Deferrals Policy and Procedure (ED-Pol-052)

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Department	Education Delivery
Owner/Responsible for Implementation	Education Delivery Manager
Approving Body	Academic Board
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Related Documents	ED-Pol-046 – Access, Transfer and Progression Policy ED-SOP-047 – Access, Transfer and Progression Procedure EDEL-Pol-054 – Protection of Enrolled Learner Policy EDEL-SOP-055 – Protection of Enrolled Learner Procedure

1.   Purpose

This policy sets out the circumstances, principles, grounds, and criteria under which RCPI will allow a learner to defer a place on a programme, to temporarily suspend their studies on a programme or to defer some of their assessments and/or formal examinations during the academic year.

2.   Scope

This policy applies to learners on RCPI education programmes.

3.   Responsibilities

The Education Delivery Manager is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

4.   Deferral of an offer – Principles and Process

4.1   Learners who are offered a place on a programme may seek deferral to the next intake of the programme. Permission to defer is not guaranteed. The learner must complete the Deferral Form (ED-F-053).

4.2   The fully completed form must be signed and returned to the Programme Coordinator.

4.3   If the deferral is due to medical reasons, the prospective learner is required to submit medical certificates with the completed deferral form.

5.   Deferral of studies – Principles and Process

5.1   A learner may apply for a deferral of studies by completing the Deferral Form (ED-F-053). Once completed, this form should be sent to the Programme Coordinator.

5.2   Where a learner defers their studies, they retain all the credit and assessment results for modules fully completed. It is not normally possible to carry any grades for partially completed modules.

5.3   Learners cannot defer indefinitely. Normally, a learner 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 one-year duration, the learner must complete it within two years, including any deferrals.

5.4   Learners are responsible for the consequences of suspending their studies, which may include:

- Additional attendance or compliance with new programme requirements
- Re-registration
- Payment of additional fees
- Attendance for re-sequenced modules

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

5.6 Learners are responsible for:

- staying in contact with RCPI and advising the relevant parties of any circumstance which may interfere with a learner's ability to complete a programme in the standard manner.
- formally requesting to suspend their studies where they wish to do so
- providing verifiable evidence in support of any deferral application
- initiating communication with RCPI when they expect to return to studies.

5.7 Learners 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.

5.8 Learners re-join the programme carrying all completed modules and resume their studies on the next module or stage as relevant.

6. Exam/Assessment Deferrals – Principles and Process

6.1 It is recognised that circumstances may arise which will lead to a learner wishing to defer some of their assessments and/or formal examinations during the academic year.

6.2 The process for a deferral of an examination/assessment is outlined below:

- The Deferral Form (ED-F-053) must be completed and sent to the Programme Coordinator.
- All sections on the form must be completed and all applications must be accompanied by supporting documentation. Examples of supporting documentation include:
    - o Illness: In the case of any illness, or accident, a medical certificate is required from a registered Medical Practitioner. This certificate should be on letterhead paper and should be legible, stamped and dated. It should cover the appropriate date(s) of the examination/assessment period.
    - o Consulted a Counsellor: A letter from a registered Psychologist or Counsellor is required. This note should be on letterhead paper and should be legible, stamped and dated.
    - o Recent diagnosis of disability: A signed copy of the registered Medical Practitioners report.

7. Evaluation of Application

7.1 The Programme Coordinator reviews the application and accompanying evidence for validity and authenticity. Where evidence supporting the application is not available, the learner is asked to make the evidence available as soon as possible.

7.2 In all cases, applications are treated as strictly confidential.

7.3 The Programme Coordinator shares the deferral application with the Programme Lead and Student Support Officer.

7.4 The Programme Lead and Student Support Officer evaluate the application and consider the following factors (not relevant in the case of deferral of an offer):

- The best interests of the learner

- The stage the learner is at in the programme

- The remaining requirements for completion of the programme

- The validation requirements for the programme (if there are any salient programme rules affecting the learner's progress)

- The academic achievements of the learner to date

- The learner's circumstances and supporting evidence

7.5 The Programme Lead makes the decision regarding the application. The decision is either:

- Deferral granted

- Deferral not granted

7.6 The learner will receive an email informing the outcome of the request for the deferral.

7.7 The Programme Lead notifies the Programme Board of any deferrals granted and any associated implications for the learner.

7.8 The Programme Lead informs the Programme Coordinator of the decision so that the learner record is updated accordingly.

8. Outcome: Deferral Granted

8.1 The learner is notified in writing of the decision and associated implications, which include:

- Any fee implications, including any increase in fees

- Requirements for progression on the programme at the point the learner returns to studies (in the case of temporary deferral from studies)

- The credit for completed modules that the learner carries with the programme.

- Implications for incomplete modules that the learner will have to complete upon returning to studies

8.2 In the case of temporary suspension of studies only, deferrals can be backdated to the time where the learner circumstances first arose or began to affect their progress through the programme. The learner may be required to complete additional work before recommencing studies.

8.3 Learners who are granted a deferral and subsequently do not recommence their studies are not entitled to a refund of fees paid.

9. Outcome: Deferral Not Granted

9.1 Where the deferral is not granted, the Programme Coordinator notifies the learner in writing.

9.2 The learner is advised that they are required to continue with their programme, or they can opt to voluntarily withdraw.

- If a learner voluntarily withdraws from a programme, the learner record is updated by the Programme Coordinator
- The learner loses all rights and entitlements of an enrolled learner, including access to all services that RCPI provides
- The learner is not entitled to a refund of fees paid

9.3 The learner has a right to reapply for a deferral if their circumstances change or if more information becomes available.

9.4 The learner also has a right to appeal the decision not to grant a deferral. This can be done through the Appeals Policy (ED-Pol-071).

10. References

ENQA (2015) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

Quality Qualifications Ireland (2016) Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines

https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Core%20Statutory%20Quality%20Assurance%20Guidelines.pdf

Quality Qualifications Ireland (2013) Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL): Protocols for the Implementation of Part 6 of the 2012 Act – Guidelines for Providers

https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Protection%20of%20Enrolled%20Learners,%20Protocols%20for%20the%20Implementation%20of%20Part%206%20of%20the%202012%20Act%20Guidelines%20for%20Providers.pdf

Quality Qualifications Ireland (2015) Policy & Criteria for Access, Transfer & Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further & Higher Education & Training

https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/ATP%20Policy%20Restatement%20FINAL%202018.pdf