

## Description of the unexpected difficulties due to...

### a) The nature of my project:

- I had intended to build a full-scale functional prototype, which will be much more difficult, if not impossible, with the labs closed and no access to the space, machines, or technicians.
- Plan B was to build a smaller scale prototype through additive manufacturing, but without access to the 3D printers and technicians in the lab this will also be disrupted. It might be possible to build a low-tech prototype out of cardboard and such like, or to order 3D printed components online, but this remains to be seen.
- Plan C is to conduct simulated testing with FEA. I had intended to carry out both this and the detailed CAD design on the lab computers, but this will no longer be possible. I can install the programs on my laptop, but I know from experience that they will run very slowly and be prone to crashing and losing work.

### b) My experiences with ADHD:

- Even under ideal circumstances, my difficulties due to ADHD are such that my DAP recommends flexible deadlines.
- A big, unstructured, self-driven project like this is an ADHD nightmare. I had numerous strategies in place in order to provide much-needed structure. For example, I had a 'breakfast club' meeting every morning where we discussed our plans for the day, and I made sure I was on campus every day as I find it much easier to work in study spaces such as the Library. This has all gone out the window.
- Due to ADHD, I have always found it next to impossible to get any work done at home.
- The disruption to daily life has meant that all of my routines have broken down, from my sleep schedule to mealtimes to working hours. Without routine I am not a functional human.
- This has been exacerbated by the fact that meeting friends in person is no longer possible and all my housemates have moved out, meaning there is nothing to stop me becoming nocturnal.
- Strategies for other areas of life have also broken down. For example, I would often do an online food shop instead of grocery shopping in person, as this is something which is overwhelming and difficult for me. This is no longer possible as all the slots are booked up and even if they weren't I wouldn't want to take them away from those who are self-isolating.
- Also, unrelated to the COVID-19 situation, I have been trying a new medication to manage the ADHD symptoms, and have been experiencing unpleasant and disruptive side effects (such as nausea and vomiting) and trying to figure out how to manage them.
- I find face-to-face meetings with the people who support me to be invaluable, whether that is my supervisor, assessor, personal tutor, study support worker, or mentor. I find phone calls and video calls quite stressful and difficult, and while texts and emails are less stressful, I have great difficulty in keeping up with them and with putting my thoughts into writing. I'm not sure exactly why this is (perhaps something to do with sensory processing?), but I have heard many other neurodivergent people talk about similar experiences, so I believe it is linked. This will of course also affect my non-academic support network of friends and family.
- ADHD is linked with greater Intolerance of Uncertainty. It has been theorised that this is because of the emotion regulation deficits present in ADHD. For this reason the uncertainty and upheaval of this situation is likely to affect my mental health more than others'.
- Switching tasks, mind-sets or plans, adapting to unexpected change, carrying out open-ended, ill-defined or "no-right-answer" tasks, prioritising competing tasks, and being able to put down and move on from one task even though it isn't 'perfect' in order to progress with the wider project; these are all things which are very difficult and consume a lot of time and mental energy for individuals with ADHD, and they are all things which are necessary throughout this project, and even more so now due to the COVID-19 upheaval.

### c) Time consuming logistics:

- My student house in Bath has no suitable workspace (no table or dining room or lounge). Due to this and other reasons, I am forced to pack up and move to my Mum's house. The logistics of packing up my life, travelling, unpacking, and setting up a workspace in the new house are time consuming.
- The everyday logistics of grocery shopping etc. without using public transport (as I do not have a car) have also been time consuming.
- Just figuring out a plan and how to make it happen, emailing people, arranging things, etc. has required a lot of mental energy and time.

d) Other personal situations (family)

- As I mentioned, I am being forced to move back in with family in order to be more productive while working from home, as well as to help out during this stressful time, as my Mum is a doctor and will be working long hours without the help of babysitters.
- I have some difficult relationships with certain family members and have worked hard to set healthy boundaries. I generally keep visits to a maximum of 48 hours, as this is necessary for my mental health. For example, I slept on friends' floors in Bath over the summer and carried a tent in the boot of my car just in case.
- I have painstakingly weighed up my options and decided that the best course of action is to move back, but I am sure that this will come with its fair share of difficulties:
  - i. Effects on mental health due to tricky family dynamics in close quarters for an extended period of time with no escape route
  - ii. There is loud building work going on right outside my workroom window because both my Mum and her neighbour are having work done
  - iii. As mentioned, my Mum will be working long hours as a GP, so I will need to support her by helping to run the household and take care of my younger brother
  - iv. Being on the front lines is a significant danger to both her mental and physical health, which is an additional stress on the whole household including me
  - v. She will most likely get the virus from patients and bring it home to my brother and I, and although I hopefully won't experience serious complications, the symptoms will impede my ability to work effectively

e) State of mind:

- Everyone's lives have changed drastically in the space of a few days. Suddenly I'll never see some of my friends again, vital routines have fallen apart, and nothing about the future is certain. This alone, as well as worrying about the health of vulnerable friends and family (and myself to a lesser extent), is enough to cause a lot of anxiety, exacerbated by ADHD.
- Every Christmas, I come back to Bath before my housemates and try to get my head down and study for exams. This is probably the most stressful and difficult part of my year, as the work is high-stakes, vast, and completely unstructured, I get little human contact, and the rest of the world is on standstill, making it hard to focus, but at least I have months to mentally prepare for it and can build a routine around commuting to and working in the Library. This situation is very similar, but I cannot work in the Library (without carelessly endangering vulnerable members of the public) and I have been thrown into it suddenly and left reeling. This is distressing and anxiety inducing.
- I am also stressed and worried about being stuck in my family home for months on end, and the prospect of this is already reopening old wounds. I will most likely face other mental health challenges as time goes on and I cannot escape.
- Completing an unstructured project of this scale with ADHD is already daunting enough, especially since this is arguably the most important deadline of my University career and can make or break my job prospects for the rest of my life, as well as render the past six years of my life and a lot of student debt either worthwhile or wasted, but the knowledge that I need to complete more work than before (because of the necessary adaptations), with less equipment, battling all of the above difficulties (especially the working from home, which I have never been successful in before, and not for lack of trying) and still hand in the report and poster/presentation in time for the *original deadline*, which is looming large, has been inducing paralysing anxiety and overwhelm.
- Every loss of time necessitates an ever more unrealistic work plan and timescale, which I inevitably fail on day one, which causes more anxiety and overwhelm, and so the cycle continues.
- In addition to this IMC application, I am requesting an extension. This would be incredibly helpful if granted, but would not resolve all of the difficulties described above, and the situation is not likely to change between now and the deadline, so I felt that an IMC application was also warranted, because I will still be at a disadvantage.
- Note that I don't have a doctor's note for the above, since it's not advisable to use NHS resources right now unless absolutely necessary, but I have been speaking to my mentor and study support worker about all this on a weekly basis and they have said that they're happy to be contacted by email (or phone, in Monica's case) for confirmation. I have also spoken to my supervisor about the necessary changes to the project. I have included their contact details in the form above.