

Deferrals Policy

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Owner: Register, Mr Stephen Plant

Oversight committee: Academic Board

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Regularity alignment with Office for Student (OfS) conditions

This Deferrals Policy forms part of the London Academy for Applied Technology's (LAAT) academic governance framework and supports the maintenance of academic standards, student progression, and fair and transparent decision-making in relation to temporary postponement of study or assessment.

The policy aligns with **OfS Condition B3 (Student Outcomes)** by ensuring that deferral decisions are managed in a structured and supportive manner that safeguards continuation, completion, and progression outcomes. By applying clear eligibility criteria and appropriate academic oversight, the policy mitigates risks to student success while maintaining academic integrity.

The policy also aligns with **OfS Condition B4 (Assessment and Awards)** by ensuring that deferred assessments or study periods are administered in accordance with approved academic regulations and that assessment integrity, validity, and reliability are preserved.

In accordance with **OfS Condition C1 (Consumer Protection Law)**, the policy provides students with clear, accurate, and accessible information regarding the grounds for deferral, application procedures, timescales, and potential academic and financial implications. This ensures informed decision-making and transparency.

The policy further reflects **OfS Condition C5 (Treating Students Fairly)** by ensuring that deferral requests are considered consistently, impartially, and in line with published procedures. Decisions are documented and communicated clearly, with appropriate routes for procedural review where necessary.

Finally, implementation and monitoring of this policy contribute to compliance with **OfS Conditions E2 (Management and Governance)** and **E3 (Accountability)** by ensuring clear allocation of responsibilities, appropriate academic oversight through the

Academic Board, and robust governance arrangements to monitor deferral activity and its impact on student outcomes.

This policy is implemented through LAAT's academic registry and quality assurance processes to ensure consistency, fairness, regulatory compliance, and protection of academic standards.

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

This policy sets out London Academy for Applied Technology's (LAAT) approach to student deferrals. A deferral allows a student to postpone the commencement of study or temporarily suspend participation in a programme for approved reasons. The policy ensures that deferral decisions are made fairly, transparently, and consistently, while supporting student wellbeing and academic success. It also supports LAAT's compliance with regulatory requirements, validating partner regulations, and consumer protection obligations.

2. Scope

2.1 Applicability

This policy applies to all students enrolled on higher education programmes delivered by LAAT under franchised or validated arrangements. It applies across all modes of study, including full-time, part-time, blended, and approved online delivery, and across all LAAT teaching locations and learning environments.

2.2 Exclusions and Precedence

This policy does not replace or override the academic regulations of LAAT's validating partner. Where any inconsistency arises between this policy and validating partner regulations, the partner's requirements will take precedence, and this policy will be interpreted accordingly.

3. Definitions

Deferral: An approved postponement of the start of a programme or a temporary suspension of study, granted based on accepted mitigating circumstances.

Mitigating Circumstances: Significant and unexpected circumstances beyond a student's control that adversely affect their ability to commence or continue their studies.

Approved Deferral: A deferral that has been formally authorised by LAAT in accordance with this policy and associated procedures.

Reasonable Adjustments: Appropriate and proportionate modifications or support arrangements made to ensure that students with protected characteristics are not disadvantaged, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

4. Principles

LAAT applies the following principles in the consideration and management of deferrals:

- **Fairness and consistency:** Deferral requests are assessed using clear criteria and applied consistently across programmes.
- **Student-centred approach:** Decisions take account of individual circumstances and aim to support student wellbeing and success.
- **Proportionality:** Decisions are proportionate to the nature and impact of the circumstances presented.
- **Inclusivity and accessibility:** Reasonable adjustments are considered where appropriate.
- **Transparency and accountability:** Processes, outcomes, and decisions are clearly communicated and appropriately documented.

5. Governance, Committees and Terms of Reference

5.1 Governance and Oversight

Strategic oversight of this policy is provided by the Board of Governors. Responsibility for academic assurance and operational oversight is delegated to the Academic Board.

5.2 Oversight Committee Responsibilities

In relation to this policy, the Academic Board will:

- Approve and periodically review the policy
- Monitor deferral trends and associated risks
- Receive assurance on compliance with regulatory and validating partner requirements
- Recommend improvements to policy or practice where required.

6. Policy Statement

6.1 Eligibility for Deferral

Students may request a deferral where mitigating circumstances affect their ability to commence or continue their studies. Examples may include health issues, personal or family circumstances, or other significant events.

6.2 Submission of Requests

Deferral requests must be submitted in accordance with LAAT procedures and within published timescales. Requests should normally be supported by appropriate evidence.

6.3 Decision-Making

Deferral requests will be considered fairly and consistently, taking account of the individual circumstances, evidence provided, and any relevant academic or regulatory implications.

6.4 Duration and Conditions

Approved deferrals are granted for a specified period. Conditions for return to study, including re-enrolment requirements, will be communicated to the student.

6.5 Communication of Outcomes

Students will be informed of the outcome of their deferral request in writing, including any conditions attached and the next steps required.

6.6 Deferral Following Enrolment and Student Finance Activation

Students who have **formally enrolled and commenced study**, and who have **applied for and had student finance activated**, should note the following:

- Where a student enrolls, applies for student finance, and subsequently does not continue with their studies, this will **normally be treated as a withdrawal rather than a deferral**.
- In such cases, students will **not normally be permitted to re-enter the programme within a minimum period of twelve (12) months** from the date of withdrawal.
- This minimum period reflects academic cycle requirements, funding regulations, and sector practice and is intended to ensure fairness, regulatory compliance, and academic integrity.
- An exception to the twelve-month minimum may be considered **only where student finance has not been activated or disbursed**, or where there are **exceptional and evidenced mitigating circumstances**, subject to approval by LAAT.
- All decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and communicated to the student in writing, with reasons clearly explained. [SRF-2025-26-complete.pdf](#)

7. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

The detailed procedures for submitting, assessing, approving, and managing deferral requests are set out in **Appendix A** to this policy. The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides operational clarity and ensures that deferral requests are handled in a **consistent, transparent, and timely manner** across the institution.

The SOP sets out:

- How and when students may submit a deferral request
- The information and evidence that may be required in support of a request
- Roles and responsibilities for reviewing and approving deferrals
- Decision-making timescales and communication requirements
- Conditions attached to approved deferrals, including return-to-study arrangements
- Record-keeping and data management requirements

The SOP should be read in conjunction with this policy and is designed to ensure that operational practice aligns with institutional, regulatory, and validating-partner requirements.

8. Regulatory, Partner and Legal Alignment

This policy is grounded in, and must be applied in accordance with, the following external requirements.

8.1 Validating Partner Requirements

This policy aligns with the academic regulations, student progression requirements, and interruption-of-study arrangements of Plymouth Marjon University. In developing and applying this policy, LAAT has had regard to the Plymouth Marjon University Student Regulations Framework 2024–25, in particular the sections relating to registration, attendance, interruption of studies, withdrawal, and student progression.

The Student Regulations Framework is available at:

<https://www.marjon.ac.uk/about-marjon/institutional-documents/student-regulations-framework/SRF-2025-26-complete.pdf?>

Where validating-partner regulations are updated or amended, this policy and its associated procedures will be reviewed to ensure continued alignment.

8.2 Regulatory Framework

This policy supports LAAT's compliance with the **Office for Students** Conditions of Registration, in particular:

- **Condition B2** – ensuring that students receive clear, accurate, and timely information
- **Condition B4** – ensuring fair, transparent, and accessible processes for academic decision-making
- **Condition C1** – ensuring that student protection and consumer rights are upheld

8.3 Legal and Statutory Requirements

This policy is informed by, and must be applied in accordance with, relevant legal and statutory obligations, including but not limited to:

- **Equality Act 2010**, particularly in relation to reasonable adjustments and non-discrimination
- **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)**, in relation to the handling and storage of personal data

Where legal or regulatory requirements change, this policy will be reviewed and updated accordingly.

9. Monitoring, Compliance and Review

9.1 Monitoring

Deferral activity, including the number, timing, and reasons for deferral requests, is monitored on an ongoing basis by the Student Support Team. Summary data, trends, and identified risks are reported to the Academic Board as part of LAAT's quality assurance, student retention, and progression monitoring arrangements.

Monitoring activity is used to:

- Identify patterns or emerging risks

- Assess the effectiveness and consistency of decision-making
- Inform improvements to student support and guidance

9.2 Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy or its associated procedures may be addressed through appropriate academic or administrative processes, in line with LAAT regulations and related policies. Any action taken will be proportionate, evidence-based, and appropriately authorised.

9.3 Review

This policy will be reviewed **annually**, or sooner where required due to changes in regulatory expectations, legal obligations, validating-partner requirements, or institutional practice. The Policy Owner is responsible for initiating the review and presenting any proposed amendments to the Academic Board for consideration and approval through the appropriate governance routes.

10. Responsible people / Roles include

- **Register (Policy Owner): Mr Stephen Plant**
Overall accountability for policy implementation
- **Head of Academic Quality: Dr Vishwanath Kokkonda**
Ensures policy compliance, documentation, and audit readiness.
- **Programme Lead: Mr Amarjeet Singh**
Academic advice, withdrawal review, approval oversight, compliance assurance
- **Student Support Officer: Ms Nadia Asim**
Responsible for operational monitoring and intervention.
- **Academic Staff**
Academic staff are responsible for the accurate and timely monitoring of student attendance and engagement.
- **Students**
Students are expected to take responsibility for their own attendance and engagement.

List of people and contacts

Role	Name	Contact email
Register	Mr Stephen Plant	Stephen.plant@laat.ac.uk
Head of Academic Quality	Dr Vishwanath Kokkonda	Vishwanath.kokkonda@laat.ac.uk
Programme Lead	Mr Amarjeet Singh	Amarjeet.singh@laat.ac.uk
Student support officer	Ms Nadia Asim	nadiaasim@laat.ac.uk

11. List of document

- Deferral Application Form
- Supporting Evidence and Eligibility Review Form
- Deferral Decision Record Form
- Student Outcome Notification Letter Template
- Study break policy
- Course Transfers Policy
- Withdrawals Policy

12. Evidence

- Deferral Application Form
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- Withdrawals Policy

Mapping table for evidence items related to OfS conditions

Evidence Item	Purpose / What it Demonstrates	Relevant OfS Condition(s)
Deferral Application Form	Provides students with a clear and accessible mechanism to request temporary postponement of assessment or study, ensuring transparency and fair process	C1 (consumer protection), C5 (treating students fairly)
Supporting Evidence and Eligibility Review Form	Demonstrates structured academic scrutiny of deferral requests, ensuring decisions are evidence-based, consistent, and aligned with academic regulations	B4 (assessment and awards), C5 (fair academic processes)
Deferral Decision Record Form	Provides documented institutional authorisation and audit trail of deferral decisions, supporting governance oversight and accountability	E2 (management and governance), E3 (accountability)

Student Outcome Notification Letter Template	Ensures clear written communication of decisions, implications, and next steps, supporting transparency and informed decision-making	C1 (consumer protection), C5 (treating students fairly)
Study Break Policy	Establishes a structured and regulated framework for temporary interruption of study, safeguarding continuation and completion outcomes	B3 (student outcomes), C3 (student protection plan), C1 (consumer protection)
Course Transfers Policy	Regulates movement between programmes to protect academic standards, progression integrity, and fair decision-making	B3 (student outcomes), B4 (assessment and awards), C1 (consumer protection), E2 (governance)
Withdrawals Policy	Ensures fair and transparent processes for voluntary or institutional withdrawal while maintaining accurate records and protecting students during cessation of study	B3 (student outcomes), C3 (student protection plan), F1 (provision of information), C1 (consumer protection)

Appendix A – Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Deferrals

A1. Process Overview

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) sets out the detailed operational steps for submitting, assessing, approving, and recording student deferral requests. The procedure ensures that deferrals are managed in a consistent, transparent, timely, and fair manner, while supporting student wellbeing and academic success. Deferral decisions are evidence-based, proportionate, and aligned with institutional, regulatory, and validating partner requirements.

A2. Step-by-Step Stages

Stage 1 – Submission of Deferral Request

- Students must submit a deferral request using the approved LAAT process and within the specified timescales.
- Requests should include a clear explanation of the circumstances and, where required, supporting evidence.
- Students are encouraged to seek advice from Student Support prior to submission.

Stage 2 – Review of Request and Evidence

- The Student Support Team reviews the request to confirm completeness and eligibility.

- Supporting evidence is assessed to determine whether mitigating circumstances are substantiated.
- Where necessary, additional information may be requested from the student.

Stage 3 – Decision and Authorisation

- Deferral requests are considered in line with this policy, relevant procedures, and validating partner regulations.
- Decisions are made by an authorised role in accordance with delegated authority arrangements.
- Consideration is given to the impact on academic progression, funding, and student support needs.

Stage 4 – Communication of Outcome and Conditions

- The outcome of the deferral request is communicated to the student in writing within a reasonable timeframe.
- Where a deferral is approved, the communication will confirm:
 - The duration of the deferral
 - Any conditions attached to the deferral
 - Requirements for return to study, including re-enrolment processes
- Where a request is not approved, the reasons will be clearly explained and alternative options signposted where appropriate.

Stage 5 – Record-Keeping and Monitoring

- All deferral decisions and supporting documentation are recorded securely in LAAT's approved systems.
- Records are maintained in accordance with UK GDPR and institutional data retention policies.
- Deferral activity is monitored to identify trends, ensure consistency, and inform quality assurance and policy review.