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Summary

The Postponement Policy explains when and how you can apply to complete your exam, EMA or emTMA at a later date.

There are two types of postponement, discretionary postponement and elective postponement. You can apply for discretionary postponement if you can't complete your exam, EMA or emTMA due to serious and unexpected circumstances. You can apply for elective postponement if you're given a resit or resubmission opportunity within 12 to 16 weeks of your original submission date.

If your postponement is approved, you'll take your exam, EMA or emTMA between twelve weeks to nine months after your original submission date. You can't request a shorter extension to your exam, EMA or emTMA submission date.

You will need to submit an online form to [request a postponement](#), and you will also need to provide evidence if you request a discretionary postponement. Sections 2 and 3 of this policy tell you the rules that apply to discretionary postponement. Sections 4 and 5 of this policy tell you the rules that apply to elective postponement.

Scope

What this policy covers

This policy covers discretionary and elective postponement. This policy applies to:

- All undergraduate and postgraduate taught students studying a module and/or a qualification, including students studying Access modules.
- Students in secure environments.
- Apprentices, except Level 3 modules where the final module is also the End Point Assessment.

What this policy does not cover

This policy does not apply to:

- Students who want to stop the module they're studying and start again at a later date: please see [Defer from modules](#).

- Apprentices on Level 3 modules with an integrated End Point Assessment: please contact the [Apprentice Enrolment and Support Team](#).
- Postgraduate research students: please contact the [Research Degrees Team](#).
- Students studying a Microcredential: Postponements are not available for Microcredentials, if you are studying a Microcredential delivered on The Open University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), please refer to the [Changing Your Study Plans](#).
- OpenLearn Learners: please contact the [OpenLearn team](#).
- Students studying under partnership agreements: please contact the [OUVP Curriculum Partnerships team](#).
- Vocational qualification learners: please contact the [Vocational Qualification Team](#).
- Students studying a non-credit bearing Short Course: please refer to the [Conditions of Registration \(Short Courses\)](#).

Support and Information

How to contact us

If you have any queries about this policy, please [Contact Us](#). Welsh-speaking Students and Learners are welcome to speak with a student support adviser in Welsh on +44 (0) 29 2047 1170.

Help centre articles

[Discretionary postponement: Postponing your exam, EMA or emTMA | Help Centre | The Open University](#)

Policy

1. Policy purpose

- 1.1 This policy sets out when and how you can apply to delay your exam, EMA or emTMA if you're unable to complete it by the submission date.
- 1.2 The objectives of this policy are:

1.2.1 To set out the circumstances in which you may apply to postpone your exam, EMA or emTMA.

1.2.2 To tell you how to apply for postponement and the deadlines which you must meet.

2 Discretionary postponement policy

2.1 A discretionary postponement allows you to delay your exam, EMA or emTMA submission.

2.2 You can apply for discretionary postponement if you can't complete your exam, EMA or emTMA because of reasons outside your control. This could include:

- Serious or unexpected circumstances affecting your preparation for your exam, EMA or emTMA. For example, experiencing a serious illness or bereavement.
- Unexpected issues arising on the day of your exam which mean you can't complete or submit your exam.
- You need longer to study the module due to a disability.

2.3 You can't postpone if you submit any part of your exam, EMA or emTMA. If you submit your exam, EMA, or emTMA we will cancel your postponement request.

2.4 You should provide evidence that supports your request. This might include:

- Medical evidence, such as a doctor's letter, medical records or copies of appointments or hospital referrals;
- Evidence of a bereavement, such as an obituary notice or funeral order of service;
- Other third-party evidence.

2.5 We'll also look at the information you've given us in your request and records of your contact with the Open University. This may include:

- Contact with Student Support Teams or the Computing Helpdesk;

- Records of your participation on your module;
 - Correspondence with your tutor about your circumstances, if you include a copy with your request.
- 2.6 If you don't have evidence to support your request, we will consider you for an exceptional postponement. You'll need to tell us why you're unable to provide evidence so we can consider your case. You can only have an exceptional postponement once on your qualification, so you should provide evidence if you can.
- 2.7 If you have a disability which means you need longer to study the module, you may request to postpone your first exam, EMA or emTMA submission opportunity on any module as a reasonable adjustment. You should speak to your SST before you request a postponement to understand how this will affect your study plans. You will need to provide evidence of your disability. If you've already provided evidence to The Open University for another reason, you won't need to provide this again.
- 2.8 You must complete your module within 13 months of the original exam, EMA or emTMA submission opportunity, or within three exam, EMA or emTMA submission opportunities, whichever occurs first. This means that:
- If you postpone your exam, EMA or emTMA more than once, you won't be offered a resubmission opportunity if you fail the module.
 - You can't postpone your final exam or EMA or emTMA submission if you have already postponed more than once.
 - You can't postpone your final exam or EMA or emTMA if you have had one postponement and one resit or resubmission result.
- 2.9 We can only make an exception to this rule if:
- You haven't been able to complete your module in this time frame for reasons related to your disability; or
 - You have experienced poor service from the University which has caused you to miss a submission opportunity.

- 2.10 If your request for a postponement is not approved and you don't submit an exam, EMA or emTMA which is compulsory for your module, then you'll fail the module.
- 2.11 If your postponement request is not approved, you will be allowed to resit your exam or resubmit your work as long as:
- you have submitted your request before the application deadline (see [section 3.1](#));
 - you have not previously had a postponement or a resit or resubmission result for the module; and
 - the resit or resubmission date falls within 13 months of your original opportunity.

If you're given a resit or resubmission opportunity, your result will be capped at the lowest grade of pass.

- 2.12 If your application for discretionary postponement is approved, your module result will not be capped.

3 Discretionary postponement procedure

- 3.1 To apply for discretionary postponement, you must submit the [discretionary postponement webform](#). Submit your postponement request when you're sure you won't be able to take your exam or submit your EMA or emTMA. You must submit it no later than midnight (UK local time) on the day after your exam date or EMA or emTMA submission cut-off date.
- 3.2 If you can't meet this deadline for reasons outside your control, you can still apply for postponement. You must be able to provide evidence to show why you couldn't meet the original deadline.
- 3.3 If you couldn't upload supporting evidence with your application form, email this to disc-post@open.ac.uk. You should send this within 14 days of submitting your application.
- 3.4 You can't apply for a discretionary postponement if you submit any part of your exam, EMA or emTMA.

If you can submit your exam, EMA or emTMA but unexpected circumstances have affected your performance, you should refer to the information on [Special Circumstances](#).

- 3.5 If you need advice or guidance you should [contact your Student Support Team \(SST\)](#) before requesting a postponement. If you are on an apprenticeship programme, you should [contact your Apprentice Enrolment and Support Team \(AEST\)](#) before requesting a postponement to discuss the impact on your studies.
- 3.6 We consider each request individually. Complex requests may be referred to the Assessment Exceptions Group (AEG) to be considered by two or three reviewers.
- 3.7 We may need to ask you for more evidence if the evidence you provided doesn't fully support your request. We will try to suggest what forms of evidence might be appropriate.
- 3.8 We aim to contact you within 10 working days of submitting your request, or earlier where possible. If you apply close to the date of your exam or submission date of your EMA or emTMA, you might not receive a response before your submission date.
- 3.9 If you haven't passed a compulsory element of your module you should speak to your SST or AEST before requesting a postponement. You can't normally pass the module if you haven't passed all the compulsory elements. You should refer to the assessment information on your StudentHome page to check if your module has any compulsory elements. These could include a threshold on a TMA or attendance at a residential school. You can submit [Special Circumstances](#) if unexpected circumstances have affected a compulsory element on your module.
- 3.10 Your postponed exam, EMA or emTMA will usually be due 12-16 weeks after the original submission date, but it may be longer for some modules. If you're not sure if you can complete your exam, EMA or emTMA in this timeframe, refer to the information about how to [Defer from modules](#) or speak to your SST or AEST.

- 3.11 Your result will be updated to 'Postponed' after the main result release date. You can find the result release date for your module on your StudentHome page.

4 Elective postponement policy

- 4.1 An elective postponement allows you to postpone your resit or resubmission until the next available submission opportunity for your module.
- 4.2 You can apply for an elective postponement if:
- You have been given a resit or resubmission opportunity which occurs within 12 to 16 weeks of your original submission date;
 - You haven't previously applied for discretionary postponement on the module; and
 - Your module permits it.
- 4.3 If your module permits elective postponement, you will find information in the 'Resit and resubmission resources' section on your resit or resubmission module website. The section is only available once you are registered on the resit or resubmission presentation, after receiving your resit or resubmission result. Your module is likely to permit elective postponement if it follows one of the following patterns:

Month module ends	Resit/Resubmission month
March	June
June	September
September	December

- 4.4 You can't electively postpone if you submit any part of your exam, EMA or emTMA. If you submit your exam, EMA, or emTMA, we will cancel your postponement request.
- 4.5 If you electively postpone, the next opportunity to resit your exam or resubmit your EMA or emTMA could be up to nine months away.

This will be your final opportunity to complete your module and you won't be able to apply for a further postponement of the exam, EMA or emTMA.

- 4.6 Submit your postponement request when you're sure you won't be able to take your exam or submit your EMA or emTMA. You must request a postponement no later than midnight (UK local time) on the day after your exam date or EMA or emTMA submission cut-off date.
- 4.7 You don't need to provide a reason or evidence to request elective postponement.
- 4.8 If you submit a request for elective postponement but you are not eligible, and you don't submit your exam, EMA or emTMA, you will fail the module.
- 4.9 If you're not eligible for elective postponement, you may still apply for discretionary postponement (see section 2).
- 4.10 An elective postponement will not change whether your resit or resubmission is capped. Please refer to the [Resit and Resubmission policy](#) to find out more about resit and resubmission rules.

5 Elective postponement procedure

- 5.1 If your module permits elective postponement, you will find information about it in the 'Resit and resubmission resources' section on your resit or resubmission module website. The section is only available once you are registered on the resit or resubmission presentation, after receiving your resit or resubmission result.
- 5.2 You may apply for elective postponement at any point up to midnight (UK local time) on the day following your remote exam, EMA or emTMA cut-off date. Requests after this deadline will not be accepted.
- 5.3 You can apply for elective postponement using the webform. You can find the webform and more guidance about elective postponement on the [Postponing your resit or resubmission](#) page on the Help Centre.
- 5.4 If you want to discuss the impact of elective postponement on your studies, please [contact your SST or AEST](#) or equivalent contact if you are studying as

part of an apprenticeship programme. If your module has a practice element you must always seek advice before requesting elective postponement.

- 5.5 Your result will be updated to 'Postponed' after the main result release date. You can find the result release date for your module on your StudentHome page.
- 5.6 If you have applied for elective postponement in time but your result says 'Fail: Not Entitled to Resit', or 'Fail: Not Entitled to Resubmit', you must [contact the Exams team](#) as soon as possible.

6 Postponement eligibility

The table below shows which type of postponement you can apply for based on the number of exam, EMA or emTMA submission opportunities you've had for your module.

Exam/EMA/emTMA opportunity	Discretionary postponement	Elective postponement
First opportunity	Yes	No
Had one postponement previously	Yes	No
Received resit or resubmission result within 16 weeks of original submission and not previously postponed	No	Yes
Received resit or resubmission result more than 16 weeks after original submission and not previously postponed	Yes	No
Either: - Postponed twice - Had one postponement and one resit or resubmission result	No, unless an exception applies (see section 2.9)	No

Methods of Appeal

If your request for discretionary postponement is not approved, you can ask for this to be reviewed if:

- you can show that this decision was based on incorrect information; or

- you have further information or evidence.

You can ask for the decision to be reviewed by replying to the original decision email.

If you have provided further information or evidence, the original decision-maker may be able to approve your request. Otherwise, the decision will be reviewed by two different members of the AEG. If they cannot agree, a third member of the AEG will be asked to review your case. The AEG is unlikely to change the original decision unless you've provided new information or evidence.

If you still feel that The Open University has not responded appropriately to your request, you can raise a formal complaint or appeal using the [Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#). You can find out more information about how to do this in The Open University's [Complaints and Appeals pages](#) on the Help Centre.

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

Definitions

Apprentice Enrolment and Support Team (AEST)

The AEST is the first point of contact for Apprentices in line with Apprenticeship Programmes. You can find [contact details for your AEST](#) on the Help Centre.

Assessment

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

Assessment Exceptions Group (AEG)

The Assessment Exceptions Group (AEG) consider cases which fall outside of standard assessment policy. Each case is considered by two independent reviewers. If the reviewers don't agree, the case is also considered by a third reviewer.

Capped resit/resubmission

If you resit your exam or resubmit your EMA or emTMA, your module outcome will normally be capped at the lowest grade of pass.

This means your module result following a resit or resubmission won't be higher than a bare Pass or Pass 4 grade. A postponement will not cause your module result to be capped.

Discretionary Postponement

If you are unable to complete your final assessed task i.e. exam end-of-module assessment (EMA) or end-of-module tutor-marked assignment (emTMA) due to serious and unexpected circumstances, you may apply to postpone this to the next available opportunity.

Elective Postponement

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

End-of-Module Assessments (EMA)

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

End-of-module Tutor-Marked Assignments (emTMA)

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

Exam (examination)

Exams are held online and remotely in exam periods at the end of module presentations. The duration and format of exams varies by module.

Some exams will be invigilated by an online invigilation provider – you will be told if this applies to your module.

Fail

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

Final assessed tasks

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

interactive Computer-Marked Assignment (iCMA)

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

interactive Computer-Marked Exam (iCME)

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

Online School

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

Online TMA/EMA service

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

Resit

If you take your exam but do not achieve the required standard for a pass on your module you may be offered a resit opportunity.

There is a minimum requirement to qualify for a resit specific to your module/s which is explained in the Assessment section on your StudentHome page. You can only resit once, and your module result will normally be capped.

Resubmission

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

Third-party evidence

Evidence obtained from an independent body other than the student themselves or their family, friends and acquaintances, for example, a medical certificate from the GP or hospital in the case of medical evidence.

Related Policies and Legislation

Refer to the following documentation in conjunction with this document:

- [Academic Regulations](#) and your Qualification Regulations, if applicable (available via [StudentHome](#) once you are registered for a qualification, or on the [online prospectus](#)).
- [TMA and iCMA Policy](#)
- [End-of-Module Assessment \(EMA\) Policy](#)
- [End-of-module tutor-marked assignment \(emTMA\) Policy](#)
- [Exam Policy](#)
- [Resit and Resubmission Policy](#)
- [Special Circumstances Policy](#)
- [Module Results Determination Policy](#)
- [Fee Rules](#)
- [Student Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#)
- [Student Privacy Notice](#)

About this Document

Summary of significant changes since last version

The following significant changes have been made:

- New policy template has been used so the layout has slightly changed, and wording updated.

Policies Superseded by this Document

This policy replaces the older version 1.0 of the Postponement Policy dated April 2025.

Document Information

Version number: 1.1

Approved by: Delegate, Director Academic Services

Effective from: May 2026

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