

THRF Group Funding

Variation Request Guidance

THRF Group understands that projects do not always go to plan and can be impacted by circumstances outside of your control.

The guidance below is intended to assist investigators and Administering Institution Research Offices (ROs) in understanding the processes and principles used by THRF Group when considering variation requests for grants and scholarships.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES WHEN CONSIDERING VARIATION REQUESTS

There are some general principles against which we consider any variation request, including the following:

- the timeliness of the request;
- the individual circumstances outlined in the request;
- the extent to which relevant circumstances have been documented in project progress reporting to date;
- the appropriateness of the request in the context of the originally funded project – e.g. a request for an extension of greater duration than that of the originally funded project will be seriously questioned;
- the feasibility of the proposed variation – e.g. revised milestones being completed within an extended time frame – and the mitigation strategies in place to prevent further issues;
- whether the project's objectives remain aligned with the purpose for which the grant/scholarship was awarded;
- the amount of project funding remaining for expenditure and the nature of that expenditure;
- (if applicable) whether any proposed replacement personnel are suitably qualified for the project; and
- any other matters of which we are aware relevant to the grant/scholarship, Administering Institution or the project team.

A detailed, timely and reasonable request for variation in line with these principles backed by good communication with THRF Group via your RO has a much higher chance of being approved and actioned quickly, facilitating the smooth continuation of the project.

Please note, however, that some things are unlikely to be considered reasonable grounds for variation. For example:

- not getting the expected results;
- excessive delays in your internal administrative or financial processes, including staff recruitment;
- lack of good project management (e.g. failing to meet deadlines for ethics applications, over-commitment of investigator time).

THE ROLE OF PROGRESS REPORTING

Project reporting plays a critical role in the variation process. Projects funded by THRF Group since 2019 are required to report on project progress every six months, via THRF Group's SmartyGrants platform.

Issues encountered during the reporting period which could impact the original project plan should be clearly and objectively described in the next available progress report, including their nature, duration and impact on project milestones. Strategies being employed to overcome or mitigate the issues, and new expected dates for completion of affected project milestones, should also be stated.

The content of progress reports factors into our consideration of any variation request. Issues raised as grounds for variation that are inconsistent with, or missing from, progress reporting may be disregarded from consideration.

PROCESS FOR REQUESTING A VARIATION

Your Administering Institution's Research Office (RO) is the first point of contact for **all** grant administration matters.

Before making a variation request, it is the responsibility of the first-named Chief Investigator ("CIA")/Project Leader to:

- contact their RO to discuss if a variation is necessary and the process for requesting one;
- seek the advice of their Administering Institution in considering ramifications to the project budget as a result of an extension (e.g. strategies for paying staff salaries);
- ensure their THRF Group progress reporting for the relevant project is up to date. Variation requests will not be considered by THRF Group until all required progress reports are submitted via SmartyGrants.

A request can then be made by the RO to THRF Group in writing via savelives@hospitalresearch.com.au. It is the CIA/Project Leader's responsibility to provide the RO with sufficient information to justify the request and ensure it aligns with that provided in progress report(s).

All variation requests must be certified and submitted by the Administering Institution's RO.

All requests should:

- a) clearly identify the project and CIA/Project Leader;
- b) outline the rationale for the requested variation;
- c) indicate what the requested variation entails (e.g. extension, suspension, budget amendment);
- d) as applicable, provide proposed revisions to milestone and/or budget tables; and
- e) be accompanied by a financial statement demonstrating the grant funds remaining.

Once a request is submitted, THRF Group will consider the request and provide a response to the RO as soon as possible. If required, we will issue a Letter of Variation to the RO detailing the new, agreed details for the project.

FURTHER GUIDANCE ON EXTENSION REQUESTS

As the most common type of variation request, some further guidance on requesting an extension is provided below.

- ❖ **End date extension:** When extra time is requested to extend the end date of the project to facilitate completion of project activities, with remaining project milestones adjusted accordingly. Requests must be submitted by the RO **no later than 60 days prior to the current project end date**.
- ❖ **Project hiatus/suspension:** Useful where a pause in project activity is desired for a set time (e.g. while a laboratory is relocated, or extended periods of unanticipated leave). During the period of suspension, no further funding will be paid to, or expended by, the Administering Institution, and all research activity ceases. Payments and project activities resume from an agreed date and then proceed for the remaining, time-extended, duration of the grant. Requests should be submitted as soon as the need to suspend project activity becomes known.

Limits on Extensions

THRF Group does not have pre-set limits on the number or duration of extensions that can be requested. We do, however, consider if each requested extension is reasonable, particularly in relation to the original project's funding period, progress made to date, and any previous variation/extension requests. THRF Group reserves the right to decline extension requests, or set limits on further extension requests.

EXTENDING A HIGHER DEGREE BY RESEARCH (HDR) SCHOLARSHIP

The information below pertains to Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Scholarships only.

HDR students seeking extension to their scholarship must notify the area responsible for higher degree research at the enrolling institution and seek the enrolling institution's advice regarding appropriate process. The enrolling institution is responsible for assessing extension requests against the conditions of award and will also be able to advise if provision was made for a THRF Group-funded extension at the time of scholarship establishment.

Where such a provision exists and an extension is approved, the enrolling institution will work with THRF Group to action any changes required.