

Mathematical and Physical Sciences Faculty Caring Fund Pilot 2021-2021
Supporting PhD Students with Caring Responsibilities during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Document type	Procedure
Scope	PhD students within MAPS
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Approver	Prof Ivan Parkin (MAPS Dean)
Purpose	Offers information and guidance for PhD students on how to apply for financial assistance within the Faculty of Mathematical and Physical sciences to cover caring expenses while working from home and while lockdown measures are in place during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Version number	Author	Date
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1. Background

The lockdown measures that have been necessary during the Covid-19 pandemic are having a disproportionately negative impact on the life-work dynamics of UCL staff and PhD researchers with caring responsibilities. There are a wide range of caring activities which need to be undertaken during this time which may be causing significant difficulties in managing working from home.

UCL has created a [Covid-19 Career Support Scheme](#) available to staff members. It aims to mitigate adverse impact caused by the pandemic that results in lost work productivity that may cause longer term career harm without additional support from UCL. **Staff with caring responsibilities and who are being affected by national lockdown measures are strongly advised to apply for this scheme.** Please, see guidance [here](#) or copy and paste the following link.

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion/equalityucl/covid-19-career-support-scheme-summary/covid-19-career-support-scheme-guidance>

The above scheme does not cover PhD students with caring responsibilities. However, the experience of the MAPS Caring Fund pilot during 2019-2020, and the specific Covid-19 related call we made on July 2020, showed that PhD students with caring responsibilities were among the group most affected by lockdown measures as reflected by the number of applicants (see Fig. 1).

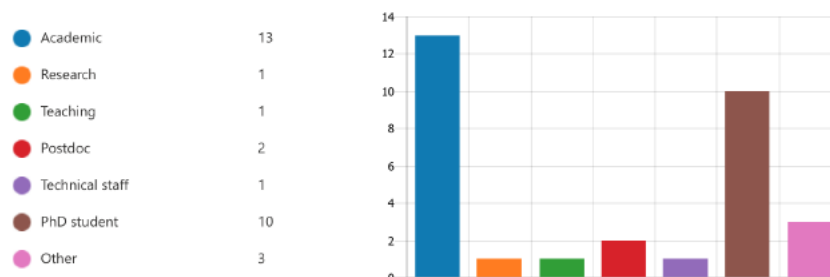


Fig. 1 Distribution of job role of the applicants to the MAPS Caring Fund during the Pandemic-related call in June 2020.

Because of this, the MAPS Faculty will run a further pilot of the MAPS Caring Fund in the academic year 2020-2021 directly focussed on supporting PhD students with caring responsibilities. Our objective is to provide some financial assistance that may help easing the burden placed on PhD students who have caring responsibilities or have acquired additional caring responsibilities due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The financial assistance is to help these postgraduate research students to achieve a better balance between doing research and attending their caring responsibilities during the pandemic. The Faculty has allocated **£5,000** for this purpose.

2. Eligibility

- 2.1. In order to be eligible for the MAPS Caring Fund 2020-2021 you need to be a PhD student within the MAPS faculty who has caring responsibilities.

3. Procedure

- 3.1. Inform your PhD supervisor that you are applying for this financial assistance.
- 3.2. Complete the online MAPS Caring Fund application form by **25 Feb 2021**. The online form can be found in this link: <http://bit.ly/PhDMAPScaringFund2021>
- 3.3. A small Faculty-level panel will consider the applications as quickly as possible and will allocate the funding according to need.
- 3.4. Successful applicants will be notified via email and an account code to which authorised expenditure should be charged will be indicated.
- 3.5. After the expenditure has been incurred, applicants should submit an expense claim form via iExpenses and send receipts to Accounts Payable. Claimants should use the 'Exceptional Items' category on iExpenses. **Claims should be submitted by 01 April 2021.**
- 3.6. A brief report of max 100 words should be submitted to the fund (maps.caring@ucl.ac.uk) as soon as the expenditure is claimed. A feedback survey should also be completed.

4. Conditions

- 4.1. For the purposes of this fund, 'Caring' can mean childcare, care of elderly or any other family member or dependants requiring help.
- 4.2. Claims up to max £300 will be considered per person. In exceptional circumstances, more funding may be allocated depending of funds available.
- 4.3. **The fund is not a general hardship fund.** Applicants must demonstrate that the funding requested will compensate for the loss of research productivity and will help them to manage in a better way their research with the additional caring responsibilities acquired due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 4.4. A brief report of max 100 words should be submitted to the fund (maps.caring@ucl.ac.uk) as soon as the expenditure is claimed. A feedback survey should also be completed.
- 4.5. Some examples of how the grant could be used are:
 - Supporting childcare while attending an online conference that happens at times of the day where the child would normally be at school or when a child is usually under the care of the carer.

- Providing financial assistance to PhD students caring and supporting the learning at home of children whose schools are closed, for instance, to buy teaching material (books, puzzles) or online support.
 - If it can be done safely, having a person that can help guiding small kids or kids with special needs through their learning while their parents do their PhD research.
 - If it can be done safely, having a person who can help with the caring of an elderly or of a family member (i.e. younger sister, brother) under the care of the PhD student.
- 4.6. If the funds are to be used for childcare, we recommend a registered childcare provider. However, we are aware that grandparents / family members / members of support networks are helpful sources of informal support particularly in these times. Please note that it is your responsibility to be aware of the law and UCL accepts no liability for your choice of childcare support.
- 4.7. Expenses claimed on the Fund can be backdated to 04 Jan 2021 —the start date of the current lockdown in England.
- 4.8. Applicants should submit their claims with receipts as soon as possible once the expenditure has been incurred and not later than 01 April 2021. Applicants will be asked to provide receipts as proof that the payment was used for the purposes it was requested. However, the scheme has been designed to cover a range of situations, including those where receipts may not be available. We will therefore accept handwritten receipts, or when they are not available, a signed declaration may be submitted. Please contact maps.caring@ucl.ac.uk for information about the sign declaration.
- 4.9. The allocation of funds will be decided by a small Faculty panel chaired by the MAPS Vice-Dean (EDI). Priority will be given to applicants without alternative access to funds.
- 4.10. In the event that the funding is no longer needed or used, applicants should notify the Faculty Office ASAP (maps.caring@ucl.ac.uk) so that the funds can be redistributed.
- 4.11. The Fund and its conditions will be reviewed at the end of the financial year.