

Hibernia College Quality Framework

Policy for Temporary Suspension of Studies



HIBERNIA
COLLEGE

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

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.

1.2 Scope

a. To whom does the policy apply?

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

b. Who is responsible for implementing the policy?

The Registrar, in consultation with the Director of Programme and Student Support Officer, is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

1.3 Definitions

a. 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-mind¹) period.

b. 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.

c. 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

¹ SI No 484 of 2013 (Consumer Information, Cancellation and Other Rights) Regulations. Available at: <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Legislation/European-Union-Consumer-Information-Cancellation-and-Other-Rights-Regulations-2013.html> [Accessed 28/08/2018].

next element of the programme for which they are eligible. This occurs where no other means of a student successfully completing the programme exists.

d. *Good financial standing*

This is where a student has paid in full all fees and monies owing to the College at a particular moment in time.

2 Context

2.1 Legal or Regulatory Context

a. *Quality assurance standards and guidelines*

This policy is designed with regard to QQI's *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines*² and the *European Standards and Guidelines*³, which set out the requirement to have policy and procedures in place to support student progression.

b. *Access, transfer and progression*

This policy supports the Hibernia College policy on access, transfer and progression and helps to implement the QQI policy on Access, Transfer and Progression⁴ in the College.

3 Policy Statements

3.1 Principles for Temporary Suspension of Studies

a. *Carrying academic credit between defined study periods*

- i. Where a student temporarily suspends their studies, they retain all the credit and assessment results for modules **fully** completed.
- ii. It is not normally possible to carry any grades for partially completed modules.

b. *Duration*

- i. Students cannot defer indefinitely.
- ii. 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.
- iii. The Registrar, in consultation with the Director of Programme, may determine if an exception to this rule can be granted.

c. *Consequences of deferring*

- i. Students are responsible for the consequences of suspending their studies, which may include:
 - Additional attendance

² Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2016), *Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines*, Sections 3.2, 5.2, 7.1. Available at: <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf> [Accessed 28/08/2018].

³ European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) et al. (2015), *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, 2nd edn, Sections 1.4, 1.6.

⁴ Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2015), *Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education (Restatement)*. Available at: <https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Access%20Transfer%20and%20Progression%20-%20QQI%20Policy%20Restatement%202015.pdf>. [Accessed 28/08/2018].

- Re-registration
- Payment of additional fees
- Repeat of first-sitting assessment for partially completed modules.

d. Good financial standing

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

3.2 Policy for Deferral

a. Student responsibility

- 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.
- Students are responsible for formally requesting to suspend their studies where they wish to do so.
- Students are responsible for providing verifiable evidence in support of any deferral application.
- 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.
- Students are responsible for initiating communication with the College when they expect to return to studies.

b. College responsibility

- 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.

c. Grounds for a deferral

- A deferral may be granted in circumstances where the student is not able to complete the programme on time. This may include:
 - A new illness, i.e., not present at the commencement of the programme
 - A new disability, i.e., not present at the commencement of the programme
 - Changes in family or personal circumstances
 - Pregnancy
 - Parental leave.
- These circumstances must not have existed, or be known to have existed, at the time of commencement of the programme.
- 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.

d. Deferrals in the case of pregnancy or recent childbirth

- Students have a right to maternity leave.
- Students also have the right to decline maternity leave or to decline the College's recommendation of maternity leave.
- Where a student is pregnant or has recently given birth, she can seek to defer her studies by taking a break from her studies and retain her place to return at a later date as agreed with the College.
- It is the student's responsibility to disclose their pregnancy and due date to the College.

- v. While not obliged to disclose this information, the College can take no responsibility for the impact on academic progress of any student who fails to notify the College of a pregnancy.
- vi. Suspension of studies due to pregnancy is normally a minimum of:
 - Two weeks before the due date
 - Four weeks after the due date.
- vii. Programme places are only held for students on maternity leave while the programme still runs and runs in the same format.

e. Parental leave

- i. Students who have recently become parents but have not availed of maternity leave are entitled to two weeks parental leave.
- ii. Where parental leave can be accommodated without deferrals, the *Policy for Extenuating Circumstances* applies.

f. Return to studies

- i. On return to studies, students re-join the programme variant that is available.
- ii. Students re-join the programme carrying all completed modules and resume their studies on the next module or stage as relevant.

4 Document Control

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	V.1.0	28/06/2018
	V.1.1	29/11/2018
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Related Procedures	Procedure for Temporary Suspension of Studies Procedure for Offers Procedure for Applying for Mitigation of Extenuating Circumstances	
Related Resources		