

Changing your studies: Deferral and Withdrawal Policy: Academic Years 2012/13 to 2015/16

1. Introduction

1.1 What the policy covers

This document sets out the policy that will govern how we will respond if you want to take a break in your studies or wish to change your study plans. The policy applies to all study in the academic years 2012/13 to 2015/16, including modules which started between 1 August 2012 and 31st July 2016

1.2 Who this policy applies to

This policy applies to all undergraduate students and postgraduate students except Research Students (who should refer to the [Research Students Handbook](#)).

1.3 It is a long document. Does it all apply to me?

This section and [Section 2](#) apply to all students

If you are currently studying and you are:

- An undergraduate student (including an integrated Master's degree student) who has registered for a qualification – [Section 3](#) on pages 3 - 8 applies to you.
- An undergraduate student who has registered for a module that you are studying as part of a declared qualification – [Section 4](#) on pages 9 -14 applies to you.
- A student who has registered for a standalone undergraduate module that is not linked to any qualification – [Section 5](#) on pages 15 - 19 applies to you.
- A postgraduate student who has registered for a module that you are studying as part of a postgraduate qualification – [Section 4](#) on pages 9 -14 applies to you.
- A student who has registered for a standalone postgraduate module that is not linked to any qualification – [Section 5](#) on pages 15 - 19 applies to you.

2. How to change your study plans

2.1 Cancellation procedure

If, after reading this policy, you wish to consider changing your qualification, changing your module choice or deferring or withdrawing from your studies, you should refer to the [Cancellation Procedure](#) which explains the procedure you will need to follow in order to do this. It is important that you follow the correct procedure so that your request is properly recorded and can be dealt with promptly.

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2.2 Important things to consider if you are changing your studies

Choosing your qualifications and modules is an important decision and you should take just as much care when you change your plans as you did when you made your initial decision. You will find the information about OU qualifications and modules that you need to help you plan your studies on [StudentHome](#).

2.3 Will there be any academic consequences of changing your studies?

There are a lot of things to consider when you change your studies; these are just some suggestions of the kind of things you should think about:

- Are there any academic reasons to change as you learn more about what you are good (or not so good) at and what interests you?
- How will it affect your study goals?
 - Will all your credit count?
 - Does the order you plan to study modules in matter?
 - Is there a final presentation of a module and this is your only chance to study it?
 - Will it affect your academic progress? (You may not be permitted to study again if you do not complete and pass any modules for 3 presentations in a row.)
 - Will it affect the class of your qualification?
 - Will the disruption affect your ability to study effectively?
 - Are there any time limits specified which you might not still be able to meet?
 - Will it affect any 'professional recognition' for your qualification?
- If you are a disabled student
 - Will any additional support needs be affected by the change?
 - Will it affect your eligibility for a Disabled Students' Allowance?

If you think you should change what you have planned to study you will find more information and support to help you with your decision if you follow the '[Changes and problems while you study](#)' link via the StudentHome [Help Centre](#) or you may wish to talk to a member of our student support team before taking action. When you contact us to make a change, we may refer you to a member of our student support team to discuss any implications if you have not done so already.

2.4 Will there be any financial consequences from your change of plans?

This document needs to be considered in conjunction with the [Fee Rules](#) available from the [Essential Documents](#) website which will explain your liability for fees and whether you may be eligible for any fee refund or fee credit. There may be substantial extra fees payable in some circumstances if you change your studies and it can also affect your eligibility for loans and grants.

There is more information about the financial consequences available from Changes and problems while you study: www2.open.ac.uk/students/help/topic/changes-and-challenges .

You can also contact Student Fees or, if you are a student in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland or Wales, your national centre for further information.

3. Students who have registered for a qualification (undergraduate only)

3.1 Who this section applies to

This section applies to any student who has registered for an undergraduate qualification or an integrated Master's degree and is enrolled for modules they are studying as part of that qualification. If you have also registered for standalone modules which are not part of your qualification, section 5 will also apply to you.

3.2 What is in this section

This section sets out the arrangements that will apply to you if you are registered for an undergraduate qualification starting on or after 1 August 2012 and wish to:

- change the qualification that you are registered for;
- change your study plans after you have enrolled for your modules, by:
 - changing the modules that you study;
 - reducing the number of modules you are studying, or studying modules with a lower credit value;
 - increasing the number of modules you are studying, or studying modules with a higher credit value;
 - deferring study of a module, either before or after it has started, until a later presentation;
- take a break from your studies for a full year or more;
- stop studying altogether.

3.3 Changing your qualification

You may change the qualification you are registered for at any time by telling us following the [Cancellation Procedure](#). If you are receiving a loan or a grant you may also need to notify the loan or grant provider and the change of qualification may affect your eligibility.

3.3.1 Changing your qualification before you have started any studies

You must contact us to change your qualification. If you also want to change the modules you have enrolled for please see section 3.4 below;

3.3.2 Changing your qualification after you have started your studies

- a) You must contact us to change your qualification;
- b) It is your responsibility to check with us whether any credit you have been awarded can be counted to the new qualification;

- c) If you are enrolled for a module that does not count towards your new qualification and you wish to continue to study it as a standalone course, you may do so;
- d) If you also want to change the modules you have enrolled for please see section 3.4 below.

3.3.3 Withdrawing from your qualification and continuing to study

- a) This paragraph applies if you intend to continue with your studies, but no longer wish to count them towards any qualification. Please see section 3.7 below if you wish to give up your Open University studies completely.
- b) If you are enrolled for a module you wish to continue to study, but withdraw from your qualification, you may do so and study that module as a standalone course;
- c) If you wish to change your choice of module after withdrawal from your qualification please see section 5.4 below.

3.4 Changing the modules that you are studying towards your qualification

3.4.1 Changing modules before the final enrolment date

- a) Subject to the rules that apply to your qualification you may change your module at any time up to the final enrolment date which is published in the module description. You can do this by contacting us on 0300 303 5303.
- b) If you wish to add additional modules, or study modules with a higher credit value, there will be an additional fee payable and you may need to notify your loan or grant provider.
- c) If you wish to study fewer modules, or modules with a lower credit value, you may be eligible for a fee refund or a fee credit. Please see the [Fee Rules](#) for details.

3.4.2 Changing modules after the final enrolment date and before module start date

- a) If you no longer wish to study one or more of the modules you are enrolled for you must tell us before the module start date or you may become liable for fees.
- b) You cannot change a module or apply to study additional modules after the final enrolment date is passed, unless paragraph 3.4.2(c), paragraph 3.4.3(e) or paragraph 3.5.5(b) below applies.
- c) If you wish to change your enrolment to a different module or to study additional modules you must contact us and request a late registration. This will be subject to the availability of places and to you satisfying one or more of the late registration conditions.

3.4.3 Changing modules after the module start date

- a) If you no longer wish to study one or more of the modules you are enrolled for you must tell us as soon as possible. The circumstances in which fees may be refunded after module start date are limited and become more limited the later you leave the change. Please see the [Fee Rules](#) for details.

- b) You cannot change a module or apply to study additional modules after the final enrolment date has passed, unless paragraph (c) or (e) or paragraph 3.5.5(b) below applies.
- c) If you wish to change your enrolment to a different module or to study additional modules within the same presentation you must contact us and request a late registration. This will be subject to the availability of places and to you satisfying one or more of the late registration conditions. Requests to change to different modules or study additional modules will not be considered if received more than 28 days after module start date. If a request to change is accepted under this paragraph the change will be treated for fee liability purposes as having been made on the day before the module start date.
- d) Only one request for change of module(s) enrolment may be approved under paragraph (c) above in any one module presentation period.
- e) A request to change a module enrolment will be approved under paragraph (c) above if it is made following the notification of a fail result in a previous module and that notification is received after the final enrolment date and not more than 28 days after the module start date.

3.5 Deferring your studies towards your qualification

3.5.1 Definition

Deferral means ceasing to study a module with the aim of returning to complete your studies later. It can only take place after you have enrolled for the module, and before the final deferral date which is the last working day before you sit the examination or submit the end-of-module assessment.

If you are thinking of deferring your studies you should give particular attention to the time limits for your qualification and for returning to your studies after deferral.

3.5.2 Deferral before module start date

- a) You may defer any module before the start date of that module. This will be treated as a cancellation of the module. Your fee liability will be adjusted to exclude the module you have deferred from and you will need to re-enrol for the module when you are ready to resume your studies.
- b) If you plan to take a full year out from all your Open University studies please see section 3.6 below.
- c) If you have previously deferred that module you are permitted to do so again, but any time limits for fee credits and assessment banking will be calculated from the date of the previously deferred module and will not be extended.

3.5.3 Deferral after module start date

- a) If you wish to defer you must notify us of your intention by following the [Cancellation Procedure](#).
- b) A deferral will be approved subject to the following conditions:
 - i. the University records that it has provided you with advice on

- a) the impact your decision to defer may have on your academic progress, including any impact on professional recognition; and
 - b) the impact your decision to defer may have on your liability for fees and your eligibility for financial support; and
- ii. you confirm that you have received that advice and wish to proceed with the deferral.

Please note that your deferral will take place only upon receipt of that confirmation.

3.5.4 Completing a module after deferral

- a) You have the following options to complete a module after deferral.
- i. Provided your module is eligible, you may retain the scores from assessments you have completed, carry these forward to a future presentation of the same module, and complete the assessment requirements during that future presentation. We call this process 'assessment banking'. If you choose this option, you have to bank all scores before the deferral date including any blank scores for assignments that you did not submit. You may not resubmit any assessments for which a score has been banked. Please refer to the [Assessment Banking Rules](#) for the full rules which apply if you wish to take this option.
 - ii. You may submit a request to cancel the scores from assessments you have completed, and resubmit all assessments (i.e. start again). We call this process deferral without assessment banking.
 - iii. If you are returning to study a module other than the module that you deferred from this will be a deferral without assessment banking (i.e. you must start that alternative module from the beginning).
- b) If you defer a module you must return:
- i. for deferral with assessment banking: to a presentation of that module starting within 13 months from the start of the presentation of the deferred module
 - ii. for deferral without assessment banking to a presentation of a module commencing: within 25 months from the start of the presentation of the deferred module.
- c) You may only defer a module with assessment banking on one occasion. When you return to study you may not defer that module again with assessment banking.
- d) If you wish to defer a module that you have returned to studying following a previous deferral you must contact us using the [Cancellation Procedure](#). You will not be eligible for any further fee credit and it may affect your liability for student loans or eligibility for grants.
- e) If you defer a module it will be counted as a module that is not completed. If you do not complete at least one module successfully in three consecutive presentations of study you will not normally be allowed to enrol for another module.

3.5.5 Returning to study after a deferral

- a) You must apply to re-enrol within the time limits set out below.
- b) If you have deferred a module with assessment banking we recommend that you apply as soon as possible to enrol for the next available presentation of that module in order to ensure that a place will be available for you to return to study. You may, subject to time limit in paragraph 3.5.4(b)(i) and to the availability of places, apply to enrol to resume a module deferred with assessment banking at any time up to and including the cut-off date in the new presentation for the last assessment for which you have banked the score. Please note that if you apply to enrol to resume the module after the published final enrolment date we do not guarantee that a place will be available for you to return to study.
- c) If you have deferred a module with assessment banking and do not return to study that module for any reason within the period set out in paragraph 3.5.4(b)(i) it will be treated as a deferral without assessment banking.
- d) If you do not return to study a module within the period set out in paragraph 3.5.4(b)(ii) it will be treated as a withdrawal from the module and it will be recorded as not completed.
- e) If you do not return to study after a deferral, the period since the deferral will be treated as an unapproved study break under paragraph 3.6.2 below, unless you have applied for the study break to be approved. Approval of a study break does not extend the period of eligibility for assessment banking or a fee credit.
- f) If you wish to return to study a different module from one that you have deferred it will be treated as a withdrawal from the deferred module, which will be recorded as not completed.

Please note that unless you are returning to study the same module you have deferred from or the module you have deferred from is in the first presentation that you have studied with the Open University, there may be restrictions on the use of a fee credit toward the fees for an alternative module. Please see the [Fee Rules](#) for full details of the conditions you are required to meet in order to use a fee credit towards the fees for an alternative module.

3.6 Taking a study break

3.6.1 Definition

- a) A study break is a period of at least 12 months during which you are not enrolled for any modules. The start of the year is defined by the start of your preceding year of study and could be October, February or April. For example, if you commenced your studies in October and completed 60 credits in that study year before wanting to take a year out, the year out would run from the following October until September.
- b) The time limits for achieving Open University qualifications do not normally require students to study continuously and many students take advantage of this to enable them to fit their study around other events in their lives.

- c) There are some qualifications where time limits may be much shorter than normal, for example because of time limits set for professional recognition, or because the qualification is being withdrawn. If you are studying for one of these qualifications the opportunity for a study break may be very limited or not available.

3.6.2 Unapproved study breaks

- a) You may take a study break without seeking any approval. However, unless you enrol for a module within two years of completing your last module, you will cease to be a registered student of the University and you will be unable to continue to access services that are provided to students.
- b) If you cease to be a registered student of the University, we will retain your study record and details of any credit you have been awarded and you may subsequently re-register with the University to resume your studies under the conditions of registration and regulations applying at the time of that re-registration.

3.6.3 Approved study breaks

- a) You may apply for a study break to be approved. The two year time limit referred to in paragraph 3.6.2(a) above only starts to run if you do not return to study at the end of the approved study break. During an approved study break you remain registered on your qualification and you can access relevant services associated with the qualification as well as services provided to all students of the University.
- b) A study break will be approved subject to the following conditions:
 - i. you have notified the University of your intention to take a study break;
 - ii. the University records that it has provided you with advice on the impact your decision to take a study break may have on your academic progress, including any impact on professional recognition;
 - iii. you confirm that you have received that advice.
- c) You may return to study earlier than the end of the study break if you so wish. Please note that you must allow sufficient time to notify us in order to meet enrolment deadlines.

3.7 Withdrawing from your qualification

3.7.1 Definition

- a) Withdrawal is the process by which you cease your studies before you have achieved your qualification aim if you do not intend to resume your studies at a later date. If you withdraw from study, you will cease to be a student of the University (unless you are also registered for a module as a standalone course). You may withdraw at any time.

3.7.2 Withdrawal due to failure of a previous module

- a) If you have enrolled for further study and receive notification of a failure of module you should contact us to discuss the options that are available to you.
- b) If you contact us to withdraw within 28 days of the start date of your current module(s) following the notification of a fail result in a previous module and that notification was

received after the module start date the withdrawal will take effect from the day before the start date of that module subject to the following conditions:

- i. you have received a fail result for a module studied in your first OU presentation and have not been notified of that result prior to the start of your current module;
- ii. following receipt of that fail result you wish to withdraw from all OU study and do not intend to return to study within the next 2 years;
- iii. you have requested to withdraw from all OU study within 28 days of the start of the current module;
- iv. the University records that it has provided you with advice on the impact of your decision to withdraw and the range of options that are available as an alternative.

3.7.3 Effect of withdrawal

- a) When you withdraw we will retain your record of study and details of any academic credit that you have been awarded.
- b) If you withdraw before you have completed all the modules for which you enrolled at the time, you may be eligible for a fee credit or a fee refund as set out in the [Fee Rules](#). Withdrawal does not lead to the cancellation of fee credits towards future study and if you decide to return to study during the period of validity of any fee credit, you may be able to use that credit to resume study.

4. Students who have declared a qualification (undergraduate or postgraduate)

4.1 Who this section applies to

This section of this policy applies to:

- undergraduate students who have studied with the OU before August 2012 and who are studying for one of the old framework undergraduate qualifications, and
- all postgraduate students studying for a qualification.

4.2 What is in this section

This section sets out the arrangements that will apply to you if you have declared an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification and wish to:

- change the qualification that you are registered for;
- change your study plans after you have registered for your modules, by:
 - changing the modules that you study;
 - reducing the number of modules you are studying, or studying modules with a lower credit value;
 - increasing the number of modules you are studying, or studying modules with a higher credit value;

- deferring study of a module, either before or after it has started, until a later presentation;
- take a break from your studies for a full year or more;
- stop studying altogether.

4.3 Changing your qualification

4.3.1 Changing your qualification after you have started your studies

You may change the qualification you have declared and are linking your credit to at any time by following the [Cancellation Procedure](#) to tell us or, where available, through your [StudentHome](#) page. If you are receiving a loan or a grant you may also need to notify the loan or grant provider and the change of qualification may affect your eligibility.

- You must either contact us or update your qualification(s) on StudentHome to change your qualification on our records;
- It is your responsibility to check with us whether any credit you have been awarded can be counted to the new qualification and that you can complete the qualification within the time limits;
- If you are an undergraduate student who is eligible for transitional arrangements the new qualification must comply with the eligibility requirements at the start of and throughout the transitional period in order for you to remain eligible. Please see the [Fee Rules](#) for details;
- If you are registered for a module that does not count towards your new qualification and you wish to continue to study it, you may do so;
- If you also want to change the modules you have registered for please see paragraph 4.4 below.

4.3.2 Changing to a registered qualification

You may be able to register for a qualification and apply to migrate your OU credit to that qualification. If you wish to transfer to a registered qualification please see the Qualification Choices information on the 'Plan your studies' link on [StudentHome](#). If you are eligible for transitional arrangements you must contact us to discuss your plans if you wish to transfer to a registered qualification.

4.3.3 Withdrawing from your qualification and continuing to study

- This paragraph applies if you intend to continue with your studies, but no longer wish to count them towards any qualification. Please see section 4.7 below if you wish to give up your Open University studies completely.
- If you are registered for a module you wish to continue to study, but no longer want to link the credit for that module towards your qualification, you may do so. You may be able to make this change yourself from your [StudentHome](#) page. If you are an undergraduate student eligible for transitional arrangements you must contact us to do this and it may affect your eligibility for transitional arrangements.

4.4 Changing the modules that you are studying towards your qualification

4.4.1 Changing modules before the final enrolment date

- a) Subject to the rules that apply to your qualification you may change your module at any time up to the final enrolment date which is published in the module description. You can do this by contacting us on 0300 303 5303.
- b) If you wish to add additional modules, or study modules with a higher credit value, there will be an additional fee payable and you may need to notify your loan or grant provider.
- c) If you wish to study fewer modules, or modules with a lower credit value, you may be eligible for a fee refund or a fee credit. Please see the [Fee Rules](#) for details.

4.4.2 Changing modules after the final enrolment date and before module start date

- a) If you no longer wish to study one or more of the modules you are registered for you must tell us before the module start date or you may become liable for fees.
- b) You cannot change a module or apply to study additional modules after the final enrolment date is passed, unless paragraph 4.4.2(c), paragraph 4.4.3 (e) or paragraph 4.5.5(b) below applies.
- c) If you wish to change your enrolment to a different module or to study additional modules you must contact us and request a late registration. This will be subject to the availability of places and to you satisfying one or more of the late registration conditions.

4.4.3 Changing modules after the module start date

- a) If you no longer wish to study one or more of the modules you are registered for you must tell us as soon as possible. The circumstances in which fees may be refunded after module start date are limited and become more limited the later you leave the change. Please see the [Fee Rules](#) for details.
- b) You cannot change a module or apply to study additional modules after the final enrolment date has passed, unless paragraph (c) or (e) below applies.
- c) If you wish to change your registration to a different module or to study additional modules within the same presentation you must contact us and request a late registration. This will be subject to the availability of places and to you satisfying one or more of the late registration conditions. Requests to change to different modules or study additional modules will not be considered if received more than 28 days after module start date. If a request to change is accepted under this paragraph the change will be treated for fee liability purposes as having been made on the day before the module start date.
- d) Only one request for change of module(s) registration may be approved under paragraph (c) above in any one academic year.
- e) A request to change a module registration will be approved under paragraph (c) above if it is made following the notification of a fail result in a previous module and that

notification is received after the final enrolment date and not more than 28 days after the module start date.

4.5 Deferring your studies towards your qualification

4.5.1 Definition

- a) Deferral means ceasing to study a module with the aim of returning to complete your studies later. It can only take place after you have registered for the module, and before the final deferral date which is the last working day before you sit the examination or submit the end-of-module assessment.
- b) If you are thinking of deferring your studies you should give particular attention to the time limits for your qualification and for returning to your studies after deferral.
- c) Please note that most of the undergraduate qualifications that you are able to declare under the old academic framework will be withdrawn by 31st December 2017 unless an earlier withdrawal date has been notified. The Open Degree will still be available under that framework until 31st December 2019. If you have not achieved your qualification by the date it is withdrawn you will no longer be able to claim it and you must transfer to a different qualification that is available. You may not be able to count all the credit you have been awarded to the new qualification – so you should think carefully about whether a deferral will affect your ability to achieve your qualification aims.

4.5.2 Deferral before module start date

- a) You may defer any module before the start date of that module. This will be treated as a cancellation of the module. Your fee liability will be adjusted to exclude the module you have deferred from and you will need to re-register for the module when you are ready to resume your studies.
- b) If you plan to take a full year out from all your Open University studies please see section 4.6 below.
- c) If you have previously deferred that module you are permitted to do so again, but any time limits for fee credits and assessment banking will be calculated from the date of the previously deferred module and will not be extended.

4.5.3 Deferral after module start date

- a) If you wish to defer you must notify us of your intention by following the [Cancellation Procedure](#).
- b) A deferral will be approved subject to the following conditions:
 - i. the University records that it has provided you with advice on:
 - a) the impact your decision to defer may have on your academic progress, including any impact on professional recognition; and
 - b) the impact your decision to defer may have on your liability for fees and your eligibility for financial support; and

- ii. you confirm that you have received that advice and wish to proceed with the deferral.

Please note that your deferral will take place only upon receipt of that confirmation.

4.5.4 Completing a module after deferral

- a) You have the following options to complete a module after deferral.
 - i. Provided your module is eligible, you may retain the scores from assessments you have completed, carry these forward to a future presentation of the same module, and complete the assessment requirements during that future presentation. We call this process 'assessment banking'. If you choose this option, you have to bank all scores before the deferral date, including any blank scores for assignments that you did not submit. You may not resubmit these assessments. Please refer to the [Assessment Banking Rules](#) for the full rules which apply if you wish to take this option.
 - ii. You may submit a request to cancel the scores from assessments you have completed, and resubmit all assessments (i.e. start again). We call this process deferral without assessment banking.
 - iii. If you are returning to study a module other than the module that you deferred from this will be a deferral without assessment banking (i.e. you must start that alternative module from the beginning).
- b) If you defer a module you must return:
 - i. for deferral with assessment banking: to a presentation of that module starting within 13 months from the start of the presentation of the deferred module.
 - ii. for deferral without assessment banking: to a presentation of a module starting within 25 months from the start of the presentation of the deferred module.
- c) You may only defer a module with assessment banking on one occasion. When you return to study you may not defer that module again with assessment banking.
- d) If you wish to defer a module that you have returned to study following a previous deferral you must contact us using the [Cancellation Procedure](#). You will not be eligible for any further fee credit and it may affect your liability for student loans or eligibility for grants.
- e) If you defer a module it will be counted as a module that is not completed. If you do not complete at least one module successfully in three consecutive presentations of study you will not normally be allowed to enrol for another module.

4.5.5 Returning to study after a deferral

- a) You must apply to re-register within the time limits set out below.
- b) If you have deferred a module with assessment banking we recommend that you apply as soon as possible to enrol for the next available presentation of that module in order to ensure that a place will be available for you to return to study. You may, subject to time limit in paragraph 4.5.4(b)(i) and to the availability of places, apply to enrol to resume a

module deferred with assessment banking at any time up to and including the cut-off date in the new presentation for the last assessment for which you have banked the score. Please note that if you apply to enrol to resume the module after the published final enrolment date we do not guarantee that a place will be available for you to return to study.

- c) If you have deferred a module with assessment banking and do not return to study that module for any reason within the period set out in paragraph 4.5.4(b)(i) it will be treated as a deferral without assessment banking.
- d) If you do not return to study a module within the period set out in paragraph 4.5.4(b)(ii) it will be treated as a withdrawal from the module and it will be recorded as not completed.
- e) If you wish to return to study a different module from one that you have deferred it will be treated as a withdrawal from the deferred module, which will be recorded as not completed.

If you are an undergraduate student, please note that unless you are returning to study the same module that you have deferred from, there may be restrictions on the use of a fee credit toward the fees for an alternative module. Please see the [Fee Rules](#) for full details of the conditions you are required to meet in order to use a fee credit towards the fees for an alternative module.

4.6 Taking a study break

4.6.1 Definition

A study break is a period of 12 months during which you are not enrolled for any modules. The start of the year is defined by the start of your preceding year of study and could be October, February or April. For example, if you commenced your studies in October and completed 60 credits in that study year before wanting to take a year out, the year out would run from the following October until September.

4.6.2 Time limits

- a) The time limits for achieving Open University qualifications do not normally require students to study continuously and many students take advantage of this to enable them to fit their study around other events in their lives.
- b) If you are an undergraduate student eligible for transitional arrangements you will normally be required to study at least one module in each academic year of the transitional period. The exceptions to this are very limited – See the [Fee Rules](#) for more details.
- c) There are some qualifications where time limits may be much shorter than normal, for example because of time limits set for professional recognition, or because the qualification is being withdrawn. If you are studying for one of these qualifications the opportunity for a study break may be very limited or not available.
- d) Please note that most of the undergraduate qualifications that you are able to declare under the old academic framework will be withdrawn by 31st December 2017 unless an earlier withdrawal date has been notified. Qualifications in the Open Degree will still be available under that framework until 31st December 2019. If you have not achieved

your qualification by the date it is withdrawn you will no longer be able to claim it and you must transfer to a different qualification that is available. You may not be able to count all the credit you have been awarded to the new qualification – so you should think carefully about whether a study break will affect your ability to achieve your qualification aims.

4.6.3 Maximum period of study break

- a) You may take a study break without seeking any approval. However, unless you register for another module within 2 years of completing your last module, you will cease to be a registered student of the University and you will be unable to continue to access services that are provided to students.
- b) If you cease to be a registered student of the University, we will retain your study record and details of any credit you have been awarded and you may subsequently re-register with the University to resume your studies under the conditions of registration and regulations applying at the time of that re-registration.

4.7 Withdrawing from your studies with the Open University

4.7.1 Definition

Withdrawal is the process by which you cease your studies before you have achieved your qualification aim if you do not intend to resume your studies at a later date. If you withdraw from study, you will cease to be a student of the University. You may withdraw at any time.

4.7.2 Notification of withdrawal

- a) If you withdraw from a current module without notifying us that you intend to withdraw from all your studies, this will be treated as a deferral and you will remain a student of the University.
- b) If you do not enrol for a module within the 2 year period referred to in paragraph 4.6.2(a) above without telling us that you intend to withdraw from your studies, this will be treated as study break and you will remain a student of the University until the 2 year period has expired.

4.7.3 Effect of withdrawal

- a) When you withdraw we will retain your record of study and details of any academic credit that you have been awarded.
- b) If you withdraw before you have completed all the modules for which you registered at the time, you may be eligible for a fee credit or a fee refund as set out in Section IV of the [Fee Rules](#). Withdrawal does not lead to the cancellation of fee credits towards future study and if you decide to return to study during the period of validity of any fee credit, you may be able to use that credit to resume study.

5. Students who are studying a standalone module not linked to any qualification

5.1 Who this section applies to

This section applies if you have registered for any modules as standalone courses which do not form part of any qualification.

5.2 What is in this section

This section sets out the arrangements that will apply if you wish to:

- link your modules to a qualification;
- change your study plans after you have registered for your modules, by:
 - changing the modules that you study;
 - reducing the number of modules you are studying, or studying modules with a lower credit value;
 - increasing the number of modules you are studying, or studying modules with a higher credit value;
 - deferring study of a module, either before or after it has started, until a later presentation;
- take a break from your studies for a full year or more;
- stop studying altogether.

5.3 Linking modules to a qualification

If you decide that you would like to start counting your module credit towards a qualification you may do so at any time

5.3.1 Undergraduate students

- a) If you are an undergraduate student and you have not studied with the Open University before 1st August 2012 you may be able to register for a qualification and apply to migrate your OU credit to that qualification. Please see the Qualification Choices information under the Next Module link on [StudentHome](#) for more information;
- b) If you are an undergraduate student who has studied with the Open University before 1st August 2012 you may either:
 - i. be able to register for a qualification and apply to migrate your OU credit to that qualification - please see the Qualification Choices information on the 'Plan your studies' link on [StudentHome](#) for more information; or
 - ii. declare a qualification and link your credit to it. If this option is available to you, you will be able to do this from the 'Study' link on [StudentHome](#).

5.3.2 Withdrawal of declared undergraduate qualifications

- a) If you are intending to declare a qualification, but have not yet done so, we recommend that you do this as soon as possible, so that we can keep you informed about any developments that are relevant to your qualification.
- b) Please note that most of the undergraduate qualifications that you are able to declare under the pre August 2012 academic framework will be withdrawn by 31st December 2017 unless an earlier withdrawal date has been notified. The Open Degree will still be available under that framework until 31st December 2019.
- c) If you have not declared and achieved a qualification by the date it is withdrawn you will no longer be able to claim it and you must either declare a different qualification that is still available or register for a qualification. You may not be able to count all the credit you have been awarded to the new qualification – so you should think carefully about whether any change to your study plans will affect your ability to achieve your qualification aims.

5.3.3 Postgraduate qualifications

If you are a postgraduate student you may declare a qualification, subject to meeting any entry requirements for that qualification, and link your credit to it.

5.4 Changing the modules that you are studying

5.4.1 Changing modules before the final enrolment date

- a) You may change your module at any time up to the final enrolment date which is published in the module description. You can do this by contacting us on 0300 303 5303
- b) If you wish to add additional modules, or study modules with a higher credit value, there will be an additional fee payable
- c) If you wish to study fewer modules, or modules with a lower credit value, you may be eligible for a fee refund or a fee credit. Please see Section IV of the [Fee Rules](#) for details.

5.4.2 Changing modules after the final enrolment date and before module start date

- a) If you no longer wish to study one or more of the modules you are registered for you must tell us before the module start date or you may become liable for fees.
- b) You cannot change a module or apply to study additional modules after the final enrolment date has passed, unless paragraph 5.4.2(c), paragraph 5.4.3(e) or paragraph 5.5.5(b) below applies.
- c) If you wish to change your enrolment to a different module or to study additional modules you must contact us and request a late registration. This will be subject to the availability of places and to you satisfying one or more of the late registration conditions.

5.4.3 Changing modules after the module start date

- a) If you no longer wish to study one or more of the modules you are registered for you must tell us as soon as possible. The circumstances in which fees may be refunded after

module start date are limited and become more limited the later you leave the change. Please see Section IV of the [Fee Rules](#) for details.

- b) You cannot change a module or apply to study additional modules after the final enrolment date is passed, unless paragraph (c) or (e) or paragraph 5.5.5(b) below applies.
- c) If you wish to change your registration to a different module or to study additional modules within the same presentation you must contact us and request a late registration. This will be subject to the availability of places and to you satisfying one or more of the late registration conditions. Requests to change to different modules or study additional modules will not be considered if received more than 28 days after module start date. If a request to change is accepted under this paragraph the change will be treated for fee liability purposes as having been made on the day before the module start date.
- d) Only one request for change of module(s) registration may be approved under paragraph (c) above in any one academic year.
- e) A request to change a module registration will be approved under paragraph (c) above if it is made following the notification of a fail result in a previous module and that notification is received after the final enrolment date and not more than 28 days after the module start date.

5.5 Deferring your studies

5.5.1 Definition

- a) Deferral means ceasing to study a module with the aim of returning to complete your studies later. It can only take place after you have registered for the module, and before the final deferral date which is the last working day before you sit the examination or submit the end-of-module assessment.
- b) If you are thinking of deferring your studies you should give particular attention to the time limits for returning to your studies after deferral.

5.5.2 Deferral before module start date

- a) You may defer any module before the start date of that module. This will be treated as a cancellation of the module. Your fee liability will be adjusted to exclude the module you have deferred from and you will need to re-register for the module when you are ready to resume your studies.
- b) If you plan to take a full year or more out from all your Open University studies please see section 5.6 below.
- c) If you have previously deferred that module you are permitted to do so again, but any time limits for fee credits and assessment banking will be calculated from the date of the previously deferred module and will not be extended.

5.5.3 Deferral after module start date

- a) If you wish to defer you must notify us of your intention by following the [Cancellation Procedure](#).
- b) A deferral will be approved subject to the following conditions:
 - i. the University records that it has provided you with advice on:
 - a. the impact your decision to defer may have on your academic progress, including any impact on professional recognition; and
 - b. the impact your decision to defer may have on your liability for fees and your eligibility for financial support; and
 - ii. you confirm that you have received that advice and wish to proceed with the deferral.

Please note that your deferral will take place only upon receipt of that confirmation.

5.5.4. Completing a module after deferral

- a) You have the following options to complete a module after deferral.
 - i. Provided your module is eligible, you may retain the scores from assessments you have completed, carry these forward to a future presentation of the same module, and complete the assessment requirements during that future presentation. We call this process 'assessment banking'. If you choose this option, you have to bank all scores before the deferral date, including any blank scores for assignments that you did not submit. You may not resubmit these assessments. Please refer to the [Assessment Banking Rules](#) for the full rules which apply if you wish to take this option.
 - ii. You may submit a request to cancel the scores from assessments you have completed, and resubmit all assessments (i.e. start again). We call this process deferral without assessment banking.
 - iii. If you are returning to study a module other than the module that you deferred from this will be a deferral without assessment banking (i.e. you must start that alternative module from the beginning).
- b) If you defer a module you must return to complete that module:
 - i. for deferral with assessment banking: to a presentation of that module starting within 13 months from the start of the presentation of the deferred module.
 - ii. for deferral without assessment banking: to a presentation of a module starting within 25 months from the start of the presentation of the deferred module.
- c) You may only defer a module with assessment banking on one occasion. When you return to study you may not defer that module again with assessment banking.
- d) If you wish to defer a module that you have returned to study following a previous deferral you must contact us using the [Cancellation Procedure](#). You will not be eligible for any further fee credit and it may affect your liability for student loans or eligibility for grants.

- e) If you defer a module it will be counted as a module that is not completed. If you do not complete at least one module successfully in three consecutive presentations of study you will not normally be allowed to enrol for another module.

5.5.5 Returning to study after a deferral

- a) You must apply to re-register within the time limits set out below.
- b) If you have deferred a module with assessment banking we recommend that you apply as soon as possible to enrol for the next available presentation of that module in order to ensure that a place will be available for you to return to study. You may, subject to time limit in paragraph 5.5.4(b)(i) and to the availability of places, apply to enrol to resume a module deferred with assessment banking at any time up to and including the cut-off date in the new presentation for the last assessment for which you have banked the score. Please note that if you apply to enrol to resume the module after the published final enrolment date we do not guarantee that a place will be available for you to return to study.
- c) If you have deferred a module with assessment banking and do not return to study that module for any reason within the period set out in paragraph 5.5.4(b)(i) it will be treated as a deferral without assessment banking
- d) If you do not return to study a module within the period set out in paragraph 5.5.4(b)(ii) it will be treated as a withdrawal from the module and it will be recorded as not completed.
- e) If you wish to return to study a different module from one that you have deferred it will be treated as a withdrawal from the deferred module, which will be recorded as not completed.

Please note that unless you are returning to study the same module that you have deferred from or the module you have deferred from is in the first presentation that you have studied with the Open University, there may be restrictions on the use of a fee credit toward the fees for an alternative module. Please see the [Fee Rules](#) for full details of the conditions you are required to meet in order to use a fee credit towards the fees for an alternative module.

5.6 Taking a study break

5.6.1 Definition

A study break is a period of 12 months during which you are not enrolled for any modules. The start of the year is defined by the start of your preceding year of study and could be October, February or April. For example, if you commenced your studies in October and completed 60 credits in that study year before wanting to take a year out, the year out would run from the following October until September.

5.6.2 Maximum period of study break

- a) You may take a study break without seeking any approval. However, unless you register for another module within 2 years of completing your last module, you will cease to be a

registered student of the University and you will be unable to continue to access services that are provided to students.

- b) If you cease to be a registered student of the University, we will retain your study record and details of any credit you have been awarded and you may subsequently re-register with the University to resume your studies under the conditions of registration and regulations applying at the time of that re-registration.

5.7 Withdrawing from your studies with the Open University

5.7.1 Definition

Withdrawal is the process by which you cease your studies if you do not intend to resume your studies at a later date. If you withdraw from study, you will cease to be a student of the University. You may withdraw at any time.

5.7.2 Notification of withdrawal

- a) If you withdraw from a current module without notifying us that you intend to withdraw from all your studies, this will be treated as a deferral and you will remain a student of the University.
- b) If you do not enrol for a module within the 2 year period referred to in paragraph 5.6.2(a) above without telling us that you intend to withdraw from your studies, this will be treated as study break and you will remain a student of the University until the 2 year period has expired.

5.7.3 Effect of withdrawal

- a) When you withdraw we will retain your record of study and details of any academic credit that you have been awarded.
- b) If you withdraw before you have completed all the modules for which you registered at the time, you may be eligible for a fee credit or a fee refund as set out in Section X of the [Fee Rules](#). Withdrawal does not lead to the cancellation of fee credits towards future study and if you decide to return to study during the period of validity of any fee credit, you may be able to use that credit to resume study.

Summary of changes to this policy

March 2015

1. Added requirement for deferral advice to include impact on fees and financial support and to confirm intention to defer. Paragraphs 3.5.3(b), 4.5.3(b), 5.5.3(b).
2. Consequential amendment arising clarification of Assessment Banking Rules relating to blank assignment scores. Paragraphs 3.5.4(a)(i), 4.5.4(a)(i), 5.5.4(a)(i).
3. Amendments to clarify effect of deferral to an alternative module. Paragraphs 3.5.4, 4.5.4, 5.5.4.
4. Extension of enrolment cut-off date for registering or enrolling to resume a module deferred with assessment banking. Paragraphs 3.5.5(b), 4.5.5(b), 5.5.5(b).
5. Added reference to availability of fee credit for an alternative module subject to restrictions. Paragraphs 3.5.5, 4.5.5, 5.5.5.
6. Miscellaneous consequential changes and amendments for clarification and to correct errors.

August 2016

1. Document redesignated as applying to study in the academic years 2012/13 to 2015/16.