

## Ambition Institute Deferral Policy

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### 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 through this policy is to ensure that we have measures 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

As with any programme provided by Ambition Institute, our aim is for participants to complete programmes in their entirety, including gaining intended qualifications where applicable. Programmes are designed as a sequence of learning episodes to be accessed in order and normally alongside a cohort of peers.

Where the programme carries an accredited qualification such as an NPQ qualification, or an apprenticeship, 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 basis for handling requests for deferral, and to ensure that our policy is consistent with the criteria laid down by Department for Education, Education and Skills Funding Agency 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. Policy and Procedures

#### **What is a deferral?**

Whilst we expect participants/apprentices to plan to complete their programme in its entirety, we understand that there may be exceptional and extenuating circumstances which may impact their ability to do so. In these circumstances, we want to support the individual to successfully complete their programme, and to complete and submit projects for assessment where applicable. This may include offering deferral. Examples of circumstances where a deferral may be offered are below:

- > Illness and/or health-related issues and leaves of absence which impact the individual's ability to fully engage with and complete the programme of study;
- > Maternity, paternity, shared parental, adoption or parental leave;
- > Bereavement or changes to personal circumstances which impact the individual's ability to fully engage with and complete the programme of study;
- > Any other change or occurrence which is out of their control and which could not have been foreseen or planned for, and which may impact the individual's ability to fully engage with and complete the programme of study.

Please note that specific additional terms apply where delivery is through an Alliance partner and in this instance, discussion should take place first with the partner delivering the programme. The partner should then notify Ambition, identifying a named, future cohort that the participant will join, along with planned dates to cease and restart.

#### **Eligibility criteria for deferral**

- > To be eligible for deferral, participants or apprentices must have started a programme, as defined by having attended at least one session, and payment, where applicable, must have been received.
- > We cannot guarantee that deferral will be available on all programmes, for example where we are running the final cohort of a programme that is partially or fully funded by the DfE. Participants/apprentices on such programmes will be made aware of this when they are offered a place.
- > Should the above not apply, the withdrawal policy will apply.
- > Where a candidate has been offered a place on a programme and wishes to defer their place we reserve the right to require any pre-programme assessment to be repeated if appropriate, e.g. in order to ensure that the programme is still right for them and they are well-placed to benefit as intended in the programme design.

#### **Deferral periods**

- > When requesting a deferral, the participant or apprentice should specify their expected date of re-joining the programme, which should normally be no longer than 12 months from the point of deferral.
- > The specific date of re-joining will take account of the delivery cycle, and this will mean that the exact deferral period may vary slightly to ensure that no programme content is missed because of the deferral.

### **Applying for a deferral**

- > Should a participant or apprentice wish to defer, they should discuss with their Participant Support team as soon as possible. This conversation will consider whether the deferral can be avoided, for instance, by catching up specific isolated content that they will miss within an alternative region or cohort.
- > The participant will be asked to apply in writing, providing specific details regarding the date they wish to defer, and their planned date of return to the programme.
- > The ultimate decision about whether to grant a deferral will be at the sole discretion of the Ambition Institute Programme Leader responsible for the programme in question.
- > If it is decided that deferral is the appropriate course of action, Participant Support will discuss next steps with the individual.
- > Once agreed, the deferral will be confirmed in writing to the participant, including the expected date of return to the programme and arrangements for re-integration.

### **Re-joining the programme**

- > The relevant Participant Support team will monitor deferrals and contact the participant 3 months prior to the planned return date requesting confirmation of their intent to return. At this point discussion will take place regarding any reasonable adjustments that the participant may require on their return to the programme.
- > If the participant chooses not to return, they will be classed as withdrawing from the programme. In this case the terms outlined in the withdrawal policy will then apply.
- > Once the return date is confirmed Participant Support will ensure that the all relevant details are provided to allow the participant to resume their programme. Depending upon the programme and timing on the return this may include supplying catch up materials from recent sessions and ensuring that the participant is connected to the cohort they are joining.

### **Fees**

If the programme carries a fee then should a participant/apprentice defer, there will be no refund, given the expectation that the participant/apprentice will be re-joining the programme at a future date.

The DfE reserves the right to claim back funding awarded to an individual in respect of fees for programme completion or assessment. Should this apply, Ambition Institute reserves the right to claim any amount due from the school/employer where appropriate.

## **4. Other Policies**

Other policies referenced here include:

- > Withdrawal policy
- > Refund policy