will not come into effect until later next year to allow careful implementation of the necessary changes to court, online and paper processes.

Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP said:

The institution of marriage will always be upheld, but when divorce cannot be avoided the law should not exacerbate conflict and harm a child’s upbringing.

These new laws will stop separating couples having to make needless allegations against one another, and instead help them focus on resolving their issues amicably.

By sparing them the need to play the “blame game”, we are removing the antagonism that this creates so families can better move on

with their lives.

The Bill was first introduced in June 2019 after a public consultation and was brought before parliament again following the General Election. It passed its final stage on 17 June, with cross-party backing as well as support amongst family law practitioners.

Juliet Harvey, national chair of Resolution, said:

After more than 30 years of campaigning by our members and others who work to reduce conflict between separating couples, we are delighted that this historic Act will now become a reality.

Lawmakers have played a valuable role in helping make the divorce process kinder and less confrontational, and our members are no longer hindered by an outdated law which encouraged couples to play 'the blame game'.

As a result, practitioners will be better able to support separating families to come to constructive, amicable arrangements that benefit everyone involved, particularly children.

Specifically, the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act will:

- Replace the current requirement to evidence either a conduct or separation 'fact' with the provision of a statement of irretrievable breakdown of the marriage (for the first time, couples can opt to make this a joint statement).
- Remove the possibility of contesting the decision to divorce, as a statement will be conclusive evidence that the marriage has irretrievably broken down.
- Introduces a new minimum period of 20 weeks from the start of proceedings to confirmation to the court that a conditional order of divorce may be made, allowing greater opportunity for couples to agree practical arrangements for the future where reconciliation is not possible and divorce is inevitable.

The new laws seek to align the divorce law process with the government's approach elsewhere in family law – encouraging a forward-looking non-confrontational approach wherever possible, thereby reducing conflict and its damaging effect on children in particular.

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**[Green light for COVID-19 trial](#)**

# recruitment

## News story

The MHRA has approved the recruitment of further participants for a clinical trial by the University of Oxford



The MHRA has approved the recruitment of further participants for a clinical trial investigating hydroxychloroquine in prevention of COVID-19, by the University of Oxford.

**Dr Siu Ping Lam, Director of Licensing at the MHRA, said:**

We have reviewed the University of Oxford's request to recommence recruitment for the 'COPCOV' trial, investigating the use of hydroxychloroquine in the prevention of COVID-19.

After analysing the additional risk mitigations and consulting the Commission on Human Medicines, we have given the clinical trial the green light to recruit more participants.

Participant safety is our priority, so we will continue to monitor the trial to ensure ongoing appropriate measures are in place to maintain continued high levels of safety.

The MHRA received a request from the University of Oxford, on 17 June, to recommence recruitment to the 'COPCOV' trial investigating hydroxychloroquine in the prevention of COVID-19.

The submitted justifications and supporting information were reviewed by the MHRA, with independent advice obtained from the Commission on Human Medicines. On 26 June it was agreed that sufficient measures had been taken to support the safe recruitment of further participants.

The decision follows the [MHRA's instructions, on 8 June](#), to UK clinical triallists using hydroxychloroquine to treat or prevent coronavirus (COVID-19) to suspend recruitment of participants until further data, which justifies continuation, have been provided, and any additional safety measures have been implemented.

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## [Stay safe around rivers: warning as lockdown eased and temperatures soar](#)

As the government eases restrictions on movement caused by the coronavirus outbreak, the public is being warned to keep safe around rivers and canals.

The Environment Agency, which manages many locks, weirs and bridges across England, wants people to remember the hazards under the water in rivers while spending time with friends and family.

The message is clear: vigilance can save lives, and water-related accidents can be avoided by knowing how to stay safe.

### **Top tips for river safety:**

- Don't jump or dive in as the depth may vary and there can be unseen hazards
- Don't go in near weirs, locks, pipes and sluices. These and some other water features are often linked with strong currents
- Inland waters can be very cold, no matter how warm the weather. Those going into cold water can get cramp and experience breathing difficulties very quickly

Keep a look out for boat traffic. Boaters, especially on larger vessels, can find it very hard to spot swimmers.

Toby Willison, Executive Director of Operations for the Environment Agency, said:

It's imperative that as the coronavirus restrictions are eased, the public are wary of the hazards around them when near or on the water.

We urge people not to jump or dive into water and to stay away from weirs, locks and pipes. There can be unseen hazards in the water, cold-water shock can affect even strong swimmers on warm days and social distancing must be continued to protect the public, staff



and boaters.

Jo Talbot, Royal Lifesaving Society (RLSS) UK Director, said:

We as a charity are certainly concerned about the impact of such a beautiful spell of weather on the number of people that are involved in fatal water incidents. It is a great time to get out and enjoy our beautiful waterways but it is crucial that everybody understands that no matter their ability, the water comes with risk, in particular the impact of cold water and falling from heights.

Despite the warm air temperature, the water temperature is still dangerously and often fatality cold, it can debilitate the most competent swimmer. Many people simply do not have the experience to swim in cold water and if they aren't used to it then, simply, our advice is that they should not go in. We are urging people to proceed with caution, take responsibility of their own safety and apply common sense.

The right choices, at the right time results in an enjoyable day around the water. For advice on how to stay safe around the water, visit [the RLSS website](#).

### **Parents and guardians can help keep children in their care safe by:**

- Teaching them to swim
- Warning them not to go into water alone, or unsupervised
- Ensuring they know where the children are and what they are doing
- Supervising them closely when near any open water

Drowning can occur very quickly, even in shallow water, and the key to keeping safe is to take all necessary precautions to avoid getting into difficulty in the first place.

Unexpectedly cold waters or strong currents can also catch bathers off-guard.

Youngsters are often seen jumping off the many bridges along the Thames. While this may seem like great fun, there are hidden dangers in the water that can cause tragic consequences.

Guidance on staying safe around water can be found on [GOV.UK](#).

### **Further information**