

NPQ Deferral request

Extenuating circumstances policy and procedures

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.

Candidates 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, candidates 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 candidates will be permitted to reengage with the programme at a later date that has been agreed by the Candidate and Partner Support team and the candidate.

1.2 Definition

Extenuating circumstances are defined as circumstances that-

- Are unforeseeable and beyond the control of the candidate
- Significantly impact the candidate's ability to complete the programme
- Occur within a relevant time frame
- Can be supported by independent evidence where appropriate

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

- The programme is paid in full
- The deferral occurs within a calendar year unless you have had a medical incident such as major injury, accident, or maternity leave
- You have had no previous deferrals

2. Scope of extenuating circumstances

In order 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, Best Practice Network/ Outstanding Leaders Partnership 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 illness that has worsened or "flared up"

- 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, e.g. staffing issues significantly affecting the candidate'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, e.g. a doctor's note
- Minor illness
- Planned familial obligations and holidays
- Childcare problems that could have been anticipated
- IT issues/failure to back up documents
- General stress/anxiety

3. How to apply for a deferral

Candidates wanting to apply for a deferral will need to make a request to Best Practice Network by filling out the deferral request form. Candidates 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.

NPQEL Special Deferral Note: All NPQEL Candidates wishing to defer from the qualification will need to look to complete their Task 2 assessed task within their own leadership networks/schools upon reengagement with the qualification. It will not be possible to add you to a new Peer Group if reengaging part way through the qualification delivery stage. If you are restarting on the qualification however it will be possible to join a new Peer Group for the NPQEL Task 2 assessment.

The completed form with all evidence attached should be sent to cpd@bestpracticenet.co.uk.

3.1 Evidence

All evidence submitted to support an extenuating circumstances request form must be independent and not self-certifying. Best Practice Network 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 author
- 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 candidate
- If received by email, be sent from a professional email address

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

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

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

4. Processing of a deferral request form

Upon the receipt of a deferral request form, a member of the Candidate and Partner Support team will check that it has been completed in full, signed by both candidate and their sponsor and that the evidence provided adheres to the above guidelines. At this stage, the form may be returned to the candidate for amendment if required.

Having received a form completed correctly and in full, a member of the Candidate and Partner Support team will make a decision regarding the candidate'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 candidate will be emailed to inform them of their reengagement term. When a request is not approved, the candidate will receive an email explaining how this decision was reached.

5. Appealing against a deferral decision

Candidates may appeal the outcome of their deferral request. Due to the limited time frame, candidates will need to submit an appeal within five working days from the day the Candidate and Partner Support team communicated their result to them. This is to ensure that should the candidate be unsuccessful in their application, they would still have time to continue with the current cohort. For appeal guidance, please see below

5.1 Appeal conditions

Candidates 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 candidate should write an appeal statement confirming why they are appealing the Candidate and Partner Support team's decision and how their appeal meets the above criteria. This will be considered alongside the candidate's original deferral request form and supporting evidence.

Appeals will not be considered by the same member of the Candidate and Partner Support team that originally declined the deferral request, but they may provide details relating to how and why this initial verdict was reached.

