



Queen Margaret University

EDINBURGH

STUDENT DEFERRAL PROCEDURE

Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Associate degree students studying with an external partner.....	2
2. Criteria for a deferral of studies.....	2
2.1. Medical grounds.....	2
2.2. Personal reasons.....	2
3. Access to University's facilities, assessments and accommodation.....	3
4. Registration period for programme and with professional bodies.....	3
5. Deferral of studies for international students.....	3
6. Financial implications of a deferral of studies.....	4
7. Other implications of a deferral of studies.....	4
8. Application process.....	4
9. Outcome of the deferral request.....	5
10. Returning to studies after a period of deferral.....	5

1. Introduction

This procedure applies to the majority of QMU students irrespective of location or mode of study, except for Doctoral candidates who should refer to and complete a '[Suspension request form](#)'. It is important that students read and understand this procedure before applying for a deferral.

A deferral is applicable where a student discontinues study with the University for an extended period of time (i.e. into the next academic year). It can be applied for and approved on the basis of valid medical or personal reasons at the request of the student. Short breaks for medical or personal reasons of less than 4 weeks, which affect a student's ability to undertake assessments on time or their performance in assessment, should be applied for under the '[Extenuating Circumstances - Guidelines for students and staff](#)'.

A deferral of studies will normally be granted for a maximum of 12 months. Extensions to this will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and students must reapply.

The application form for a deferral of studies is available at <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/current-students/thinking-of-leaving/taking-a-break-or-returning-to-study/>

Students should be aware that a deferral of studies is not an automatic right and therefore applications may be refused if a deferral is deemed inappropriate or if insufficient supporting evidence is provided. Requests for deferrals must be approved by the Programme Leader.

1.1. Associate degree students studying with an external partner

Students studying with one of QMU's local college partners are subject to the University Deferral Procedure. Students considering deferral should discuss this with both their College Tutor and the Thinking of Leaving staff (thinkingofleaving@qmu.ac.uk) at the University. The final decision regarding the deferral application rests with the University.

2. Criteria for a deferral of studies

The criteria for a deferral are circumstances **beyond a student's control** which may affect their ability to continue on their programme of study. These are normally of a medical or personal nature affecting the student for an extended period of time i.e. a significant proportion of the current academic session. This would include circumstances preventing attendance on an on-going basis. Examples would include, but not be limited to, illness, pregnancy, maternity or paternity leave, accident, bereavement or a significant change to the student's employment. The University also recognises that some students need time away from their studies for other reasons such as prolonged homesickness or uncertainty about course choice. In these cases, students may be permitted to defer if they can demonstrate that time away from their studies would help to facilitate successful completion of the programme on their return.

Deferral of studies should not be used when a student has been unable to submit course work, take an exam or performed less well in an assessment than they may have expected to. In those circumstances students should refer to ["Extenuating Circumstances - Guidelines for students and staff"](#) and the [Academic Appeals Regulations](#) to find out if they are eligible to be considered under these routes.

Other examples where a deferral request will NOT normally be approved are when:

- the student has previously been granted a period of deferral
- the request is submitted retrospectively i.e. the student applies for the deferral significantly after the planned start date of the deferral period
- the deferral period would take the student outwith their registration period either with the University or the relevant Professional Body (see Section 4)
- planned changes to the student's programme would make it impossible for the student to complete their original programme
- academic progress is unsatisfactory
- the student has failed to make appropriate supporting evidence available.

2.1. Medical grounds

Students must make relevant supporting evidence available to their Programme Leader. This can be in the form of a medical certificate, letter from Student Services (or equivalent department at non-Scottish campuses) or other relevant qualified practitioner.

Where appropriate, re-admittance on to a programme of study may be subject to confirmation by an appropriate medical practitioner indicating the student's fitness to return to studies.

2.2. Personal reasons

Students should make documentary evidence available to their Programme Leader to support their claim. Individual circumstances will determine the type of evidence. Students should seek

to provide supporting information from an independent person, organisation or support service that could confirm the student's circumstances.

If a student's reasons for deferral are of a personal nature that they do not want to document in detail, then the student can instead discuss these with their Personal Academic Tutor, the Student Counsellor, or the Students' Union Welfare and Representation Coordinator. These staff may then be able to provide a letter or email confirming that the student has valid reasons, without disclosing details, to the Programme Leader, ensuring they can consider the claim. Please note that this is not an automatic entitlement and is at the discretion of the staff involved.

3. Access to University's facilities, assessments and accommodation

Some students may find it useful to maintain access to University facilities, such as email, during periods of deferral. This can be helpful as a way of keeping in contact with the programme and the University. Students are encouraged to consider what might be appropriate for them and discuss this with their Programme Leader before starting their deferral period. Module Coordinators can offer advice about recommended reading and other work, in the lead up to a student returning to studies.

Students who have been granted a deferral will not normally be permitted to sit any assessments nor will they be permitted to take part in any project/dissertation work during the period of deferral. A student may exceptionally be permitted to re-sit an assessment which cannot be carried forward to the next stage of study where this impacts on the student progressing to the next stage. Any exceptions will need to be confirmed by the student's Programme Leader.

Students who live in University accommodation should contact Accommodation Services to discuss their situation. Students who defer will remain liable for rent for the duration of their tenancy agreement.

4. Registration period for programme and with professional bodies

The registration period is the maximum amount of time a student can be registered on a programme. This varies depending on the type of programme, the level and the mode of study (i.e. full-time or part-time). Deferrals count towards this time period. It is therefore very important that students considering a deferral are aware of this and ensure they can return to and complete the programme within the registration period. Further guidance is available in the [Registration Regulations](#), see section 4 on page 6.

Students on Health Science programmes which require registration with a Professional Body such as the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) or the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) also need to consider the registration period of the Professional Body. This may be shorter than the University registration period and if this is the case the Professional Body time period would apply. Students should be aware that in some cases there are no grounds for appeal relating to registration periods with Professional Bodies.

5. Deferral of studies for international students

International students with a Tier 4 Visa should carefully consider visa/immigration implications **before** applying for a deferral of studies and should seek advice from the University's

International Student Support Coordinator based in the International Office. Contact international@gmu.ac.uk to arrange an appointment.

The University is obliged to report any significant changes in students' circumstances relating to study periods for Tier 4 Visa holders to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). This includes periods of deferral. Depending on the reason and length of the deferral, permission to stay in the UK may no longer be valid if a student is not actively studying and students may be advised to leave the UK. When ready to resume studies, students will have to make a new application for a visa.

6. Financial implications of a deferral of studies

Students granted a deferral of studies will be liable for the appropriate proportion of the fee based on how much of the semester they have attended. Students paying by instalments, who then defer their programme of study, must meet any shortfall between the full fee determined by the University for the period of study undertaken and the total amount of the instalments already paid. For example, if a student defers their studies 28 days after the start of semester, they will be liable for the fees for the remainder of that semester. Semester one fees are equivalent to half a full year fee.

If a student or a sponsor has paid the fees for a full academic session and the student then defers, the tuition fee will normally be retained by the University and carried forward to the next academic session.

Sponsored students should discuss their deferral with their sponsor. Where relevant the University will inform the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) or Student Loans Company (SLC) once a deferral of studies has been granted.

Students who wish to defer can seek advice from Registry (registry@gmu.ac.uk) on their tuition fee liability.

7. Other implications of a deferral of studies

A deferral may impact on a student in a number of ways (e.g. financial, accommodation, visa, academic, peer group, placement). It is the student's responsibility to carefully consider the impact and seek advice from the relevant support services such as Student Services, their Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) or the Students' Union.

Students on health care programmes with mandatory placements need to be aware that even a short period of deferral can have a significant impact on their clinical hours. They must discuss this with their Programme Leader before starting a period of deferral.

8. Application process

8.1. Before applying for a deferral, students must discuss their situation with their Programme Leader to determine if a deferral would be appropriate. Students should make any supporting documentary evidence they have available at this stage.

8.2. Students are advised to seek further advice from relevant support services to determine the impact a deferral may have on their academic performance, financial situation, and student or immigration status.

8.3. If a student wishes to proceed with a deferral of studies application they should download and complete the [deferral request form](#).

8.4. All completed forms should be submitted electronically and sent from the student's University email account to thinkingofleaving@gmu.ac.uk for initial processing and review. The Thinking of Leaving team will pass the form to the Programme Leader for approval and confirmation that they have seen supporting documentation.

9. Outcome of the deferral request

9.1. If a deferral of studies application is approved the student will be informed by email. The Thinking of Leaving team will inform all relevant internal departments including the School Office, the International Office and Accommodation Services. Registry will update the student's record and inform external parties such as the Grant/Fee Awarding Authority e.g. SAAS or SLC, UKVI and any other parties deemed relevant by the University

9.2. If a deferral of studies application is refused, the student will be informed by email of the reason. Students are encouraged to make best use of available support services to ensure they are able to continue with their studies.

10. Returning to studies after a period of deferral

Students will be contacted by Registry with instructions on how to matriculate before the start of the next academic year. Matriculation normally opens around the 1 September each year. Where required, students who have deferred for medical reasons must provide evidence of fitness to study to the Programme Leader.

Deferrals are normally granted for a maximum period of 12 months. Failure to matriculate and attend classes will not automatically extend a student's deferral period. If a student has not matriculated within 4 weeks of their expected return date, their record will be closed.

If a student decides not to return to their studies they should complete the online withdrawal form available at <https://www.gmu.ac.uk/current-students/thinking-of-leaving/if-you-want-to-leave-gmu/> After the form has been submitted, students will be sent an email with a link asking them to confirm your withdrawal. Please note they will not be withdrawn until this has been done. The form will then be circulated to the relevant staff and the student's record updated. A final transcript detailing any results will be sent to the student's permanent home address.

Useful links to support services

Student Services	https://www.gmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/
Effective Learning Service	https://www.gmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/effective-learning-service-els/
Students' Union Help Zone	https://www.gmusu.org.uk/top-menu/advice-support