



Deferral policy

1. Objectives

The objective of this policy is to outline our approach to requests from participants to defer a programme place, including the circumstances where a deferral would be approved, and arrangements that would apply in managing the deferral from and return to the programme. Our intention of this policy is to ensure that we have processes in place to enable all participants to fully benefit from our programmes as far as possible, and do not experience discrimination due to maternity, sickness or other individual circumstances.

2. Background and Legal/Regulatory Framework

The Alliance of Leading Learning aims ensure that participants complete programmes in their entirety, including gaining intended qualifications where applicable. Programmes are designed as a sequence of learning modules to be accessed in order and normally alongside a cohort of other participants. Where the programme carries an accredited qualification such as an NPQ qualification, there is also a need to provide assurances regarding the learning that has been accessed by a participant in pursuit of this qualification along with an expected timeframe to gain the relevant qualification. In creating a policy, we therefore aim to adopt a fair and consistent approach for handling requests for deferral, and to ensure that our policy is consistent with the criteria laid down by Department for Education, or other relevant body in respect of programme expectations that include attendance requirements. We also aim to ensure that no specific groups are discriminated against in the application of this policy. However, we recognise that there are circumstances where it is necessary for a period of deferral to take place to allow the participant/apprentice to complete the programme when they may otherwise have to withdraw. We also recognise that there are some instances when withdrawal is unavoidable. This policy will outline the process for deferral from and re-integration to the programme

3. Deferrals

3.1 Types of Deferral Available

The Alliance of Leading Learning are **no longer in a position to defer participants who have started programmes to future programmes**, allowing participants to restart their programmes. This is due to the current NPQ licence ending in August 2022.

In some cases, we may be able to offer a '**deferral of assessment**' - where a programme has been completed (or anticipated to be completed). To be granted a 'deferral of assessment', candidates must prove that they have been affected by an extenuating circumstance (see 3.2 below). Deferrals are not guaranteed to all who apply and will be

allocated on a case by case basis. Successful candidates will be permitted to submit their assignment at a later date that has been agreed by the Programme Manager and the candidate. **Please see our website for details as to specific programmes and cohorts. ([NPQML / NPQSL Link](#) and [NPQH / NPQEL Link](#))**

The current NPQs are coming to an end in August 2022 and the latest we can therefore accept submissions (given a deferral of assessment is approved) is November 2021. This final window allows for participants to be given the opportunity to make any necessary re-submissions (up to a maximum of 2) and ensures that all current participants receive their certifications prior to August 2022.

3.2 Extenuating Circumstances

Extenuating circumstances are defined as circumstances that:

- Are unforeseeable and beyond the control of the candidate
- Significantly impact the candidate's ability to complete the programme
- Occur within a relevant time frame
- Can be supported by independent evidence where appropriate

Please note that a deferral of assessment can only be considered if the programme is paid in full or a scholarship has been awarded.

In order to qualify for a deferral, at least one extenuating circumstance must be met and evidenced.

What is considered an extenuating circumstance?

Whilst it is difficult to provide an exhaustive list of circumstances that meet the above definition, The Alliance of Leading Learning considers the following to be valid extenuating circumstances.

- Medical incidents such as major injury, accident, or surgery
- A short-term illness that has resulted in sick leave
- A long-term illness that has worsened
- Pregnancy and maternity/paternity leave
- Clinical mental health issue
- Personal/psychological issues for which counselling is received
- Death/severe illness of an immediate relative
- Change in employment

Circumstances that are not considered:

- Poor time management/personal organisation/workload
- Circumstances occurring outside of the relevant time frame
- Medical circumstances without sufficient evidence, e.g. a doctor's note
- Minor illness
- Planned familial obligations and holidays
- Childcare problems that could have been anticipated
- IT issues/failure to back up documents
- General stress/anxiety
- Ofsted inspections
- Issues associated with Covid when guidance has been provided

3.3 How to apply for a deferral of assessment

Candidates wanting to apply for a deferral of assessment will need to e-mail adminall@leadinglearning.co.uk. They may be encouraged to discuss their circumstances with the Programme Manager to see if a deferral can be avoided. If a deferral of assessment is still required, then they will then be sent the appropriate deferral request form. Candidates should give full details of their extenuating circumstances in the “reason for request” section of the form, explaining how these circumstances meet the above definition and have impacted their ability to continue the programme. Dates will need to be provided as to when the extenuating circumstance began. All sensitive and personal data will be treated in accordance with data protection guidelines. The form will then need to be returned.

3.4 Processing of a deferral request form

Upon the receipt of a deferral request form, a member of admin team will check that it has been completed in full, signed by both candidate and their sponsor and that the detail provided adheres to the above guidelines. At this stage, the form may be returned to the candidate for an amendment if required.

Having received a form completed correctly and in full, a member of the admin team (in partnership with the programme manager) will make a decision regarding the candidate’s request for deferral using the guidance outlined in this document. All deferral requests will be reviewed and receive a verdict within ten working days of submission. When a request is approved, the candidate will be emailed to inform them of the outcome and the revised assessment deadlines. When a request is not approved, the candidate will receive an email explaining how this decision was reached.

3.5 Appealing against a deferral decision

Candidates may appeal the outcome of their deferral request. Due to the limited time frame, candidates will need to submit an appeal within five working days from the day the admin team and Programme manager communicated their result to them. This is to ensure that should the candidate be unsuccessful in their application, they would still have time to submit as per their original deadlines. For appeal guidance, please see below.

Appeal conditions

Candidates must have a demonstrable reason for their appeal, beyond simply being dissatisfied with the outcome. For example, an appeal may be made if the candidate can prove that their application was not judged in accordance with the definition of extenuating circumstances as outlined in this document.

Appeal content

With the submission of their appeal, the candidate should write an appeal statement confirming why they are appealing the ALL’s decision and how their appeal meets the above criteria. This will be considered alongside the candidate’s original deferral request form – supporting evidence may be required.

Appeals will not be considered by the same member of the original team that declined the deferral request, but they may provide details relating to how and why this initial verdict was reached.