



Early Stage Investigator User Guide

March 15, 2024

NOTE: This user guide is an identical PDF version of the online help.

Contact Us

Additional Help Needed? Please contact the eRA Service Desk (<https://www.era.nih.gov/need-help>).

Toll-free: 1-866-504-9552; **Phone:** 301-402-7469

Hours: Mon-Fri, 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time

Feedback on the user guide? Please email the eRA Communications Office (era-communications@mail.nih.gov).

Disclaimer STATEMENT

No data shown in illustrations represents any real account, project, or individual. Any resemblance to actual accounts, projects, or individuals is purely coincidental.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	3
Overview--Early Stage Investigator (ESI) Status	4
Determining Your ESI Status	6
How to Access the Link for Requesting an ESI Extension	8
Complete and Submit the ESI Extension Request Form	11

Overview--Early Stage Investigator (ESI) Status

An Early Stage Investigator (ESI) is a Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) who meets the following qualifications:

- Completed terminal research degree or end of post-graduate clinical training, whichever date is later, within the past 10 years, and
- Has not previously successfully competed as PD/PI for a substantial NIH independent research award.

ESI applications with meritorious scores will be prioritized for funding by the institute or center receiving the application.

Some ESIs will experience a lapse in their research or research training or periods of less than full-time effort during the 10-year ESI period. To accommodate such lapses, NIH will consider requests to extend the ESI period, on a case by case basis at the sole discretion of NIH.

Investigators should consult the [FAQs](#), Section IV, *Extension of Early State Investigator Status* prior to submitting a request.

Extensions may be granted for the following reasons as described in [NOT-OD-09-034](#):

- Childbirth
- Family Care Responsibilities
- Clinical Loan Repayment Requirements
- Disability or Illness
- Active Duty Military Service
- Natural or Other Disaster
- Public Health Emergency
- Other

Investigators can submit a request via an **ESI Extension Request** button in the *Education* section of the Personal Profile in eRA Commons. The PI must provide a justification for requesting the extension. **NOTE:** ESI buttons and information do NOT appear until and unless you click the **Edit** link for the Education pane.

NOTE: Only the PD/PI can request the ESI extension. Although filling out the Personal Profile can be delegated by the PI, the request for ESI extension cannot be delegated.

The information described in the request for ESI extension will be considered confidential and will be maintained under the Privacy Act record system SORN, 09-25-0036, "Extramural Awards". The individual submitting a request for ESI extension is responsible for providing true, accurate, and complete information.

See also:

Determining Your ESI Status on page 6

How to Access the Link for Requesting an ESI Extension on page 8

Complete and Submit the ESI Extension Request Form on page 11

Determining Your ESI Status

You can find your ESI Status in your Personal Profile. To find your ESI Status:

1. Log into an eRA Commons account with a Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) role.
2. Click the [Personal Profile](#) button or click the [Apps](#) menu and select [Personal Profile](#). The Personal Profile Summary appears.



3. On the Personal Profile Summary screen, scroll down to the *Education* section and click its [Edit](#) link. The Education section expands to show your information.



NOTE: ESI buttons and information do NOT appear until and unless you click the **Edit** link for the Education pane.

4. Scroll down to the bottom of the Education section, and you see an area labeled [Early Stage Investigator \(ESI\) Status](#). If you are no longer an Early Stage Investigator,

ator, you see a note informing you of that status:

Early Stage Investigator (ESI) Status

ESI status may give you special funding consideration when applying for certain grants.

[ESI Extension Request](#)

Your ESI Status

No longer an Early Stage Investigator: Your terminal degree or post-graduate clinical training was completed in December 1986, over 10 years ago.

[See more Information on ESI](#)

Figure 1: Early Stage Investigator Status screen, showing text that informs the user that their ESI status is over

If you are still an Early Stage Investigator, you see **the date when your ESI status ends:**

Early Stage Investigator (ESI) Status

ESI status may give you special funding consideration when applying for certain grants.

[ESI Extension Request](#)

Your ESI Status

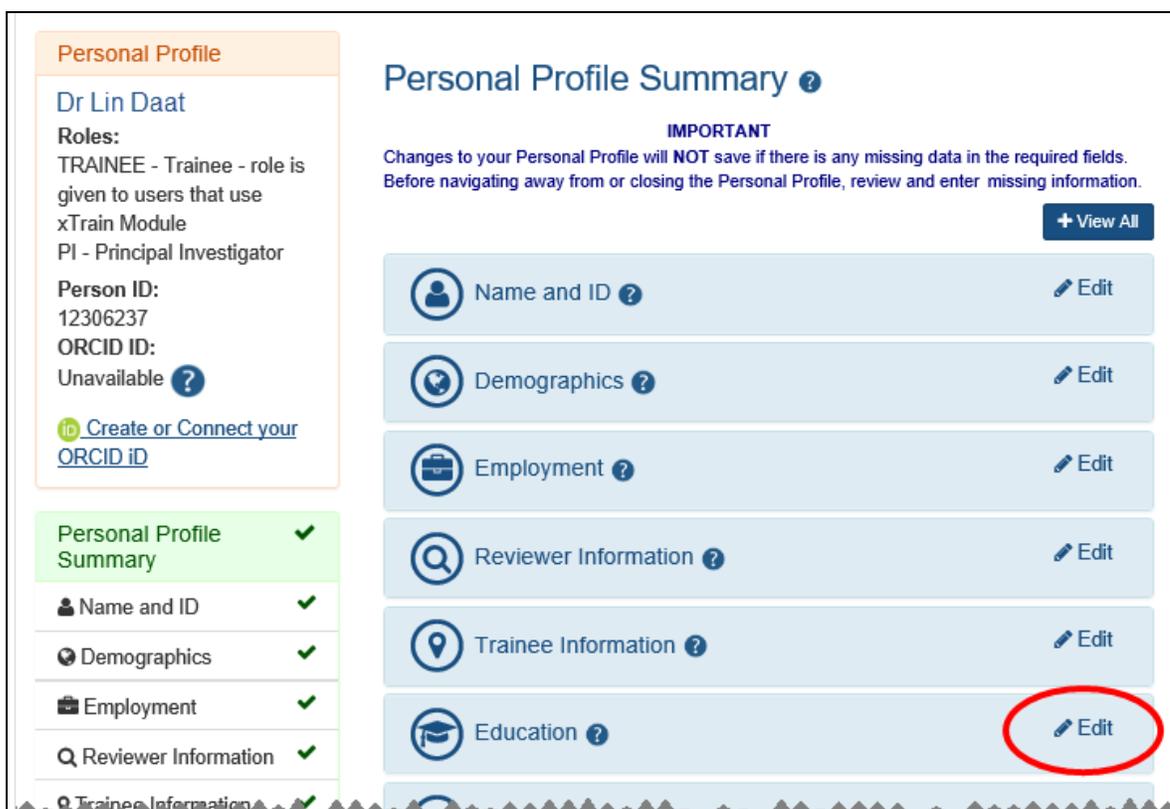
Currently eligible: Your terminal degree or post-graduate clinical training was completed in May 2012, so you are eligible for ESI until May 2022.

If you are near your ESI Status end date, and you experienced a qualified event where you were unable to work, such as a natural disaster, you can apply for an extension of your ESI Status to cover the time period lost to the qualified event. See [How to Access the Link for Requesting an ESI Extension](#).

How to Access the Link for Requesting an ESI Extension

1. Log in to eRA Commons and navigate to the Personal Profile module to open your profile.
2. Click the *Edit* link for the *Education* section.

NOTE: ESI buttons and information do NOT appear until and unless you click the **Edit** link for the Education pane.



3. Click the *ESI Extension Request* button.

Education ?

You have 3 completed degrees or post-graduate clinical training, and 0 in progress

Enter all post-high school degrees completed or in progress. It should also include your latest post-graduate clinical training information, if there is any. You may enter degrees in any order.

Your degree information is sometimes checked against award applications or used to populate other forms. Your highest degree can affect eligibility for awards or appointments.

Trainees: This information is critical. We use it to determine eligibility, and it can affect stipends.

Post-Graduate Clinical Training: If you entered at least one completed degree, you can add post-graduate clinical training information. Commons includes information on only one post-graduate clinical training at a time. If you already have post-graduate clinical training information listed and you now want to tell us about a new post-graduate clinical training, use Edit Post-Graduate Clinical Training Information to change the information.

Fellowships: Enter post-doctoral fellowships and assistantships on the Employment page.

[For translation of degree codes click here](#)

Your degrees

Date Completed	Degree and Institution	Action
May 2008	PSYD in Child Psychology West Virginia University This is your terminal degree.	Edit Delete Edit Delete
May 2006	MD West Virginia University	Edit Delete

Add a Degree

Add Post-Graduate Clinical Training Information

Your Post-Graduate Clinical Training Information

Date Completed	Area of Post-Graduate Clinical Training	Action
August 2009	Pediatric Hematology/Oncology	Edit Delete

Add Post-Graduate Clinical Training Information

Early Stage Investigator (ESI) Status

ESI status may give you special funding consideration when applying for certain grants.

Your ESI Status

Currently eligible: Your terminal degree or post-graduate clinical training was completed in August 2009, so you are eligible for ESI until August 2019.

[See more Information on ESI](#)

ESI Extension Request

The [ESI Status Request](#) form opens.

ESI Status Request [?](#)

Commons ID: LINDA

Applicant Name: Daat, Lin	Highest Terminal Degree: PHD	Email: eRATest@mail.nih.gov	Current ESI End Date: 05/31/2022
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Extension Request

* Required fields

Total number of months requested for extension (please use a whole number) *

Are you requesting an extension for childbirth(s) during your initial 10 years ESI period? *

Yes No

Add Reason for Hiatus + Add Hiatus

Reason for Hiatus	Duration	Typical Percent Research Effort	Total Percent Research Effort During Life Event	Description of Hiatus
<p>General Principles for Extending the Period of ESI Status</p> <p>An Early Stage Investigator (ESI) is a Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) who has completed their terminal research degree or end of post-graduate clinical training, whichever date is later, within the past 10 years and has not previously competed successfully as PD/PI for a substantial NIH independent research award. Some ESIs will experience a lapse in their research or research training or periods of less than full-time effort during the 10-year ESI period. To accommodate such lapses, the NIH will consider requests to extend the ESI period for reasons that can include family care responsibilities, extended periods of clinical training, medical concerns, disability or illness, active military service, and natural disasters. Investigators should consult the FAQs prior to submitting a request.</p>				

Attachment(s) (Optional)

Browse

File Name	Date Uploaded
No documents have been uploaded	

Cancel Save Save & Submit

See *Complete and Submit the ESI Extension Request Form* on page 11.

Complete and Submit the ESI Extension Request Form

For COVID-19 questions, see [Can ESI Status Be Extended Due to Disruptions From COVID-19?](#)

1. On the **request form screen**, fill out the fields.

ESI Status Request

Applicant Information Commons ID: LINDA

Applicant Name: Daat, Lin Highest Terminal Degree: PHD Email: eRATest@mail.nih.gov Current ESI End Date: 05/31/2022

Extension Request

* Required fields

Total number of months requested for extension (please use a whole number) *

Are you requesting an extension for childbirth(s) during your initial 10 years ESI period? *

Yes No

Add Reason for Hiatus

Reason for Hiatus	Duration	Typical Percent Research Effort	Total Percent Research Effort During Life Event	Description of Hiatus
No documents have been uploaded				

General Principles for Extending the Period of ESI Status

An Early Stage Investigator (ESI) is a Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) who has completed their terminal research degree or end of post-graduate clinical training, whichever date is later, within the past 10 years and has not previously competed successfully as PD/PI for a substantial NIH independent research award. Some ESIs will experience a lapse in their research or research training or periods of less than full-time effort during the 10-year ESI period. To accommodate such lapses, the NIH will consider requests to extend the ESI period for reasons that can include **family care responsibilities, extended periods of clinical training, medical concerns, disability or illness, active military service, and natural disasters**. Investigators should consult the [FAQs](#) prior to submitting a request.

Attachment(s) (Optional)

File Name Date Uploaded

No documents have been uploaded

Required fields on the ESI Extension Request form are marked with a red asterisk.

2. Enter the total number of months requested in whole numbers.
3. Select *Yes* or *No* for the childbirth question.

The system checks that the extension request falls within the ESI eligibility window. When entering the childbirth date, the date should fall within the ESI eligibility window.

4. Click the **Add Hiatus** button to open the **Reason for Hiatus** window.

Reason for Hiatus ✕

* Required fields

Reason for Hiatus *

Public Health Emergency

Hiatus Start Date * 11/01/2021 

Hiatus End Date * 01/31/2022 

Typical Percent Research effort is the percentage of your professional effort that is normally devoted to research activities. This will correspond with your professional appointment (e.g., 80% research/20% teaching or 50% research/50% clinical). If you are 100% research this implies that you have no clinical, teaching, or administrative duties.

Typical Percent Research Effort *

80 %

Total Percent Research Effort During Life Event is the percentage of your professional effort that was actually devoted to research activities during the indicated hiatus. If your normal appointment is 70% research and you were forced to cut this in half, you would enter 35%.

Research activities include much more than just laboratory work: Reading, writing, or reviewing scientific papers; Conducting literature reviews; Performing data analysis and calculations; Communicating with research colleagues by phone or Zoom; Attending scientific conferences either virtually or in-person are some examples of what are considered "research activities." Extended periods of time where research activities are reported as "0%" need to be explained and/or documented in detail.

Total Percent Research Effort During Life Event *

50 %

Description of Hiatus

Lab Closure COVID-19

1480 characters remaining.

Cancel Save

5. Use the drop-down menu in the *Reason for Hiatus* field to select a **reason**:
 - Clinical or Didactic Training
 - Disability or Illness

- Family Care - Child/Children
 - Family Care - Other than Children
 - Lab Issue (i.e. lose animal colony, cell line, lab relocation, personnel)
 - Military Service
 - Natural Disaster
 - Pay Back Obligation
 - Visa Issues
 - Other/Miscellaneous
 - Public Health Emergency
6. Use the calendar icon to select the hiatus start and end dates.
 7. Read the description for the next two fields to make sure you understand what to enter.
 8. In the **Typical Percent Research Effort** field, enter the percent of time that you typically spend on research.
 9. Enter the **Total Percent Research Effort During Life Event**. This is the percent of time you actually spent on research during the hiatus/life event. This percent must be less than or equal to the **Typical Percent Research Effort**.
 10. Optionally, enter a *Description of Hiatus*.
 11. Click the **Save** button.

12. Now you see the **request form screen** again with the hiatus information displayed.

ESI Status Request

Applicant Information Commons ID: LINDA

Applicant Name: : Daat, Lin Highest Terminal Degree: PHD Email: eRAtest@mail.nih.gov Current ESI End Date: 05/31/2022

Extension Request

* Required fields

Total number of months requested for extension (please use a whole number) *

Are you requesting an extension for childbirth(s) during your initial 10 years ESI period? *

Yes No

Add Reason for Hiatus + Add Hiatus

Reason for Hiatus	Duration	Typical Percent Research Effort	Total Percent Research Effort During Life Event	Description of Hiatus
Public Health Emergency	11/01/2021 - 01/31/2022	80%	50%	Lab Closure COVID-19

General Principles for Extending the Period of ESI Status

An Early Stage Investigator (ESI) is a Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) who has completed their terminal research degree or end of post-graduate clinical training, whichever date is later, within the past 10 years and has not previously competed successfully as PD/PI for a substantial NIH independent research award. Some ESIs will experience a lapse in their research or research training or periods of less than full-time effort during the 10-year ESI period. To accommodate such lapses, the NIH will consider requests to extend the ESI period for reasons that can include **family care responsibilities, extended periods of clinical training, medical concerns, disability or illness, active military service, and natural disasters**. Investigators should consult the [FAQs](#) prior to submitting a request.

Attachment(s) (Optional)

Upload Browse

File Name	Date Uploaded
LabClosureOrder.pdf	02/15/2022

Cancel

13. Use the **Upload/Browse** button to add attachments (PDF only), if needed.

14. You can edit your selections:

- To change the **Reason for Hiatus**, click the item's three-dot ellipsis menu and select **Edit** or **Delete**.

- To view or delete the **Attachments**, click the item's three-dot ellipsis menu and select **View** or **Delete**.

The screenshot displays two side-by-side panels. The left panel, titled 'Add Reason for Hiatus', contains a table with one row: 'Reason for Hiatus' with the value 'Public Health Emergency'. To the right of this row is a three-dot menu icon. A red box highlights the 'Edit' and 'Delete' buttons that appear when the menu is open. The right panel, titled 'Attachment(s) (Optional)', contains an 'Upload' button and a table with one row: 'File Name' with the value 'LabClosureOrder.pdf'. To the right of this row is a three-dot menu icon. A red box highlights the 'View' and 'Delete' buttons that appear when the menu is open.

- When finished, click the **Save & Submit** button. Use the **Save** button if you are not ready to submit the request, which means you can come back to this form later to complete and submit it. Click **Cancel** to leave the request form without making or saving any changes.

When a decision is made regarding your request, you will receive an email at the email address specified in your eRA Commons account. In addition, the ESI indicator in your eRA Commons Account will change and the end date of your ESI status period will be modified to reflect the extension granted. In most cases it is expected that a decision will be made within a few weeks. If there are large numbers of requests for extensions or if there are unanswered questions after the first request, the process and the decision may take longer.