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Version number: 1.0	Approved by: Assistant Director, Policy and Projects
Effective from: December 2023	Date for review: August 2024

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## Alternative format

If you require this Postponement Policy document in an alternative format, please contact the Student Support Team via <https://www.open.ac.uk/contact> (phone +44 (0)300 303 5303), or your dedicated Student Support Team via StudentHome if you are a current Open University student.

If you are studying as part of an apprenticeship programme, then please contact the [Apprenticeship Enrolment and Support Team \(AEST\)](#).

Students living in Wales can speak with a student support adviser in Welsh on 029 2047 1170, should you wish to do so.

## Summary of policy

- If you are unable to complete your final assessed task i.e. exam), end-of-module assessment (EMA) or end-of-module tutor-marked assignment (emTMA), The Open University may give you permission to postpone it to the next available opportunity on a discretionary basis. This is called **discretionary postponement**.
- If you have been offered a resit or resubmission opportunity which is scheduled within 12 to 16 weeks of your original exam period or EMA/emTMA cut-off date, you may be eligible to postpone this to the next available opportunity. This is called **elective postponement**.
- This Policy outlines the general rules explaining the eligibility criteria to apply for discretionary and elective postponement and the deadlines by which you need to make these requests.
- [Table 1 in section 4](#) below summarises all the policy points contained within this document with deadlines and exceptions to the policy (if any).
- To receive advice or guidance about making a request for postponement, please [contact us](#).

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# Scope

## What this policy covers

This policy covers discretionary and elective postponement. This policy applies to you if you fall into any of the categories below:

- Enquirers (for information only)
- All undergraduate and postgraduate taught students studying a module and/or a qualification, including students studying Access modules
- Students in secure environments
- Apprenticeships except Level 3 modules where the final module is also an end point assessment.

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## What this policy does not cover

This policy does not apply to:

- Apprentices studying Level 3 modules with integrated end point assessment.
- Postgraduate research students: please contact the [Research Degrees Team](#)
- Learners studying a Microcredential
- OpenLearn Learners: please contact the [OpenLearn team](#)
- PD Course learners
- Students studying under partnership agreements: please contact the [OUVP Curriculum Partnerships team](#)
- Vocational qualification learners: please contact the [vocational qualification team](#).
- Students studying a non-credit bearing Short Course: you should refer to the [Conditions of Registration \(Short Courses\)](#).

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## The Open University Student Charter Values

The [Student Charter](#) was developed jointly by The Open University and the OU Students Association. It is a declaration of our shared values and the commitments we make to each other. This document has been developed with the Student Charter values as its foundation.

### Introduction

#### Discretionary postponement

You may be permitted to postpone your exam or EMA/emTMA submission to the next opportunity if you cannot submit your remote exam, EMA or emTMA due to circumstances beyond your control. You will need to provide third party documentary evidence of the circumstances which prevent you from submitting. This process is called discretionary postponement.

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#### Elective Postponement

If you have been offered a resit or resubmission opportunity which is scheduled within 12 to 16 weeks of your original exam period or EMA/emTMA cut-off date, you may be eligible to postpone this to the next available opportunity. This process is called elective postponement. You are not eligible to electively postpone if you have previously postponed your remote exam, EMA or emTMA or if your resit/resubmission date is more than 16 weeks from the original exam date or EMA/emTMA cut-off date.

Discretionary postponement and Elective postponement have different eligibility criteria. Please refer to section 1 and 2 below to find more information about each of them.

Any terminology that may be unfamiliar is explained in a [glossary](#) at the end of this document.

For specific guidance on how this policy may relate to your personal circumstances, please contact your [Student Support Team \(SST\)](#) who are specially trained to advise on the implementation of policy. If you are an Apprentice studying as part of an apprenticeship programme, you should contact the [Apprenticeship Enrolment and Support Team \(AEST\) for more information](#);

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alternatively, you should request that your employer contacts their named Apprenticeship Programme Delivery Manager (APDM) for further information. See the [Contacts section](#) below for more information.

## Policy and Related Information

### 1. Eligibility criteria for discretionary postponement

- 1.1 To be eligible for discretionary postponement you **must** submit a postponement request before midnight (UK local time) on the day directly after your submission deadline for your remote exam, EMA, or emTMA. If you are unable to do so, you will be required to provide evidence that you were prevented from meeting this deadline due to circumstances outside of your control. You must provide independent third-party documentary evidence to support your postponement request within 14 calendar days of submitting your form. Your evidence should relate to the preparation or submission period for your remote exam, EMA or emTMA.
- 1.2 The following are some examples of acceptable evidence for a postponement request:
- a) If you were ill, you should provide medical evidence for the period concerned, signed by a certified medical practitioner.
  - b) In cases of bereavement a photocopy of the death certificate is acceptable. In circumstances where a death certificate is not available an obituary notice or funeral service card or suitable equivalent is acceptable.
  - c) If your reason was a business commitment, your employer must confirm this in writing, signed off with the name and position of a person with suitable authority. You can [contact us](#) for any queries you may have.
- 1.3 Supporting evidence can either be submitted electronically or in hardcopy as instructed by the online submission tool. Postponement requests which are not supported by independent third-party documentary evidence confirming that you were unable to submit your remote exam, EMA, or emTMA for the reason stated will not be agreed.

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- 1.4 Once we receive your request, you will be informed of our decision as quickly as possible after receipt of your evidence. We will try to ensure that you receive a response before the date of your assessment (if you have submitted the request before the assessment cut-off date). However, this may not always be possible if you have made your request shortly before the date of your assessment, or if there are a very high number of applications received. Requests are individually considered and, in some circumstances, may need to be considered by The Open University's Assessment Exceptions Group.
- 1.6 If you have submitted any work for a remote exam, EMA or emTMA or you have clicked the submit all and finish button in your remote interactive computer marked exam (iCME), you cannot postpone. You can submit a Special Circumstances form to tell us about circumstances that have impacted your ability to complete your remote exam, EMA or emTMA; please refer to the [Special Circumstances policy](#).
- 1.7 If you do not submit your remote exam, EMA or emTMA, and you have not had an application for postponement formally agreed in advance, you must consider the possibility that your application will not be approved. If this happens, you will normally receive a 'Fail: Absent', 'Fail: Not Entitled to Resit', or 'Fail: Not Entitled to Resubmit' module result and will have to re-take the whole module to obtain credit.
- 1.8 You must complete your module within **13 months** of the original remote exam, EMA or emTMA opportunity. So, if you postpone your final assessed task and then fail it, you will not normally be eligible for a resit exam or resubmission of the EMA or emTMA if that assessment falls more than 13 months after the original assessment opportunity. You should check with your [SST or AEST](#) or equivalent contact if you are studying as part of an apprenticeship programme, if you are unsure how this may affect your study.
- 1.9 You can apply for a postponement of your exam, EMA or emTMA using the [discretionary postponement webform](#).
- 1.10 Applications cannot be accepted by telephone. If you require advice or guidance about making a request for postponement, you should contact your [SST or AEST](#) or equivalent contact if you are studying as part of an apprenticeship programme.
- 1.11 You will **not** be offered another remote exam or another opportunity to submit your EMA or emTMA if:

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- a) you have not satisfied any residential school requirement or Online school (previously known as Alternative Learning Experience (ALE)) associated with that module; or
- b) you have already been given three exam or submission opportunities, or the date of the next scheduled exam or submission date for the module would be more than 13 months later than your first submission opportunity, whichever occurs first.

## 2. Eligibility criteria to apply for elective postponement

- 2.1 To find out whether your module permits elective postponement please refer to the resit/resubmission guidance that can be accessed via [StudentHome](#) where the module result is published. If you receive a resit/resubmission result you will see information about how to apply for elective postponement on [StudentHome](#), if this is permitted for your module. You can apply for elective postponement at any point after you have registered for your resit/resubmission, but you **must** request it no later than midnight (UK local time) on the day following your remote exam or EMA or emTMA cut-off date. Requests after this deadline will not be accepted.
- 2.2 For most modules, you can apply for elective postponement if the resit/resubmission opportunity is scheduled within **12 to 16 weeks** of your original exam period or EMA or emTMA cut-off date. If your resit/resubmission opportunity occurs more than 16 weeks after your original assessment, or if you have previously postponed, you will not be eligible to apply for elective postponement.
- 2.3 If you electively postpone, you will be expected to resit your remote exam or resubmit your EMA or emTMA at the next available opportunity which could be as much as nine months away. This will be your final opportunity within The Open University timescale to complete your module and you will not be able to apply for a further postponement of the remote exam, EMA or emTMA. Please refer to the [Resit and Resubmission policy](#) to find out more about Resit and Resubmission rules.

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- 2.4 **If you submit the form and are not eligible for elective postponement, your remote exam, EMA or emTMA submission will not be postponed. If you fail to attend your remote exam or submit your EMA or emTMA you will fail your module.**
- 2.5 You can apply for elective postponement using the webform which will be made available on StudentHome. You will be able to check and edit the information on your elective postponement request before you submit the form.
- 2.6 If you are unsure whether you qualify to request elective postponement, or of the impact it will have on your qualification pathway, please contact your [SST or AEST](#) or equivalent contact if you are studying as part of an apprenticeship programme to discuss your options further. If your module has a practice element you must always seek advice before requesting elective postponement.
- 2.7 Your result notification will confirm whether your request for elective postponement has been successful. If your notification says 'Fail: Not Entitled to Resit', or 'Fail: Not Entitled to Resubmit', yet you have applied for elective postponement within the stipulated deadlines and are eligible for it, you must contact the [Exams team](#) as soon as possible.

### 3. Discretionary Postponement override

If you submit your remote exam, EMA or emTMA, even partially, before the end of the late penalty period, then any postponement you have applied for will be automatically overridden and your work will be marked, even if you have received confirmation that the postponement has been approved. You should only apply for a postponement if you are not able to take your exam or submit your work. If you submit your work, even partially, after applying for postponement then this may result in a slight delay in receiving your final result.

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## 4. Deadlines for applying for Postponements and exceptions to the Policy

4.1 Table 1: Deadlines for applying for postponements, supplying third-party evidence and exceptions to the policies.

Policy and third-party evidence	Deadline	Exception
Applying for discretionary postponement	Before midnight (UK local time) on the day following your remote exam or your EMA, emTMA submission cut-off date.	If you can provide evidence that you were prevented from meeting this deadline by circumstances outside of your control.
Third party documentary evidence to support your postponement request	Within 14 calendar days of submitting your form.	If you can provide evidence that you were prevented from meeting this deadline by circumstances outside of your control.
Discretionary postponement on the day of the exam	If, on the day, you are unable to submit your exam you should consider applying for a Discretionary Postponement to allow you to sit your exam at the next opportunity. If you have submitted any work for a remote exam or EMA or emTMA or have clicked the submit all and finish button in a remote interactive computer marked exam (iCME), you cannot postpone.	N/A
13-month rule for discretionary postponement	You must complete your module within <b>13 months</b> of the original remote exam,	No exception

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	EMA or emTMA opportunity. See <a href="#">point 1.8</a> and <a href="#">1.11</a> above.	
Applying for elective postponement	At any point after you are registered for your resit/resubmission and no later than midnight (UK local time) of the day following your remote exam or EMA or emTMA cut-off date.	No exception
16-week rule to apply for elective postponement	For most modules, you can apply for elective postponement if resit/resubmission opportunity is scheduled within <b>12 to 16 weeks</b> of your original exam period or EMA or emTMA cut-off date. If it is not within 16 weeks, then you are not eligible.	No exception

## 5. Methods of appeal

If you have a query or experience a problem with any aspect of The Open University's application of this policy, please [contact us](#) promptly. If you feel that The Open University has not responded appropriately to your policy query or concern, you can raise a formal complaint or appeal using the [Students Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#). You can find out more information about how to do this in The Open University's [Complaints and Appeals](#) pages on the Help Centre.

The Open University also has a specific complaints procedure for complaints relating to Welsh Language Standards. Please refer to [Welsh Language Standards, Dealing with Complaints and Comments](#) for more details.

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## 6. Contact details for further information

### Student Support Teams (SSTs)

You can contact your student support team from the [Contact us](#) page in the Help Centre or via StudentHome.

For queries related to apprentices/apprenticeships the following learner support contact details are applicable:

### **AEST (Apprenticeship Enrolment and Support Team) (for apprentices in England, Scotland and Wales)**

Email: [apprentice-support@open.ac.uk](mailto:apprentice-support@open.ac.uk)

Telephone: 0300 3034121

### **APDM (Apprenticeship Programme Delivery Manager) (for apprentices in England, Scotland and Wales)**

Employers: please contact your named APDM, alternatively please email [apprenticeships@open.ac.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@open.ac.uk), and your allocated APDM will contact you.

### Other

To check the latest postal addresses please see [OU Offices](#).

## **Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at The Open University**

Policies are inclusive of all Open University Students, Learners, Enquirers and Alumni, regardless of age, civil status, dependency or caring status, care experience, disability, family status, gender, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnerships, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, socio-economic background, sex, sexual orientation or trades union membership status.

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## Safe Space Reporting

The Open University is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment in which everyone feels safe and is treated with dignity and respect. Unlawful discrimination of any kind across The Open University will not be tolerated. Safe Space Reporting is available through [an online tool](#) through which staff, students, learners and visitors are encouraged to report incidents of assault, bullying, harassment, hate crime, or sexual harassment. It also provides information about what you can do if these incidents happen to you, or to someone you know, and where you can find support.

## Glossary

### Apprenticeship Enrolment and Support Team (AEST)

The AEST is the first point of contact for Apprentices in line with Apprenticeship Programmes. Please see the [contacts section](#) above for their contact details.

### Apprenticeship Programme Delivery Manager (APDM)

APDMs support Employers participating in an Apprenticeship Programme. They offer support and advice on recruitment, registration and eligibility; act as the conduit between the Employer and the OU; and provide support to line managers/workplace mentors and Apprentices. APDMs also review, track and respond to Apprentice progression by working with the Employer, the Apprentice and the Faculty to achieve successful completion. They collect and act upon feedback from the Employer and the Apprentice to continually enhance this process.

### Assessment

This is the term we use to mean all the ways the University assesses how you are progressing during your module. It covers things like TMAs, iCMAs, exams, emTMAs and EMAs.

### Discretionary Postponement

Where you are unable to complete your final assessed task i.e. exam end-of-module assessment (EMA) or end-of-module tutor-marked assignment (emTMA), you may apply to The Open University who may give you permission to postpone it to the next available opportunity on a discretionary basis.

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## **Elective Postponement**

If you have been offered a resit or resubmission opportunity which is scheduled within 12 to 16 weeks of your original exam period or EMA/emTMA cut-off date, you may be eligible to postpone this to the next available opportunity.

## **End-of-Module Assessments (EMA)**

This means one of the final assessed tasks within a module. On many modules, you have to work independently to produce an extended piece of work rather than sitting a traditional exam at the end of your study. For ease of reference, these essays, projects, portfolios, dissertations, assessments, etc. are referred to collectively as end-of-module assessments (EMAs).

## **End-of-Module tutor-marked assignments (emTMA)**

Where a module does not have an exam or EMA, the last TMA on that module will be classed as an emTMA. If this is the case, your assessment strategy will clearly state which assignment is the emTMA. Please note that the 'final TMA' that comes before the exam, EMA or emTMA is not the same as an emTMA.

## **Exam (examination)**

The University holds a number of different types of exams in exam periods at the end of module presentations. Exams will be online and taken remotely. The duration and format of exams varies by module.

## **Fail**

This means the required standard has not been achieved for a pass result to be awarded.

## **Final assessed tasks**

This is the name given to the assessments that you complete at the end of a module. The types of final assessed tasks that a module can have are exam, end-of-module assessment (EMA) and end-of-module tutor-marked assignment (emTMA).

## **interactive Computer-Marked Assignment (iCMA)**

This is an interactive form of assessment made up from a series of questions and submitted online. This submission method was originally developed to facilitate interactive Computer-Marked Assignments, but it is now also used to facilitate submissions for some other types of assessment that are not interactive or computer-marked.

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## **interactive Computer-Marked Exam (iCME)**

This is an interactive computer marked exam submitted via the iCMA system online.

## **Online School**

Previously known as Alternative Learning Experience (ALE). They are normally available to students on modules with a residential school element who are unable to attend any of their schools.

## **Online TMA/EMA service**

This is the University's system that allows you to submit work electronically for assessment.

## **Resit**

If you take your exam but do not achieve the required standard for a pass on your module you may be offered a resit opportunity. There is a minimum requirement to qualify for a resit specific to your module/s which is explained in the Assessment section on [StudentHome](#). You can only resit once, and your module result will normally be capped.

## **Resubmission**

If you submit your end-of-module assessment (EMA) or end-of-module tutor-marked assignment (emTMA) but do not achieve the required standard for a pass on your module you may be offered a resubmission opportunity. There is a minimum requirement to qualify for a resubmission specific to your module/s which is explained in the Assessment section on [StudentHome](#). You may only resubmit once, and your module result will normally be capped.

## **Third-party evidence**

This means evidence obtained from an independent body other than the student himself/herself or their family, friends and acquaintances providing it. The evidence must be from a professional body for e.g. a medical certificate from the GP or the hospital where the treatment has been carried out.

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## Related Documentation

Refer to the following documentation in conjunction with this document:

- [Academic Regulations](#) and your Qualification Regulations, if applicable (available via [StudentHome](#) once you are registered for a qualification, or on the [online prospectus](#)).
- Assessment Policies:
  - a) [TMA and iCMA Policy](#)
  - b) [End-of-Module Assessment \(EMA\) Policy](#)
  - c) [End-of-module tutor-marked assignment \(emTMA\) Policy](#)
  - d) [Exam Policy](#)
  - e) [Special Circumstances Policy](#)
  - f) [Resit and Resubmission Policy](#)
  - g) [Module Results Determination Policy](#)
- [Changing Your Study Plans: Deferrals, Withdrawals and Cancellations](#)
- [Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#)
- [Student Privacy Notice](#)

## Further clarification

If you have any queries around the content provided within this document and how to interpret it, please contact your Student Support Team via StudentHome who are specially trained to advise on the implementation of policy. Alternatively, you can contact your Student Support Team through the 'Contact Us' option on the [Help Centre](#) if you are a current Open University student.

Apprentices studying as part of an apprenticeship programme should contact the appropriate Apprenticeship Enrolment and Support Team (AEST) or equivalent contact, for more information; alternatively, they should request that their employer contacts their named

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Apprenticeship Programme Delivery Manager (APDM) for further information, see [Contacts section](#) above for more information.

Students living in Wales can speak with a student support adviser in Welsh on 029 2047 1170, should you wish to do so.

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## Feedback

If you have any comments about this policy document and how it might be improved, please submit these to [SPR-Policy-Team@open.ac.uk](mailto:SPR-Policy-Team@open.ac.uk).

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## Summary of significant changes since last version

There are a number of significant changes from the previous version of this policy. These are:

- a) New policy template has been used so the layout has slightly changed and wordings updated.
  - b) The wording in some sections has been reviewed and updated to make the information clearer.
  - c) The information relating to exams has been revised to ensure that it is accurate for remote exams and references to face-to-face exams have been removed.
  - d) Glossary terms have been updated to ensure they are up to date and to make the terms simpler and easy to understand.
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## Policies superseded by this document

This policy supersedes the Postponement Policy with effective date March 2023.

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