

<b>Document Name and Version</b>	<b>4.1a Policy Deferral and Temporary Suspension of Studies.</b>
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<b>Policies that Interact with Policy 4.1</b>	Procedure 4.1b Procedure for Programme Deferral and Suspension of Studies Policy 4.2a Policy and Procedure for Programme Withdrawal Policy 4.3 Fees Policy Policy 5.2 Assessment Regulations
<b>Approval Body</b>	Academic Council
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<b>Revisions</b>	

## **Programme Deferral and Temporary Suspension of Studies Policy**

### **Section 1 - INTRODUCTION**

#### **Purpose**

(1) For any number of reasons, it may be necessary for a student to temporarily suspend their studies on a programme, i.e. defer continuing studies for a period of time. This policy sets out the circumstances, principles, grounds and criteria under which the College will allow or advise a student to temporarily suspend their place on the programme.

#### **Scope**

##### **To whom does the policy apply?**

(2) This policy applies to students registered on QQI-validated programmes leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

##### **Who is responsible for implementing the policy?**

(3) The Registrar, or nominee, in consultation with the Programme Director/Leader or nominee and Student Support Officer, is responsible for the implementation of this policy. The Financial Controller or nominee is responsible for confirming that the student is in good financial standing prior to the granting of a deferral.

#### **Definitions**

(4) Postponement - A postponement is a temporary delay of commencement of a programme granted to a successful applicant following consideration of a request by the applicant either before they become a registered student or during the designated 'cooling-off' (change-of-mind) period (SI No 484 of 2013 European Union (Consumer Information, Cancellation and Other Rights) Regulations 2013). For IICP programmes this is a period of 4 weeks from the date at which the programme commenced.

(5) Deferral - A deferral is a temporary suspension of studies granted to a registered student following consideration of a request by the student. It may only be granted to a student after the end of the cooling-off period.

(6) Transfer - A transfer is where the student moves from one live cohort to another live cohort following recommendation by the College and where, in transferring, all academic and financial history remain associated with the student. There is no intent to pause or suspend studies when a transfer occurs. However, due to the flow of a programme's structure, a student may need to wait to undertake the next element of the programme for which they are eligible. This occurs where no other means of a student successfully completing the programme exists.

(7) Good Financial Standing - This is where a student has paid in full all fees and monies owed to the College at a particular moment in time.

### **Section 2 - CONTEXT**

#### **Legal or Regulatory Context**

#### **Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines**

(8) This policy is designed with regard to QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and the European Standards and Guidelines, which set out the requirement to have policy and procedures in place to support student progression.

### **Access, Transfer and Progression**

(9) This policy supports the College Access, Transfer and Progression Policy and helps to implement the QQI Policy Restatement: Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training in the College.

## **Section 3 - POLICY STATEMENTS**

### **Part A - Principles for Temporary Suspension of Studies**

#### **Carrying Academic Credit Between Defined Study Periods**

(10) Where a student temporarily suspends their studies, they retain all the credit and assessment results for modules fully completed.

(11) It is not normally possible to carry any grades for partially completed modules.

#### **Duration**

(12) Students cannot defer indefinitely.

(13) Normally, a student must complete their programme of study within a maximum of double the standard time allocated to the programme. For example, if a programme is of two years' duration, the student must complete it within four years, including any deferrals.

(14) The Registrar, or nominee, in consultation with the Programme Director/Leader or nominee, may determine if an exception to this rule can be granted on the presentation of new circumstances impacting the student's ability to return to study, supported by verifiable evidence.

#### **Consequences of Deferring**

(15) Students are responsible for the consequences of suspending their studies, which may include:

- a. Additional attendance
- b. Re-registration
- c. Payment of additional fees
- d. Repeat of first-sitting assessment for partially completed modules
- e. Impact on vetting requirements
- f. Impact on availability of electives
- g. Any additional assessment requirements at module level

#### **Good Financial Standing**

(16) To be eligible to apply for a deferral, a student must be in good financial standing with the College.

### **Part B - Policy for Deferral Student Responsibility**

(17) Students are responsible for staying in contact with the College and advising the relevant parties of any circumstance which may interfere with a student's ability to complete a programme in the standard manner.

(18) Students are responsible for formally requesting to suspend their studies where they wish to do so.

(19) Students are responsible for providing verifiable evidence in support of any deferral application.

(20) Students who apply to defer their studies should be aware that their application may not be granted and, accordingly, must continue studying until the outcome of their application is issued.

(21) Students are responsible for initiating communication with the College when they expect to return to studies.

### **College Responsibility**

(22) Where the College is concerned about a student's progress or circumstances, the College may advise the student of the option of deferral to defray the effect of any circumstances affecting their ability to complete the programme with their original cohort

(23) In the case of non-payment of fees, the College may initiate a temporary suspension of studies pending payment of fees.

### **Grounds for a Deferral**

(24) A deferral may be granted in circumstances where the student is not able to complete the programme on time. This may include:

- a. A new illness, i.e. not present at the commencement of the programme
- b. A new disability, i.e. not present at the commencement of the programme
- c. Changes in family or personal circumstances
- d. Pregnancy
- e. Parental leave
- f. An unexpected deterioration in an existing illness or condition

(25) These circumstances must not have existed, or be known to have existed, at the time of commencement of the programme or may have unexpectedly deteriorated.

(26) The College will consider factors that were present but have worsened or where the impact was not foreseen and where evidence of this is provided.

### **Return to Studies**

(27) On return to studies, students re-join the programme variant that is available, as determined by the College on consideration of the relevant information.

(28) Students rejoin the programme carrying all completed modules and resume their studies on the next module or stage as relevant.