Ambition Institute

NPQ Part-Time, Deferral and Portability Policy

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Policy Owner	Director, NPQ Programmes
Version	2.4
Last reviewed	October 2026
Approved by	Programme Operations Committee
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Applies to	Participants on National Professional Qualification programmes beginning Autumn 2021 onwards
Exceptions	N/A
Audience	Available on SharePoint and publicly on Ambition's website

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Section 1: Overview

1.1. Purpose

1.1.1. Providers of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), including Ambition Institute, must ensure their programme is suitable for participants who work on a part-time basis, is adaptable for those who move schools or settings mid-programme, and is flexible for those who need to defer their place to a later cohort.

1.1.2. This policy outlines how participants - including those employed part-time or who face unforeseen and exceptional changes to situation and/or circumstance - may be supported to engage with and complete their programme, including assessment.

Section 2: Policy and Procedure

2.1. Programme Design Overview

2.1.1. The DfE (Department for Education) require NPQ participants to engage with at least 90% of the programme content to be eligible to sit the assessment and complete the programme. How this is calculated is determined by individual Lead Providers.

2.1.2. Ambition Institute's NPQ programmes are designed to meet the needs of participants regardless of their context, providing the agility to support all participants to engage and complete the programme. This includes those who are employed part time; who move school or setting part way through a programme; or who have exceptional and/or unexpected circumstances which impact their ability to complete the programme as planned.

2.1.3. A significant amount of learning is asynchronous and so can be completed at a time which suits each participant, with course release staggered to break content down into manageable chunks, therefore further supporting a range of working patterns/engagement needs. Synchronous events are often online, and – including when events are in-person – dates are communicated in advance to support individuals in their time management. Structured 'catch-up' material is also available should participants not be able to attend in-person events on the available dates.

2.2. Part-Time Participants

2.2.1. Lead Providers are required to ensure the programme is accessible for participants who work on a part-time basis. The NPQ programmes are designed with the following flexibility:

2.2.2. *Asynchronous Content:* Independent content is designed in the form of 'modules' that participants complete at a time which suits them. Online self-study materials must be accessed in sequence, but modules can be completed at any point, though ideally within a 2-week window. Module content will remain available for the duration of the programme.

2.2.3. *Clinics:* Dates for clinics will be shared in advance to enable all participants, including those who work on a part-time basis, to plan to attend according to their schedule. Clinics should be attended in sequence, and we will seek to accommodate request for alternative dates for participants who work on a part-time basis. Structured 'catch-up' material is also available should participants not be able to attend on the available dates.

2.2.4. *Coaching (applicable to NPQEL and EHCO only):* Coaching can be scheduled based on the participant's availability, in conjunction with that of their coach.

2.2.5. *Conferences:* Dates will be communicated to participants in advance to support attendance.

2.2.6. *Assessment:* Participants have an 8-day window in which they should complete the NPQ summative assessment. This will be communicated in advance. The assessment can be completed at any time within the window, allowing for flexibility around part-time schedules and any other commitments.

2.3. Deferral

2.3.1. We expect participants to complete their NPQ programme, including the assessment, with the cohort they started with. Only in extenuating circumstances would we offer a deferral – this is a place on a future cohort, with the participant restarting the programme with that cohort at the point they deferred from their original cohort.

2.3.2. To be eligible for deferral, participants must have been accepted and formally commenced their NPQ programme - a Started Declaration must have been successfully submitted to the DfE. They must also demonstrate that they meet the criteria for extenuating circumstances (see 2.3.5 below).

2.3.3. Once a deferral is agreed as a suitable option, participants must return to the next available cohort. This will be approximately 12 months from the point of deferral as the have one cohort per year only.

2.3.4. Participants may defer only once, and deferral is dependent on the availability of a suitable future cohort.

2.3.5. Examples of extenuating circumstances where a deferral may be discussed as a suitable option include (but are not limited to):

- Illness and/or health-related issues which impact the individual's ability to fully engage with and complete the programme for a sustained period.
- 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 for a sustained period.

If a participant would like to discuss options to support them to complete their programme, including whether a deferral is an option, they must contact their Delivery Partner or Ambition for our national cohorts.

2.3.6. If it is agreed that deferral is the most appropriate action, the participant should discuss and provisionally agree on their expected date of re-joining the programme with Ambition (national cohort) or their Delivery Partner. This is most likely to be in approximately 12months and with the following cohort. If they need to cover content which they missed before the deferral was formalised, they may need to return sooner.

2.3.7. When a participant defers, they restart the programme with a new cohort at the relevant point in the programme journey (i.e. at the point they last engaged). This ensures that participant time is prioritised as they do not have to restart the programme in full. All content is accessible to them via our online learning platform, so they can revisit learning at their own pace, whilst accessing new learning and attending events with their new cohort.

2.3.8. Prior to the agreed restart date, the Delivery Partner or Ambition (for our national cohorts) will contact the participant requesting confirmation of their intent to return to the NPQ programme. At this point, there will also be a discussion regarding any reasonable adjustments that the participant may require on their return to the programme to support their reintegration.

2.3.9. If the participant chooses not to return to the programme as agreed initially, they will be understood as withdrawing from the programme. In this case, the terms outlined in the NPQ Withdrawal policy will then apply.

2.3.10. We offer participants on our NPQ programmes one deferral opportunity. Only under new and extenuating circumstances will a further deferral be considered.

2.3.11. We cannot guarantee that deferral will always be available, for example, where we are running the final cohort of a particular NPQ programme or where our contract to deliver NPQ programmes ceases. If deferral is not possible, we will communicate this to the participant and outline the options that are available to them. This may result in withdrawal from the programme, to which the NPQ Withdrawal policy will apply.

2.3.12. Our final intake under the current NPQ contract will be in November 2027. This means:

- Participants who join the November 2027 cohort will not be able to defer, as this is the final intake under the current NPQ contract and there will be no later cohort to re-join. Where a new NPQ contract comes into effect, it will not be possible to defer from the current NPQ to a cohort in the future NPQ contract.
- Participants who deferred before the November 2027 cohort must re-join and complete their NPQ during, or before, the November 2027 cohort.
- Participants who defer and do not re-join and complete their NPQ by the end of the November 2027 cohort will be withdrawn.

Funding and programme fee

2.3.13. If the programme is a scholarship funded by the Department for Education, the participant will retain funding when they restart their NPQ programme. This is subject to change at any time by the Department for Education.

2.3.14. If the programme is self-funded by the individual or funded by their school, trust or associated organisation, no refund will be given at the point of deferral, given the expectation that the participant will be re-joining the NPQ programme at a future date. Please see our NPQ Refund Policy for further information on refunds.

2.4. Deferral prior to, and during, the assessment but after programme completion

2.4.1. If a participant would like to discuss the possibility of deferring their summative assessment only, they must have first completed a minimum of 90% of programme – meeting the requirement for completion and entry into the assessment window. They should contact their Delivery Partner (or Ambition for our national cohorts) as soon as possible and no later than the pre-communicated deadline for completing the programme. The above deferral process will then be followed. This will not affect a participant's right to two assessment attempts. The participant will be entered into the next suitable assessment window.

2.4.2. Where a participant has entered the assessment window but, due to extenuating circumstances, cannot complete the assessment as planned, they may be granted a deferral to complete the assessment with the next suitable cohort. Ambition reserves the right to request further supporting evidence, where necessary. Where approved, this will not affect the participant's right to two assessment attempts. The participant will be entered into the next suitable assessment window.

2.4.3. Examples of circumstances which can be viewed as extenuating, and which could result in deferral of the summative assessment only may include:

- Unforeseen illness and/or health-related issues and leaves of absence, which have impacted/will impact a participant's ability to submit their assessment.
- Bereavement or unforeseen changes to personal circumstances which have impacted/will impact a participant's ability to submit their assessment.

2.4.4. Participants who do not submit their assessment and do not notify their Delivery Partner or Ambition (for our national cohorts) of any extenuating circumstances will lose one of their two assessment attempts.

2.5. Portability (school transfers)

2.5.1. We expect our participants to complete their NPQ programme whilst being employed in the same school/organisation. However, we recognise that there may be instances where a school/setting move during the completion of an NPQ programme is unavoidable.

2.5.2. Our programmes are designed in such a way that we do not expect a school/setting move to inhibit a participant's ability to engage with their NPQ programme. This means a participant will be able to continue with their NPQ programme should they move schools/settings.

2.5.3. If a participant does move school/setting during their NPQ, they must notify their Delivery Partner or Ambition (if on the national cohort) so that we update our records.

2.5.4. Should a participant move to a school/setting outside of our network i.e., to a school/setting in an area not covered by Ambition Institute as the Lead Provider, the participant will not be required to withdraw or transfer to another Lead Provider and can remain on the programme. In most instances they will be able to continue with their programme as initially planned. However, should there be a scenario in which the participant can no longer reasonably be expected to continue on their programme with Ambition, and a transfer to another Lead Provider's programme be the only reasonable way for them to continue with and complete the programme, we will work with any relevant other Lead Providers as appropriate to support the participant's transfer to a programme delivered by the Lead Provider of their choice. This may include relevant data sharing with the new lead provider. We cannot however guarantee that this will be possible as acceptance of a transfer request is at the discretion of the other Lead Provider.

Section 3: Version Control

3.1.1. All Ambition policies are regularly reviewed by the Policy Owner. Feedback from employees and relevant stakeholders will be considered during the review process, and revisions will be made as necessary to reflect changes in laws, regulations, or company practices.

Version	Issue/release date	Summary of changes	Approver
1	January 2024	N/A	Programme Director, NPQs
2	July 2024	Insertion of NPQ-specific deferral policy	Programme Director, NPQs
2.1	June 2025	Annual review, minor changes	Programme Operations Committee
2.2	August 2025	Minor changes to 2.3 following revised DfE guidance on deferrals.	Programme Director, NPQs
2.3	July 2026	Annual review. Addition of 2.3.3.	Programme Director, NPQs
2.4	October 2026	Addition of 2.3.12.	Programme Director, NPQs.