

Changing Your Study Plans

Policy

(Microcredentials hosted on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)) 2025/26

Contents

Alt	ernat	ive format	\$
Intr	oduo	ction	}
Sco	ope		}
	Wha	t this policy covers	}
	Wha	t this policy does not cover4	ŀ
Suj	oport	and Information4	ŀ
	How	to contact us4	ŀ
	Rep	orting Bullying and Harassment5	5
Pol	icy		;
	1.	Purpose6	3
	2.	Policy principles6	;
	3.	Overview of your options	7
4.	Rule	es and procedures for each study change option8	}
	4a)	Cancel enrolment or registration	}
	4b)	Withdraw from a Microcredential10)
	4c)	Suspend study of a Microcredential (defer)10)
	4d)	Change to a different Microcredential11	
	4e)	Reduce or increase the number of Microcredentials you are studying11	
	4f)	Change or withdraw from the Microcredential-only qualification you are	
		studying towards12	2
	4g)	Include or exclude a Microcredential from a Microcredential-only	
		qualification12)

	4h)	Stop studying temporarily (taking a study break)	14	
	4i)	Stop studying with The Open University	15	
Exp	Expressing a concern			
Definitions			16	
Related Policies			19	
	Char	ity Statement	20	
	Give	Us Your Feedback	20	
	Our	commitment to Equality Diversity and Inclusion	20	
	Our	Student Charter Values	20	
	Wels	sh language standards	20	
About this Document21				
	Sum	mary of Significant Changes since last version	21	
	Polic	ies Superseded by this Document	21	
	Docu	ument Information	21	

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 <u>Contact</u> <u>Us</u> (visit www.open.ac.uk/contact), telephone us on +44 (0)300 303 5303, or get in touch with your Student Support Team via StudentHome if you are a current Open University Learner.

Welsh-speaking Learners are welcome to speak with a student support adviser in Welsh on +44 (0) 29 2047 1170. Rydym yn croesawu cyswllt yn Gymraeg.

Introduction

The Changing Your Study Plans (Microcredentials hosted on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)) 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 Microcredentials and/or Microcredential-only qualification 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.

For the purposes of this document, you will be referred to as a Learner of The Open University. As a Learner studying an Open University Microcredential, you may also be referred to as a 'Student'.

<u>A list of Definitions</u> is included to explain the terms used in this document. Throughout this document, where you see references to 'we', 'us', or 'our' this means The Open University. 'You' refers to you as the Learner.

Scope

What this policy covers

This policy applies to all Learners studying Microcredentials and Microcredential-only qualifications starting in the Academic Year 2025/26, (i.e. from 1 August 2025). Enquirers may also find the policy helpful when deciding whether to study with us.

What this policy does not cover

This policy does not apply to:

- Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students studying a module and/or a qualification, who should refer to the <u>Changing Your Study Plans policy</u>.
- Apprentices: you should contact your Apprentice 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 <u>Research Degrees</u> <u>Team</u> for options for changing your study plans.
- Learners studying a non-credit bearing Short Course: you should refer to the <u>Conditions of Registration (Short Courses)</u>.

This policy does **not** cover final assessed tasks (end-of-module assessment (EMA), or end-of-module Tutor-Marked-Assignment (emTMA)) or postponements. You should refer to our <u>Assessment Policies</u> for information.

Support and Information

We encourage you to talk with your <u>Student Support Team</u> before taking action to change your study plans, to ensure you are fully aware of all options and their potential implications.

How to contact us

If you have any queries about the content provided within this document and how to interpret it, please <u>Contact Us</u>. To check the contact details for the Open University, please see <u>Open University Offices</u>.

Welsh-speaking Learners are welcome to speak with a student support adviser in Welsh on +44 (0) 29 2047 1170. Rydym yn croesawu cyswllt yn Gymraeg.

Your Student Support Team

Your Student Support Team phone number and email contact can be found on <u>StudentHome</u> or Help Centre <u>Your contacts</u>.

Student Fees (England)

Phone +44 (0)1908 653411 or e-mail <u>Studentfees@open.ac.uk</u>

Your Nation Office

To check the latest contact details please see Open University offices.

If you are a Learner in Ireland, Wales or Scotland please contact your Nation Office:

The Open University in Ireland

110 Victoria Street Belfast BT1 3GN

Phone +44 (0)28 9032 3718

The Open University in Scotland

10 Drumsheugh Gardens Edinburgh EH3 7QJ

Phone +44 (0)131 226 3851

The Open University in Wales

18 Custom House Street Cardiff CF10 1AP

Phone +44 (0)29 2047 1170

Rydym yn croesawu cyswllt yn Gymraeg.

Reporting Bullying and Harassment

The Open University is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment where everyone feels safe and is treated with dignity and respect. Unlawful discrimination of any kind across The Open University will not be tolerated. We encourage students, Learners, visitors and staff to report incidents of assault, bullying harassment, hate crime or sexual harassment through <u>Report + Support</u>. This platform also provides information about what you can do if you or someone you know experiences such incidents, and where you can find support.

Policy

1. Purpose

We recognise that you may need to change your study plans to support your personal circumstances.

We are committed to helping you achieve your study goals by offering options for changing how or what you study, and will offer 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:
 - Explain your legal right to cancel enrolment or registration.
 - Set out your options for changing your study plans.
 - Identify the potential financial and academic implications of these options.
 - Explain the procedure for each option.

2. Policy principles

- 2.1 The principles are that we:
 - 2.1.1 Recognise that personal circumstances impact Learners' study plans and Learners may need to study flexibly at a pace that suits their needs at different times.
 - 2.1.2 Commit to giving Learners the appropriate information, advice and guidance they need to choose the best study solution for their particular circumstances.
 - 2.1.3 Recognise Learners' legal rights as consumers within the context of Higher Education.

- 2.1.4 Work in partnership with Learners to make informed decisions that are most likely to lead to a successful outcome.
- 2.1.5 Support Learners to find the best solutions that will enable them to achieve their study goals.

3. Overview of your options

3.1 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.

Cancel enrolment or registration

You have a statutory right to cancel your registration or enrolment to study a Microcredential, without giving any reason, within the statutory cancellation period which is within 14 days of confirmation of registration or enrolment. You can also cancel your Microcredential enrolment or registration before the Microcredential start date without incurring a fee liability. You may cancel a Microcredential-only qualification or other qualification registration or declaration at any point.

Withdraw from a Microcredential

After the statutory cancellation period has expired, this option allows you to cease studying a Microcredential without the intention to resume study of that Microcredential.

Suspend study of a Microcredential (defer)

You can temporarily suspend your study of a Microcredential (defer) by withdrawing and re-registering or re-enrolling on a future presentation. You will need to pay the full Microcredential fee again if you choose to suspend your study of a Microcredential.

Change to a different Microcredential

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

Reduce or increase the number of Microcredentials you are studying

You can reduce the number of Microcredentials you are studying by withdrawing or suspending study (deferring) from some of your Microcredentials.

You can increase the number of Microcredentials you are studying by registering or enrolling on additional Microcredentials. You must not exceed the study limits set out in the Academic Regulations or the fee limits set out in the Fee Rules.

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

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

Include or exclude Microcredential(s) from a Microcredential-only qualification

You can include valid Microcredentials or exclude non-compulsory Microcredentials from a Microcredential-only qualification for which you have registered or declared.

Stop studying temporarily (taking a study break)

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

Stop studying permanently

You can tell us that you want to stop studying with us, and can withdraw from your Microcredential and/or Microcredential-only qualification at any time. This will mean you will cease to be a Learner of The Open University.

4. Rules and procedures for each study change option

This Section indicates whether there are any academic or financial implications you need to consider before making a decision.

4a) Cancel enrolment or registration

4.1 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, 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.

- 4.2 You can cancel any Microcredential enrolment or registration before the start date of that Microcredential. If you are permitted a late registration on to a Microcredential which has already started, you may subsequently cancel this if you are still within the 14 calendar days statutory cancellation period. To cancel your Microcredential enrolment or registration, you must inform The Open University 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 and the Microcredential name, and the codes for the Microcredential(s) you wish to cancel. If you send a letter to request cancellation of a Microcredential, you are advised to obtain proof of posting to confirm the date that you sent it.
- 4.3 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 <u>contact us</u>.

Effect of cancellation:

- 4.4 We will cancel your registration or enrolment for the Microcredential(s) that you have told us you want to cancel. If you cancel a Microcredential 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).
- 4.5 If you have previously 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:

4.6 You will not be able to study or continue to study the Microcredential(s) 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 the other Microcredentials, and you will remain liable to pay the fees and other charges for the Microcredentials you have not requested to cancel.

4b) Withdraw from a Microcredential

- 4.7 To **withdraw from a Microcredential** you must inform your Student Support Team by telephone, letter or email. Withdrawals cannot be made by webchat.
- 4.8 Withdrawal can only take place after Microcredential start and before the published final deferral date towards the end of the Microcredential.
- 4.9 If you request to withdraw from a Microcredential by letter sent by post, please obtain proof of postage of when you send the letter. Once we have 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 <u>Student Support Team</u>.
- 4.10 Prior to requesting to withdraw from a Microcredential, we strongly recommend that you speak with your <u>Student Support Team</u> who can outline your options, including offering advice and guidance if for example, 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.

4c) Suspend study of a Microcredential (defer)

- 4.11 If you want to suspend study of a Microcredential but return to study it at a later presentation, you can **defer your study**. To defer from a Microcredential, you must contact your <u>Student Support Team</u> before the final deferral date by phone, letter or email, and advise them that you want to defer your study of a Microcredential and re-enrol or re-register on a later presentation for that Microcredential. You will need to pay the full Microcredential fee again if you choose to suspend your study of a Microcredential.
- 4.12 If it is not possible to enrol or register onto a future presentation of your Microcredential at the time of withdrawal from your current registration (e.g. because the next presentation for your Microcredential is not yet available), you will need to <u>contact us</u> 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.

- 4.13 You cannot 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 Section 4b).
- 4.14 If you are registered on a qualification and you cannot complete the necessary study before the qualification completion date, deferral from your Microcredential will mean you are not able to complete that qualification. Your qualification completion date is displayed in Your Record in <u>StudentHome</u>. In such cases, deferral may be unsuitable. You can contact your <u>Student Support</u> <u>Team</u> to discuss alternatives and options.

4d) Change to a different Microcredential

- 4.15 You may **change your choice of Microcredential** at any time up to the final enrolment date. If you are studying towards a Microcredential-only 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.
- 4.16 To change your choice of Microcredential, you must contact your <u>Student</u> <u>Support Team</u> 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 you would like to study. If you are eligible to register for a new Microcredential, your request will take effect within 10 working days of the date your <u>Student Support Team</u> receive your phone call, letter or email.

4e) Reduce or increase the number of Microcredentials you are studying

4.17 To reduce the number of Microcredentials you are studying outside of the 14 calendar days cancellation period (as set out in 4a), you may withdraw from a Microcredential (see Section 4d).

Withdrawing from a Microcredential may impact your ability to complete your qualification within any specified time limits (as stated within your qualification regulations). If you withdraw from a Microcredential on or after day 14 of your Microcredential, you will be liable for the full fee and will not be entitled to any refund.

4.18 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 <u>Academic Regulations</u> or the fee limits set out in the <u>Fee Rules</u>, if applicable.

4f) Change or withdraw from the Microcredential-only qualification you are studying towards

- 4.19 You can change the Microcredential-only 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 need to notify the loan or grant provider, as the change of qualification may affect your eligibility for the loan or grant.
- 4.20 To change or withdraw from your qualification, you need to inform your <u>Student</u> <u>Support Team</u>. 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.

4g) Include or exclude a Microcredential from a Microcredential-only qualification

This Section refers to **Microcredential-only qualifications**; for other Undergraduate and Postgraduate qualifications, please refer to the <u>Changing Your Study Plans Policy</u>.

- 4.21 If you have been studying standalone Microcredentials and decide that you would like to start counting valid Microcredential credit towards a Microcredential-only qualification, you may do so at any time, where the qualification regulations allow this. 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 <u>StudentHome</u> and click 'choose next modules'.
- 4.22 If you want to declare or register for a Microcredential-only qualification and include your Microcredentials towards that qualification, you should contact your <u>Student Support Team</u> by phone, letter or email. Your request will take effect within 10 working days of the date on which the <u>Student Support Team</u> receive your request.
- 4.23 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 Microcredential 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. This will help ensure you have explored all available options prior to changing your study plans or requesting to cancel your registration on a Microcredential-only qualification.
- 4.24 If you are paying with an undergraduate tuition fee loan and want to remove a Microcredential you are studying 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 you are receiving a postgraduate loan, you will no longer be eligible to receive that loan if you remove the Microcredential from your qualification. You must contact your <u>Student Support Team</u> to make this change.

4h) Stop studying temporarily (taking a study break)

This Section refers to Learners who are either registered for a Microcredential-only qualification or are studying a Microcredential on its own.

For Learners registered on other Undergraduate and Postgraduate qualifications, please refer to the Changing Your Study Plans Policy.

- 4.25 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 describe 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 <u>Student Support Team</u>, but do not then register for anything in that academic year.
- 4.26 Your registration as a Learner 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.
- 4.27 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).
- 4.28 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

- 4.29 An approved study break can be requested during or before the academic year in which the study break is to commence.
- 4.30 To apply for an approved study break, you need to contact your <u>Student</u> <u>Support Team</u> 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 <u>Student Support Team</u> 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.

4.31 You can extend your approved study break for one additional academic year at a time. To do this, you should apply to your <u>Student Support Team</u> for an extension of the current study break before the end of your currently approved study break, as per the process in clause 4.29.

Unapproved study break

4.32 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.

4i) Stop studying with The Open University

- 4.33 If you wish to stop studying with us, you should speak with your <u>Student</u> <u>Support Team</u> first, as they will be able to offer advice and guidance before you make your final decision.
- 4.34 If you no longer want to be a Learner, you should contact your <u>Student Support</u> <u>Team</u> by phone, letter or email, making it clear whether you are currently studying any Microcredentials or qualifications. 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.
- 4.35 When you stop studying with us, we will retain your academic study record and details of any Microcredential credit you have been awarded. If you decide to study with us at a later date, any subsequent registration will be under the <u>Conditions of Registration</u> and other regulations which apply to a Learner commencing their studies at that time.
- 4.36 If you leave 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 Microcredential Fees.

4.37 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 Section 4h.

Expressing a concern

If you have a query about any aspect of how we apply this policy, we encourage you <u>to</u> <u>contact us</u> promptly so that we can put things right. 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 <u>Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure</u>.

Definitions

Academic Year

The academic year starts on 1 August each 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 Microcredentials will not be counted for qualification purposes unless you have told us that you want this Microcredential to be counted in your qualification.

Declared qualifications

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

A declared qualification is a taught postgraduate qualification that you have told us that you are studying towards and to which you are linking the Microcredentials that you register for, study and are awarded credit for.

Deferral

You can temporarily suspend your study of a Microcredential by deferring. This means you withdraw from the Microcredential and re-enrol or re-register on a later presentation.

Final Deferral Date (FDD)

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

Enrolment

The process by which a Learner who is registered for an undergraduate qualification signs up to study each Microcredential which will be studied as part of that qualification.

Final enrolment date (FED)

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

A course studied online that 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

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 will 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

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'.

Registered Learner

You will be a Learner 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 currently registered for a Microcredential or you have studied a Microcredential in either of the previous two academic years.

Registered Qualification

A registered qualification is an undergraduate qualification that you have formally registered to study. You then enrol on eligible Microcredentials and count the credit from those Microcredentials towards the qualification.

All Open University undergraduate qualifications are registered qualifications. Open University postgraduate qualifications are *declared*, not *registered* qualifications.

Registration

The process by which you become a Learner of The Open University.

If you are studying for an undergraduate qualification, you will also register for this qualification (and subsequently enrol on Microcredentials within it).

If you study an undergraduate Microcredential as a standalone course rather than as part of a registered undergraduate qualification, you will register for this Microcredential.

If you are studying at postgraduate level you will register for Microcredentials and if you have declared a qualification, link these Microcredentials to your declared qualification.

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

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.

Related Policies

- Your Qualification Regulations, if applicable.
- <u>Conditions of Registration (Microcredentials hosted on the Virtual Learning</u>
 <u>Environment (VLE))</u>
- End-of-Module Assessment (EMA) Policy
- End-of-Module Tutor-Marked Assignment (emTMA) Policy
- TMA and iCMA Policy

Charity Statement

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC 000391), an exempt charity in England and Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (SC 038302). The Open University is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to its secondary activity of credit broking.

Give Us Your Feedback

If you have any comments about this policy document and how it might be improved, please share this with us, by emailing <u>SPR-Policy-Team@open.ac.uk</u>.

Our commitment to Equality Diversity and Inclusion

Our commitment to equality and inclusion is embedded in all that we do and reflects our mission to be open to people, places, methods and ideas. We celebrate diversity and the strengths that it brings, whilst challenging under-representation and differences in outcomes within our institution. We promote and manage equality and diversity to meet both our strategic goals and our statutory equality duties. We achieve this in many ways, including the development of inclusive policy.

Our Student Charter Values

The <u>Student Charter</u> was developed jointly by The Open University and the Open University Students Union. 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.

Welsh language standards

Yr iaith Gymraeg (Welsh Language Standards)

The Open University is one of several universities named in the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. This means that any Learners in Wales can expect to receive certain services from the Open University in Welsh. These are outlined in what's called the <u>Open University's Welsh language standards</u>.

This means that you can speak to our student recruitment and support team in Welsh or contact the university in Welsh. You can find out more about your rights as a Welsh language user on the <u>Open University in Wales website</u>.

About this Document

Summary of Significant Changes since last version

The following changes have been made:

- The policy has been put into a new template to improve accessibility and revisions have been made to the text to improve clarity.
- Clarification has been provided in Section 4.10 reiterating that Learners will need to pay the full Microcredential fee again if they choose to suspend their study of a Microcredential.

Policies Superseded by this Document

This policy replaces the previous version of the <u>Changing Your Study Plans Policy</u> (Microcredentials hosted on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)) 2023/24 - 2024/25.

Document Information

Version number: 1.0

Approved by: Delegate, Director Academic Services

Effective from: 1 August 2025

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