

Open College of the Arts

Extensions and Deferrals policy

Introduction

Occasionally students may encounter circumstances that disrupt their ability to study with OCA, and need to apply for an extension or deferral. This policy sets out OCA's approach to this for all OCA students. Where elements are course specific, this will be noted.

This policy replaces the previous Mitigating Circumstances policy and includes the following sections:-

- Extensions
- Deferrals
 - Three month deferral (*not applicable to Short / Postgraduate courses*)
 - Deferral of more than three months (*not applicable to Short / Postgraduate courses*)
 - Deferral of assessment
- Interruptions (*applicable to Postgraduate students only*)
- Grounds
- Supporting Evidence
- Making an application
- Financial implications

Related policies and documents

Students who need additional time as a result of a disability or long term mental health condition may be re-directed to the Reasonable Adjustments policy. Also of relevance is the OCA Active Study policy.

Short Course or Personal Development Learners should refer to the Non-Accredited Framework (NAF).

Undergraduate students should refer to this policy in conjunction with the following sections of the Academic Regulatory Framework (ARF):-

- Section 2.3 - Maximum period of registration for full degree;
- Section 2.4 - Maximum period allowed for completion of levels and individual units;
- Section 2.5 - Deferrals.

Postgraduate students should refer to UCA's Common Credit Framework (CCF).

Extensions

Any student who experiences delays to their studies may be eligible to apply for an extension to their unit and level timeframes.

Delays must be unforeseen, outside a student's control and be likely to prevent the student from completing their unit or level of study within the permitted timeframes.

We advise students to contact the Learner Support Team at the time the circumstances occur, and submit the appropriate paperwork in advance of the relevant deadline. Learner Support can be contacted via learnersupport@oca.ac.uk or 01226 777 593. In exceptional cases where it can be shown it was not possible to submit at the time, we will consider retrospective applications provided they are not outside of the course deadlines.

This will require supporting evidence; please refer to the sections on **Grounds** and **Supporting Evidence** for more information.

Short Course students who need a short extension to an assignment submission date should apply to their tutor. This can be for a maximum of five days and is agreed at the discretion of the course tutor.

Unless stated explicitly otherwise, extensions and deferrals do not lead to any extension to the overall timeframes for completion of a degree. An extension to the maximum period of registration may only be granted in exceptional circumstances and where the reason for the extension has been approved formally by the Director of Academic Services of the validating body, UCA.

Deferrals

Any Foundation, Personal Development or Undergraduate student who requires a break of three or more months during a unit may be eligible to apply for a deferral. Postgraduate students should refer to the section on **Interruptions**. Deferrals do not apply to Short Courses.

Where there is enough time remaining in the overall twelve year limit, any period of deferral will be added to the level timeframes, so as not to impact on the time remaining for other units. Students may only apply for one deferral per unit.

Three month deferral (*not applicable to Short / Postgraduate courses*)

This is the minimum deferral period. Any breaks in study shorter than this, e.g. a holiday, the Christmas period, should be planned for within the unit timeframe.

Students should complete the deferral request form to apply for a three month deferral. You should provide an impact statement outlining how the circumstances which have resulted in your deferral request will impact you and your studies. You will not be required to evidence these circumstances but may wish to do so.

Deferral of more than three months (*not applicable to Short / Postgraduate courses*)

Students requiring a deferral of more than three months may apply for this providing there are evidenced grounds. Deferrals cannot exceed more than twelve months in total within any one unit.

To request a deferral in excess of three months, please complete the deferral request form. This will require supporting evidence; please refer to the sections on **Grounds** and **Supporting Evidence** for more information.

This will be reviewed by the Extensions and Deferrals Panel (see also: **Making an application**).

Deferral of assessment

Any student who experiences delays which are unforeseen, outside a student's control and will prevent them from submitting their work at their final formal assessment opportunity may apply to defer assessment.

Undergraduate students should refer to [Academic Regulatory Framework](#), Section 3.3 for assessment events for Undergraduate students. If deferred assessment is awarded, this will be for the third assessment event following completion of the unit. There can be no further deferral beyond this event.

Postgraduate students should refer to UCA's [Common Credit Framework](#), Section 4.8 Deferred assessment. If deferred assessment is awarded, students will normally be permitted to undergo assessment during a specified resit period.

To request a deferral of assessment, please complete the deferral request form. This will require supporting evidence; please refer to the sections on **Grounds** and **Supporting Evidence** for more information.

Interruptions (*applicable to Postgraduate students only*)

An interruption is an extended period of absence from the course requested as a result of circumstances which must be unforeseen, beyond the control of the student, and with the potential to impact significantly, adversely, and for a substantial duration on the student's studies. To request an interruption, please complete a **Change of**

Status form. This will require supporting evidence; please refer to the sections on **Grounds** and **Supporting Evidence** for more information.

Grounds

In order for an extension, deferral or interruption to be agreed, the student must adequately demonstrate that the circumstances:

- were outside the student's control;
- were unforeseen and unforeseeable;
- were evidenced to be true;
- were relevant to the affected period/time-frame;

The circumstances will also result in at least one of the following:

- prevent the student from completing their assignments by the unit or level deadline;
- prevent the student applying for/submitting by the formal assessment deadline;
- require the student to have an extended break in study.

Examples of circumstances which may be accepted include, but are not limited to:

- personal illness/health
- illness of close relative or dependant
- bereavement
- sudden deterioration of a long-term condition
- loss of employment.

Pregnancy or maternity leave will also be accepted where the application is for a deferral during a unit.

Examples of circumstances which will not normally be accepted include, but are not limited to:

- holiday/leisure travel
- house move / renovation
- employment commitments
- circumstances that occurred outside the period in question
- personal computer / printer problems
- poor study practice
- insufficient IT knowledge to engage with the course

- ignorance of due dates/ times for submission of assignments and/or work for assessment
- poor time management

Students with existing health conditions / disabilities can be given additional time in accordance with the Reasonable Adjustments policy. For extensions outside of this, students are still expected to meet the above criteria.

Supporting Evidence

Supporting evidence is required in all cases, with the exception of the three-month deferral. This must be from an independent, third party professional / qualified practitioner and include dates relevant to the affected period in question. Evidence should not include photographs / images, except where these are photographs of documentation.

Evidence may include, but is not limited to:

- medical/health certificate confirming that the student is unable to study, and the period this relates to (ie from a GP, counsellor, mental health team or other medical professional)
- death certificate/interim death certificate or other evidence
- an official document such as police report, including a police reference number, court summons or other legal document
- letter from a solicitor, social worker or other official agency
- supporting letter from a Learner Support Adviser where the student has been in regular, sustained contact during the relevant period

If evidence is in a foreign language, it is the student's responsibility to have it independently translated by an accredited translator, prior to submission.

If there are associated costs with the supporting evidence and this is prohibitive for the student, it may be possible to apply to the Learner Support Scheme to fund this.

Making an application

Students should seek advice and guidance from the Learner Support Team prior to applying for an extension or deferral.

Applications should be made on the relevant form which is available on the OCA website. Please title your email accordingly (Extension Application, Deferral Application or Interruption Application), and send your application form with any required supporting evidence to learnersupport@oca.ac.uk Postal applications can be sent to the Head Office address for the attention of Learner Support Team.

Your application and supporting evidence will be reviewed to ensure it is complete. You will receive notification that we have received your completed claim. If the form is incomplete and / or we need further evidence, we will inform you in writing, giving you a deadline for providing the additional information.

Decisions will be made by the Extensions and Deferrals Panel. The Extensions and Deferrals Panel will be the Director of Learning and Teaching (Chair), Programme Leader representative, Head of Quality & Academic Support and Head of Student Services. Quoracy will be three members of the panel including the panel chair.

Students will receive a response within 20 working days of their claim receipt.

The panel will consider a student's existing progress on the unit in making their decision and will determine what constitutes reasonable progress. If the request is agreed, the panel will consider the time left available on the unit and degree course, the assignments remaining, and the period requested.

Decisions of the Extensions and Deferrals Panel are final and may not be appealed.

Financial Implications

Self-funded students with an instalment plan in place will remain liable for payments during any period of deferral.

For students funding their studies via Student Finance, OCA has a responsibility to report to Student Finance in line with the Active Study policy. For deferrals of three months, students will continue to be marked in attendance for funding purposes. Tuition fees, maintenance loans and grants will not be affected, and DSA support will continue where applicable.

For deferrals over three months, students will be marked as suspended with Student Finance. Tuition fees, maintenance loans and grants, and DSA support will be suspended. Students will be liable for any fees not covered by their funding body if they subsequently withdraw from the course.

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