



National Professional Qualifications Deferral Procedure

1 Introduction

1.1 Deferral

Deferrals are for those who have completed the part of their facilitated course and would like to defer part of the programme until a later date.

Participants can request a deferral when they believe that they will be unable to continue the programme due to an extenuating circumstance, as defined below (1.2).

To be granted a deferral, participants must prove with independent evidence (3.1) that they have been affected by an extenuating circumstance. Deferrals are not guaranteed to all who apply and will be allocated on a case-by-case basis. Successful participants will be permitted to reengage with the programme at a date to be agreed by the Forest Learning Alliance team and the participant.

1.2 Definition

Extenuating circumstances are defined as circumstances that:

- Are unforeseeable and beyond the control of the candidate or the Forest Learning Alliance including events as a result of force-majeure
- Significantly impact the participants ability to complete the programme
- Can be supported by independent evidence where appropriate

Please note that a deferral can only be considered if the following are met:

- The all programme and additional fees such as enhancement courses and charges applicable for late-window submission are paid in full
- The deferral occurs within a calendar year unless the participant has had a medical incident such as major injury, accident, or maternity leave
- The participant has had no subsequent deferrals

2 Scope of extenuating circumstances

To qualify for a deferral, at least one extenuating circumstance must be met and evidenced.

2.1 What is considered an extenuating circumstance?

Whilst it is difficult to provide an exhaustive list of circumstances that meet the above definition, the Forest Learning Alliance considers the following to be valid extenuating circumstances:

- Medical incidents such as major injury, accident, or surgery
- A short-term illness that has resulted in sick leave
- A long-term and/or pre-existing illness that has worsened to the extent that it impairs the participant from completing the programme
- Pregnancy and maternity/paternity leave
- Clinical mental health issue
- Personal/psychological issues for which counselling is received

- Death/severe illness of an immediate relative
- Change in employment
- Sudden and unanticipated increase in workload, for example, staffing issues significantly affecting the participant's workload

2.2 Circumstances not considered

- Poor time management/personal organisation
- Circumstances occurring outside of the relevant time frame
- Medical circumstances without sufficient evidence, for example, a doctor's note
- Minor illness
- Planned familial obligations/holidays, public and/or religious holidays/observations
- Childcare problems that could have been anticipated
- IT issues/failure to back up documents
- General stress/anxiety

3 How to apply for a deferral

Participants wanting to apply for a deferral will need to make a request to the Forest Learning Alliance filling out the **Deferral Request Form**. Participants should give full details of their extenuating circumstances in the "reason for deferral" section of the form, explaining how these circumstances meet the above definition and have impacted their ability to continue the programme. All sensitive and personal data will be treated in accordance with data protection guidelines.

The completed form with all evidence attached should be sent to info@forestlearningalliance.org.uk

3.1 Evidence

All evidence submitted to support an extenuating circumstances request form must be independent and not self-certifying. Forest Learning Alliance reserves the right to verify all supporting evidence. All evidence must:

- Be written by an appropriately qualified and objective professional
- Be signed and dated by the participant
- Be as detailed as possible regarding the dates in which the circumstance occurred and, where necessary, the effect on the candidate
- Not be retrospective
- Not be altered in any way by the participant
- If received by email, be sent from a professional email address

For example, for health-related circumstances a participant may provide a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner, outlining the duration of an illness and its effect on the participant.

Failure to adhere to these guidelines may make the evidence inadmissible and affect the outcome of the participant's request for a deferral.

All supporting evidence must be attached to the same email with which participants submit their deferral request form.

4 Processing of a Deferral Request Form

Upon the receipt of a Deferral Request Form, a member of the Forest Learning Alliance team will check that it has been completed in full, signed by both the participant and their sponsor and that the evidence provided adheres to the above guidelines. At this stage, the form may be returned to the participant for amendment if required.

Having received a form completed correctly and in full, a member of the Forest Learning Alliance team will make a decision regarding the participant's request for deferral using the guidance outlined in this document. All deferral requests will be reviewed and receive a verdict within ten working days of submission. When a request is approved, the participant will be emailed to inform them of their re-engagement term. When a request is not approved, the participant will receive an email explaining how this decision was reached.

5 Appealing against a deferral decision

Participants may appeal the outcome of their deferral request. Due to the limited time frame, participants will need to submit an appeal within five working days from the day the Forest Learning Alliance communicated their result to them. This is to ensure that should the participant be unsuccessful in their application; they still have time to continue with the current cohort. For appeal guidance, please see below.

5.1 Appeal conditions

Participants must have a demonstrable reason for their appeal, beyond simply being dissatisfied with the outcome. For example, an appeal may be made if the candidate can prove that their application was not judged in accordance with the definition of extenuating circumstances as outlined in this document.

5.2 Appeal content

With the submission of their appeal, the participant should write an appeal statement confirming why they are appealing the Forest Learning Alliance team's decision and how their appeal meets the above criteria. This will be considered alongside the participants' original deferral request form and supporting evidence.

Appeals will not be considered by the same members of the Forest Learning Alliance that originally declined the deferral request, but they may provide details relating to how and why this initial verdict was reached.

6 Final date for deferrals

Due to the end of NPQ contracts in August 2022, the final date for applying for a deferral is Monday 29th March 2021.

For further information contact:

Forest Learning Alliance

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