

Changing Your Study Plans

(Microcredentials hosted on the Virtual
Learning Environment (VLE)) 2023/24 - 2024/25

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Alternative format

If you require this Changing Your Study Plans (Microcredentials hosted on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)) Policy document in an alternative format, please contact the Student Support Team via <http://www.open.ac.uk/contact/> (phone +44 (0)300 303 5303), or via StudentHome if you are a current Open University Student. 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

The Changing Your Study Plans Policy document is in two parts.

- The first part sets out The Open University's policy about the options that you have as a Learner if you want to change the Microcredential and/or Microcredential-only qualification that you are studying, take a break from study, or withdraw from your studies with The Open University.
- The second part of the document explains the rules and procedures for each option and indicates potential financial or academic consequences.

At every stage, you can contact your [Student Support Team](#). Contact details are provided in [Section 9](#).

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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Scope

What this policy covers

This policy applies to Microcredentials and Microcredential-only qualifications starting from the Academic Year 2023/24, i.e. after 1 August 2023 until this version is withdrawn. This policy applies to you if you fall into any of the categories below:

- Enquirers (for information only)
- All Undergraduate and Postgraduate Learners studying a Microcredential and/or a Microcredential-only qualification

This document may be updated throughout the year to correct errors, improve clarity or accessibility, or to reflect changes in legal or regulatory requirements. If these amendments occur after you have registered, you will be notified by email of any significant changes to this document.

What this policy does not cover

This policy does not apply to:

- All Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students studying a module and/or a qualification, who should refer to the [Changing Your Study Plans policy](#).
- Apprentices: you should contact your Apprenticeship Enrolment and Support Team (AEST) for further discussion. Your AEST will discuss the implications of changing your study plans with you and your employer
- Postgraduate Research Students: you should contact the [Research Degrees Team](#) for options for changing your study plans
- Those studying a non-credit bearing Short Course: you should refer to the [Conditions of Registration \(Short Courses\) 2023/24](#)
- Those studying an Open University Microcredential via the FutureLearn platform you should contact mc.support@futurelearn.com

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This policy does **not** cover final assessed tasks (end-of-module assessment (EMA), or end-of-module Tutor-Marked-Assignment (emTMA)) or postponements. If you need information about policy and procedure relating to postponements or resits/ resubmissions, see the related policies, [End-of-Module \(EMA\) Policy](#), [End-of-Module Tutor-Marked Assignment \(emTMA\) Policy](#) and [Postponement Policy](#).

The Open University Student Charter Values

[The Student Charter](#) was developed in partnership by The Open University and the OU Students Association. It sets out our shared values and the commitments we make to each other as a community of staff and students. This document has been developed with the Student Charter values as its foundation.

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

Our 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.

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.

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Introduction

This document sets out The Open University's policy on helping you change your study plans to achieve your study goals. It tells you the options that you have for making an appropriate change, the rules and procedures for cancelling your enrolment or registration, for making changes to your current or planned study, for taking a break from study or for withdrawing from your studies with The Open University.

Unfamiliar terms are explained in a glossary at the end of this document.

Policy

1. Purpose

The Open University recognises that you may need to change your study plans to support your personal circumstances.

The Open University is committed to helping you achieve your study goals by offering options for changing how or what you study, and sufficient information, advice and guidance for you to make well-informed decisions. This policy supports that commitment.

1.1 The objectives of this policy are to:

- 1.1.1 Explain your legal right to cancel enrolment or registration.
- 1.1.2 Set out your options for changing your study plans.
- 1.1.3 Identify the potential financial and academic implications of these options.
- 1.1.4 Explain the procedure for each option.

2. Policy principles

2.1 The principles behind this policy are:

- 2.1.1 The Open University recognises that personal circumstances impact students' study plans and students need to study flexibly at a pace that suits their needs.

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- 2.1.2 The Open University is committed to giving students the information, advice and guidance they need to be able to choose the best study solution for their particular circumstances.
- 2.1.3 The Open University recognises students' legal rights as consumers.
- 2.1.4 Students and The Open University working in partnership to make informed decisions, are most likely to achieve a successful outcome for students.
- 2.1.5 The Open University is committed to enabling students to achieve their study goals. We will do our best to help you find a solution that allows you to do this.

3. Study Options available for changing your study plans

This section contains a brief description of each of the options available for changing your study plans. Each definition has a link to the corresponding section that outlines the rules and procedure associated with that option in greater detail.

3a) Cancel enrolment or registration (5a)

You have a statutory right to cancel your registration or enrolment to study a Microcredential and/or Microcredential-only qualification, without giving any reason, within the statutory cancellation period.

3b) Change to a different Microcredential (5b)

This means you stop studying one Microcredential and change to another.

3c) Reduce or increase the number of Microcredentials you are studying (5c)

You can reduce the number of Microcredentials you are studying by withdrawing or suspending study (deferring) from Microcredentials. You can increase the number of Microcredentials you are studying by registering or enrolling on additional Microcredentials.

3d) Withdraw from a Microcredential (5d)

This option allows you to cease studying a Microcredential without the intention to resume study of that Microcredential.

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3e) Suspend study of a Microcredential (defer) (5e)

You can temporarily suspend your study of a Microcredential (defer) by withdrawing (5b) and re-registering on a future presentation.

3f) Change or withdraw from the Microcredential-only qualification you are studying towards (5f)

You can change the Microcredential-only qualification you are studying towards, including changing to a qualification of a different level.

3g) Include or exclude a Microcredential from a Microcredential-only qualification (5g)

You can count your Microcredential credit towards a Microcredential-only qualification at any time. If you are enrolled for a Microcredential you wish to continue to study, but want to cancel your Microcredential-only qualification registration or declaration, you may do so and study that Microcredential on a standalone basis where applicable. You may also exclude an individual Microcredential you are studying from your qualification unless it forms a compulsory part of that qualification.

3h) Stop studying temporarily (taking a study break) (5h)

You can take a break for a full academic year (1 August until 31 July). This means you do not register or enrol on further Microcredentials for that year.

3i) Stop studying permanently (5i)

If you stop studying and do not intend to undertake any further study with The Open University, you can withdraw from your Microcredential and/or Microcredential-only qualification, and cease to be a Student of The Open University.

4. Where to go for further information

Section 5 of this document provides procedures for the available options for changing your study plans. If you would like to talk to someone about your study options, please contact your [Student Support Team](#). Your SST phone number and email contact can be found on [StudentHome](#) or on the Help Centre under [Your contacts](#).

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Rules and Procedures

5a) Cancel enrolment or registration

- 5.1 Under the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013, you have a right to cancel your registration or enrolment to study a Microcredential and/or qualification, without giving any reason, within 14 calendar days of the date of the email or letter confirming our acceptance of your application to register or enrol (“the Cancellation Period”). You are not required to return or pay for any goods that may have been sent to you during the cancellation period.
- 5.2 Cancellation of a Microcredential enrolment and/or qualification registration can only happen within the 14 calendar days statutory cancellation period (this might mean that it extends beyond the 14 days you have to withdraw after Microcredential start, covered in Clauses 5.7-5.14). To cancel your enrolment or registration, you must inform us of your decision by letter, email or telephone or form before the 14 calendar days statutory cancellation period has expired. The statement must include your name, your Open University Personal Identifier (PI) Number, the Microcredential and/or qualification name(s), and the code(s) for the Microcredential(s) and/or qualification you wish to cancel. If you send a letter to request cancellation of a Microcredential and/or qualification, you are advised to obtain proof of posting to confirm the date that you sent it.
- 5.3 We will acknowledge receipt of your cancellation request by e-mail or letter within 10 working days. If you have not heard from us by then, you should [contact us](#). This information is also highlighted in the confirmation of your registration or enrolment for study at The Open University.

Effect of cancellation:

- 5.4 We will cancel your registration or enrolment for the Microcredential(s) and/or qualification that you have told us you want to cancel. If you cancel within the statutory 14 calendar days cancellation period, you will receive a full refund or waiver for the fees you have agreed to pay for your study. You will not be liable to pay any further fees for that study (please note that fees paid by sponsors will be returned to the sponsor).

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- 5.5 If you have told us that you intended to pay for your studies with a tuition fee loan or tuition fee grant, we will inform the appropriate body that you have cancelled your study.

Consequences of cancellation:

- 5.6 You will not be able to study or continue to study the Microcredential(s) and/or qualification you have cancelled. If you have registered or enrolled to study more than one Microcredential and you have not cancelled all of the Microcredentials for which you are enrolled or registered, you will still be able to study those other Microcredentials, and you will remain liable to pay the fees and other charges for all Microcredentials you have not requested to cancel.

5b) Change to a different Microcredential

- 5.7 You may change your Microcredential at any time up to the final enrolment date. If you are studying a Microcredential as part of a qualification, you will need to take any requirements of your qualification, such as any compulsory Microcredential or study order, into account before requesting to change your Microcredential.
- 5.8 To change your choice of Microcredential, you must contact your [Student Support Team](#) by phone, letter or email. You must clearly state which Microcredential you would like to change, what you would like to replace it with, and the presentation of the replacement Microcredential. If you are eligible to register for a new Microcredential your request will take effect within 5 working days of the date your [Student Support Team](#) receive your phone call, letter or email.

5c) Reduce or increase the number of Microcredentials you are studying

- 5.9 To reduce the number of Microcredentials you are studying outside of the 14 calendar days cancellation period (as set out in 5a), you may withdraw from a Microcredential as per [Clauses 5.11 – 5.13](#). Withdrawing from a Microcredential may impact your ability to complete your qualification within any specified time limits for completion of qualifications (stated within your qualification regulations). If you withdraw from a Microcredential on or after day 14 of your course, you will not be entitled to any refund or fee credit.

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- 5.10 If you want to increase the number of Microcredentials you are studying, you may do this by registering or enrolling on additional Microcredentials when they are available for registration or enrolment. You must not exceed the study limits set out in the [Academic Regulations](#) or the fee limits set out in the [Fee Rules](#), if applicable.
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5d) Withdraw from a Microcredential

- 5.11 Withdrawal can take place up to the Final Deferral Date (FDD) for your Microcredential. To withdraw from a Microcredential, you must contact your [Student Support Team](#) by telephone, letter or email to say that you would like to withdraw.
- 5.12 If you request to withdraw from a Microcredential by letter, please obtain proof of postage of when you sent the letter. Once we has processed your withdrawal, we will confirm this in writing, by letter or email, within 10 working days. If you have not heard from us by then, contact your [Student Support Team](#).
- 5.13 Prior to requesting to withdraw from a Microcredential, we strongly recommend that you speak with your [Student Support Team](#) who can outline your options, including offering advice and guidance if you need help getting your study back on track. This will help ensure you have explored all of your available options prior to changing your study plans or requesting to withdraw from your Microcredential.
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5e) Suspend study of a Microcredential (defer)

- 5.14 Although you cannot cancel your Microcredential registration after the end of the 14 calendar days cancellation period, you can suspend your study of a Microcredential and return to study on the next presentation (i.e. defer your studies). To suspend your studies from a Microcredential, you must contact your [Student Support Team](#) by phone, letter or email, and advise them that you want to suspend your study of a Microcredential and defer to a later presentation.

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- 5.15 If it is not possible for you to complete the deferral process by enrolling or registering onto a future presentation of your Microcredential at the time of suspending your current registration, because the next presentation for your Microcredential is not yet available, you will need to [contact us](#) at a later date to complete this step. Please note that you must complete your new registration before the final enrolment date for the presentation you wish to study on.
- 5.16 If you are registered on a qualification and you cannot complete the necessary study before the qualification completion date, suspension and deferral from your Microcredential will mean you are not able to complete that qualification. Your qualification completion date is displayed in Your Record in [StudentHome](#). In such cases, suspension and deferral may be unsuitable. You can contact your [Student Support Team](#) to discuss alternatives and options.
- 5.17 You cannot suspend and defer your study if:
- it is beyond the Final Deferral Date; or
 - the Microcredential you are studying is in its final year of presentation (instead, you may be able to register onto another Microcredential – please see clauses 5.7 - 5.8).

5f) Change or withdraw from the Microcredential-only qualification you are studying towards

- 5.18 You can change the qualification that you are studying towards, at any time. To do this, your new qualification must be available for registration or [declaration](#); you must satisfy any specified entry requirements; and you must be able to complete the qualification within any specified time limit. If you are receiving a loan or a grant, you will also need to notify the loan or grant provider, as the change of qualification may affect your eligibility for the loan or grant.
- 5.19 To change your qualification, you need to inform your [Student Support Team](#). They will advise you of your options, including whether you can use some or all of your existing Microcredential credit or current study towards a new qualification.

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5g) Include or exclude a Microcredential from a Microcredential-only qualification

- 5.20 If you have been studying Microcredential(s) on a standalone basis and decide that you would like to start counting your Microcredential credit towards a Microcredential-only qualification, you may do so at any time. The qualification must be available for registration or declaration, you must satisfy any specified entry requirements, and you must be able to complete the qualification within any specified time limit. If you are a Microcredential-only Learner and have not yet chosen your next Microcredential, go to your Study Record page on [StudentHome](#) and click on 'choose next modules'.
- 5.21 If you want to declare or register for a qualification and count Microcredential credit towards that qualification, or wish to remove any Microcredentials from a registered or declared qualification, you should contact your [Student Support Team](#) by phone, letter or email. Your request will take effect within 5 working days of the date on which the [Student Support Team](#) receive your request.
- 5.22 If you want to cancel your Microcredential-only qualification, but you wish to continue to study your Microcredential, you can do so on a standalone basis (unless that Microcredential is unavailable for standalone study, which will be made clear on the course website). You may also opt to exclude an individual Microcredential from your qualification unless it forms a compulsory part of that qualification. We strongly recommend that you speak with your Student Support Team who can outline your options, including offering advice and guidance if you need help getting your study back on track. This will help ensure you have explored all of your available options prior to changing your study plans or requesting to cancel your registration on a Microcredential-only qualification.
- 5.23 If you are paying with an undergraduate tuition fee loan and remove a Microcredential you have studied from your qualification, we will require an alternative payment method for the Microcredential fee, as you will no longer be eligible for the loan. If you are paying an England or Wales postgraduate fee for a Microcredential and are receiving a postgraduate loan, you will no longer be eligible to receive the loan if you remove the Microcredential from your qualification. You must contact your [Student Support Team](#) to make this change.

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5h) Stop studying temporarily (taking a study break)

- 5.24 To achieve an Open University qualification, you do not need to study continuously. You can take a break of an academic year from your studies; this is referred to as a study break. We refer to a study break as being ‘approved’ if you inform your Student Support Team of your intention to take time away from your studies, or ‘unapproved’ if you do not inform your [Student Support Team, but do not then register for anything in that academic year](#).
- 5.25 Your registration as a Learner of The Open University will lapse if you do not register for a Microcredential or qualification within two consecutive academic years, unless you have applied for an **approved study break** for one of those years. If your registration lapses, we will reassess your fee scheme and funding regime if you then return to study, for example if you have changed your home address, country of residence or study location. Please refer to the [Fee Rules](#) for full details.
- 5.26 There is no limit on the number of one-year study breaks you can take. However, the time taken for a study break, whether **approved** or **unapproved**, counts towards the maximum time limit within which a qualification must be achieved (as stated within the qualification regulations).
- 5.27 If you do not enrol or register for a Microcredential within two successive academic years, you will automatically cease to be a Learner of The Open University, unless you have extended this period of no study by requesting approved study breaks.

Approved study break

- 5.28 An approved study break can be requested during or before the academic year in which the study break is to commence
- 5.29 To apply for an approved study break, you need to contact your [Student Support Team](#) by phone, letter or email. They will provide you with advice about the impact your decision may have on your study aims, including on any professional recognition. Your [Student Support Team](#) will then record your study break on your Student record. You can choose to return to study at any time before the agreed end of a study break by enrolling or registering for a Microcredential. The study break will automatically cease as soon as you do this.

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- 5.30 You can extend your approved study break for one additional academic year at a time. To do this, you should apply to your [Student Support Team](#) for an extension of the current study break before the end of your currently approved study break, as per the process in clause Ap1.28.

Unapproved study break

- 5.31 You can take a study break of one academic year without seeking any approval. An unapproved break means that we will not be aware that you intend to stop study in that academic year.

5i) Stop studying permanently

- 5.32 If you wish to stop studying on a permanent basis, we strongly recommend you speak with your [Student Support Team](#) first, as they will be able to offer advice and guidance before you make your final decision.
- 5.33 When you stop studying with us, we will retain your academic study record and details of any Microcredential credit that you have been awarded. If you decide to apply to study with us at a later date, any subsequent registration will be under the [Conditions of Registration and other](#) regulations which apply to a Learner commencing their studies at that time.
- 5.34 If you no longer want to be a Learner of The Open University, you should contact your [Student Support Team](#) by phone, letter or email, making it clear whether you are currently studying any Microcredential or qualification. Your request will take effect on the date the Student Support Team receives your request. We will acknowledge receipt of your request by e-mail or letter within 10 working days.
- 5.35 If you withdraw from The Open University before you have completed the Microcredential for which you are registered at the time, you will still be liable to pay your course Fees.
- 5.36 If you do not enrol or register for a Microcredential within two successive academic years, you will automatically cease to be a Learner of The Open University, unless you have had a study break approved through the procedure in [Clauses Ap1.30 – Ap1.32](#).

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Glossary

Academic Year

The academic year starts on 1 August each calendar year and ends on 31 July.

Cancellation period

Under the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013, you have a right to cancel your registration to study a Microcredential and/or qualification, without giving any reason, within 14 calendar days of the date of the email or letter confirming The Open University's acceptance of your application to register ("the Cancellation Period").

Count credit to a qualification

If you are studying a declared qualification you can count the Microcredential that you study and are awarded credit for towards this qualification. Credit from standalone Microcredential will not be counted for qualification purposes unless you have told us that you want this Microcredential to be counted in your qualification.

Deferral

You can temporarily suspend your study of a Microcredential by deferring a Microcredential. This means ceasing to study a Microcredential temporarily with the intention of completing that Microcredential later.

Declared qualifications

A declared qualification is a qualification that you have told us you are studying towards and to which you are counting the Microcredentials you are studying and are awarded credit for.

All postgraduate certificates, diplomas and Master's degrees are declared qualifications.

Enrolment

Enrolment is the process by which a Student who is registered for a qualification is allocated to a Microcredential which will be studied as part of that qualification.

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Final Deferral Date (FDD)

The Final Deferral Date is the last working day before you sit the final end-of-module assessment (EMA) or for Microcredentials which do not have an end of module assessment, the last working day before the submission deadline for the final piece of assessed work.

Final enrolment date (FED)

The Final Enrolment Date is the last date that a reservation can be made for a Microcredential in a specific presentation period. It will be published in the online prospectus in the Microcredential description and on StudentHome.

Microcredential

This means a course studied online and consists of between 100-150 hours of study time (including the Summative Assessment) for which academic credits are awarded.

Microcredential Credit

Each Microcredential is assigned a credit value, which is related to the workload required to successfully complete it. One credit represents about 10 hours of study. You will be awarded credits when you successfully complete a Microcredential and pass the assessment.

Microcredential Learner

This means a Learner studying for a Microcredential. As a Microcredential Learner, you will also be asked to agree to other Open University Policies and Procedures as listed within these Conditions, which refer to you as a Student.

Microcredential Start date

This is the date on which teaching of a Microcredential officially begins. There may be communication or access to learning facilities before this date. You will be informed of the Microcredential Start Date when you enrol on a Microcredential.

Presentation

A presentation is the period of time between Microcredential start and end dates. Presentations are referred to by their first month e.g. a Microcredential that is presented from February to October is a February presentation.

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Registered qualification

A registered qualification is an undergraduate qualification that you have formally registered to study and that you have enrolled on Microcredentials for and are counting credit towards.

Registered Student

You will be a Student of The Open University for the purposes of this policy if you are currently registered for a qualification or, if you are not registered for a qualification, you are either currently registered for a Microcredential or you have studied a Microcredential in either of the previous two academic years.

Registration

Registration is the process by which you become a Student of The Open University. To register you must agree to the Conditions of Registration, signalling your intention to study one or more Microcredentials or qualifications, and make or arrange payment for your studies.

Standalone Microcredential

A Microcredential that is not linked to a qualification.

Time limits for completion of qualifications

If you are studying a registered qualification, the time limit specified for your qualification is included in the qualification regulations available on your StudentHome or available on the qualification website.

If you are studying a postgraduate qualification, any time limit which is applicable to your qualification is included in the qualification regulations, available on your StudentHome.

Withdrawal

Withdrawal is the removal of your enrolment or registration on a Microcredential or qualification. Microcredential withdrawal can only take place after the end of the cancellation period and before the Final Deferral Date.

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Related Documentation

- Your Qualification Regulations, if applicable.
- [Conditions of Registration \(Microcredentials hosted on the Virtual Learning Environment \(VLE\)\)](#)
- [End-of-Module \(EMA\) Policy](#)
- [End-of-Module Tutor-Marked Assignment \(emTMA\) Policy](#)
- [TMA and iCMA Policy](#)

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

Feedback

Comments and feedback about this policy and how it might be improved are welcomed. Please submit these to SPR-Policy-Team@open.ac.uk.

Summary of significant changes

This is a new policy document.

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