

UCL NPQ Deferral and Withdrawal Policy: August 2023

1. Guiding Principles

1.1 During the course of an NPQ programme it is possible that the circumstances under which a participant began their programme will change and as a consequence make it challenging for them to complete that programme. In such a situation the participant has the following options:

1. Continue with the programme with additional support from their school, Delivery Partner or UCL.
2. Defer to a later cohort of their chosen programme.
3. Withdraw from the programme.

1.2 It is the aim of UCL to enable as many participants as possible to continue and successfully complete their chosen programmes as part of their original cohorts. To support participants in achieving this we provide alternative activities when participants are unable to attend synchronous sessions and there is flexibility regarding the timing and completion of other programme components.

1.3 Any participant faced with a change of circumstances that presents a serious challenge to their ability to meet the programme requirements should in the first instance read the UCL NPQ Deferrals and Withdrawals Policy and then review their options with their line manager and delivery partner before making a final decision regarding deferral or withdrawal.

2. Deferral

2.1 There are two distinct types of deferral that may be considered and these are covered separately below:

- a) Deferral from participation in the programme itself i.e. that covered by the 90% engagement requirement for successful completion of the programme (the learning journey) to continue at a later date
- b) Deferral from completing the summative assessment task within the allocated eight day window at the end of the programme to complete in a later window

In-programme deferral

2.2 Participants may defer from their current programme cohort in five main circumstances:

- a) Parental leave
- b) Long-term sickness
- c) Compassionate leave
- d) The participant's school is subject to severe disruption of normal routine which has a significant impact on their workload
- e) Being subject to investigation, suspension or capability procedures

2.3 It is unlikely that in-programme deferral would be granted in the following circumstances:

- a) short term sickness
- b) change of role or employer
- c) normal level of workload
- d) Ofsted inspection

This is because the flexibility of the programme components that make up the learning journey should allow participants to work around such circumstances. The asynchronous components may be completed at a time that best suits individual participants and alternative learning activities that meet the engagement criteria are available for participants unable to attend synchronous sessions.

It is the firm view of UCL and its Delivery Partners that where possible it is in the interests of all participants to complete their NPQ programme with their chosen cohort and so avoid a potential lengthy delay in securing the qualification (see 2.4 below). Clearly this is unlikely to be possible in the circumstances described in 2.2 above.

2.4 The length of a deferral will be determined by UCL as the Lead Provider on a case by case basis depending upon individual circumstances. The length of the deferral will have a bearing on how the participant resumes their NPQ programme. This is outlined below:

1. Participants dealing with particularly challenging work circumstances of up to three months should be supported by their Delivery Partner to catch up parts of the programme missed during this time. This would include participation in face-to-face activities and would not involve moving to a later cohort. The intention is that the participant concerned would complete alternatives to the face-to-face activities by a later date of their choosing, but in time to meet the 90% engagement criteria, so that they are still assessed with their original cohort.
2. Participants in circumstances other than workload challenges, but which meet the criteria in 2.2 above who accept a deferral of more than three months should be aware that when they resume their learning journey it is highly likely they will be joining a later cohort.

2.5 Participants should note that a deferral will begin on the date it is agreed by UCL. Up to that point a participant applying for a deferral is considered to still be active on their NPQ programme and should make every effort to continue to participate in programme activities.

2.6 UCL will endeavour to provide a decision regarding a deferral request within 10 working days of the Deferral Form being received from the Delivery Partner. This time may be extended during holidays and UCL closure periods.

2.7 A participant who is deferred from their programme will automatically be deferred from their original summative assessment window. They will be informed of their revised assessment window as part of the process of identifying the length of their deferral and the date on which they will formally resume their programme.

2.8 If a participant has not completed any programme activities, it is possible that they have not formally started the programme and so, do not need to go through the formal deferral process. This will be determined by UCL, and the participant and their Delivery Partner informed accordingly.

Summative assessment deferral

2.9 Participants are strongly encouraged to complete the summative assessment task within their allocated window if at all possible. The eight calendar days allowed for writing their task response should give more than sufficient time for all participants, including those needing more than the usual time, to access, understand and respond to materials. It is estimated that it will take between four and nine hours to complete the Assessment Case Study, depending on working styles.

2.10 UCL will consider allowing a participant to defer their summative assessment in a limited set of circumstances that occur during or close to the summative assessment window. Including:

- a) The participant is taken ill and absent from work as a result
- b) The participant's school is subject to severe disruption of normal routine which has a significant impact on the participant's workload
- c) The participant is called for jury service
- d) The participant is on compassionate leave as stated in the school policy

2.11 Participants deferred from their original programme cohort are automatically deferred to a later assessment window and will not need to apply for a separate deferral.

The processes for applying for a deferral

2.12 Should a participant feel that they need to **request a deferral period from the programme** itself (i.e. take a break from the learning journey) due to extenuating circumstances, then the steps below should be followed:

1. Participants should consult the Deferral and Withdrawal Policy to check the proposed extenuating circumstances meet the criteria for a deferral (programme extension).
2. The participant should then speak to their Line Manager in the first instance to discuss their situation to ascertain if arrangements can be made to enable them to continue as part of their original cohort.
3. If this is not possible, the participant should then speak to their Delivery Partner who will discuss the deferral process, timelines and programme implications. Please note that in the case of NPQEL, the Delivery Partner is UCL.
4. The Delivery Partner will then complete the Deferral and Withdrawal Request Form provided by UCL, which can be found in the top ribbon in the General channel on Teams. It will state the reasons for deferral, the length of proposed deferral time and the options discussed with the participant.
5. Participants may only return to a programme at the start of a module. Deferrals will be dated to the participant's last completed module at time of submission. Before submitting a deferral request, a participant may wish to complete remaining activities if they are nearing module completion.
6. Deferrals begin immediately on approval of the request by UCL. Participants will no longer be able to access UCL Extend from this point until their return.
7. An NPQ Programme Leader (usually the Programme Leader responsible for Operations) will then review the request. Once they have reached a decision, the outcome will be communicated directly to the participant by the Programme Leader with the relevant Delivery Partner Lead for Deferrals and Withdrawals copied in.

2.13 Should a participant feel that they need to **request a deferral period from the eight day assessment writing window** (i.e. postpone their completion of the summative assessment) due to extenuating circumstances that have occurred within the 8 day window, then the steps below should be followed:

1. Participants should consult the Deferral and Withdrawals Policy to check the proposed extenuating circumstances meet the criteria for a deferral (summative assessment postponement).
2. Participants who request a deferral from submitting for assessment must notify their delivery partner at the earliest opportunity prior to, during or immediately after the eight day window.
3. The delivery partner will then submit a Summative Assessment Deferral request via the Deferral and Withdrawal Request online form.
4. The request will be considered by the appropriate Programme Leader. The result of the request will then be emailed by the Programme Leader to the participants with the Delivery Partner Lead for Deferral and Withdrawals copied into the email.
5. The next available submission window will then be offered to the participant.
6. NPQonline will be informed of the deferral of the participant to the next assessment window.
7. Deferrals submitted at all other times are considered In-Programme deferrals and will be assessed against the criteria in section 2.2. These must be submitted using the In-Programme online form.

2.14 If a participant fails to submit their assessment case study response, but does not contact UCL to request a deferral, then the following will apply:

1. If the failure is due to the participant being unable to contact UCL because of circumstances beyond their control such as the sudden onset of illness or an accident involving the participant, then UCL will consider retrospectively deferring this participant onto the next assessment window. They will retain their two assessment opportunities.
2. If the participant has no justifiable reason for not contacting UCL regarding the submission of their assessment, then this will be classed as a fail. The participant will therefore have used one of their two assessment opportunities and will be automatically moved to the next assessment window. Should the participant fail their assessment in that window, they will not be able to re-sit.

3. Withdrawal

3.1 A participant considering withdrawal from an NPQ Programme should be aware that it is the Department for Education Policy to only fund an NPQ course for a participant once. This means that a participant who starts a Department for Education funded NPQ course, and then withdraws from or fails that course, will not be funded again for the same programme.

3.2 Please note that the stipulation outlined in 3.1 does not apply to participants not funded by the Department for Education. If a non-funded participant withdraws from an NPQ programme, then they are still eligible for scholarship funding, should they subsequently work in an eligible school and apply to undertake the same NPQ programme again.

3.3 Should a participant still wish to withdraw after reading the guidance in the UCL NPQ Deferrals and Withdrawals Policy, then the following process should be followed:

1. The participant should discuss their intent to withdraw with their Line Manager to establish if they could continue with support or to consider whether deferral is a more appropriate course of action.
2. A follow-up discussion should then take place between the participant and the Delivery Partner. The Delivery Partner should ensure all avenues for support available are known by the participant, and where deferral may be a more appropriate course of action.
3. If all the above parties agree that a withdrawal is the most appropriate option for the participant, then the Delivery Partner completes the online Deferral and Withdrawal Request Form with the participant.
4. The UCL NPQ Team will then formally process the withdrawal including informing the Department for Education and removing the participant's UCL Extend access with immediate effect from their respective programme.
5. After this point, no further funding for the participant will be provided to UCL or the relevant Delivery Partner for the programme in question by the Department for Education.
6. If a participant does not complete the Deferral and Withdrawal Request Form, UCL has the authority as the Lead Provider to withdraw them from their NPQ programme without their formal consent.

4. Delivery Partner Initiated Withdrawal

4.1 In instances where contact has been lost with a participant, a Delivery Partner Initiated Withdrawal request can be submitted. For full details of this process please see the Non-engaged Participant policy.

4.2 Contact with a participant will be considered lost if the Delivery Partner has made three attempts to contact the participant, including at least one by phone, and contacted the participant's line manager or, in the event of this person being uncontactable, the participant's headteacher (chair of governors/trust board in the case of headteachers and executive leaders or line manager/similar in the case of EYL participants working in PVI settings). A record of this contact should be included in the Withdrawal Form in step (b).

4.3 In such a situation the Delivery Partner will submit to UCL a Delivery Partner Initiated Withdrawal request, which can found in the online Deferral and Withdrawal Request form. The Delivery partner will record the attempts made to contact the participant and the reason for withdrawal as follows:

- If a participant is known to have moved to another school, then reason (f) 'Personal reasons: moving school' should be recorded.
- If a participant 's circumstances are unknown, then reason (d) 'Insufficient capacity to undertake the programme' should be recorded.

4.4 Upon receipt of a Delivery Partner Initiated Withdrawal Form UCL will write to the participant, using both their supplied email addresses and copied named Head Teacher or Line Manager mentioned in the form and the Delivery Partner

4.5 Participants will have a window of 14 days to contact UCL following this email for the withdrawal to be overturned.

5. Participants returning from deferral

5.1 Participants must make contact with UCL 30 days before they are due to return to the programme. UCL will then register the participant with their new cohort and reinstate access to UCL Extend. This is communicated to participants in their confirmation of deferral email.

5.2 Participants must make contact with their delivery partner 30 days before they are due to return to the programme. Their delivery partner will share information about all upcoming programme dates and events. This is communicated to participants in their confirmation of deferral email.

5.3 We recommend Delivery Partners keep records of deferred participants and their expected return dates. We advise Delivery Partners to make contact with returning participants once the 30 day return window has opened, if the participant has not already made contact. This is particularly important when participants are returning for an assessment window, in order to receive their assessment login details in time.