

NPQ Deferral Policy

Responsibility:	NPQ Programme Director	Date doc. Created	March 2022
Print name sign off:	Director of Quality & Compliance	Last review date of doc.	August 2025
Signature:	Chris Garcia	Next review date	March 2026

Introduction

This policy sets out the requirements and process for requesting a deferral to the NPQ programme team. It is for all NPQ participants¹ who commenced one of the reformed NPQs (National Professional Qualification) from September (Autumn) 2021.

1. Deferral

1.1 General Principles

Deferrals are for participants who have started a programme, have not yet reached the assessment phase, and would like to defer the remainder of the programme until a later date.

Important: In line with changes in the DfE policy, from November 2025, deferrals will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Participants can request a deferral when they believe that they will be unable to complete their programme within the given timeframe due to exceptional extenuating circumstances.

1.2 Exceptional Circumstances for Deferral

Reasons for deferral will be limited to exceptional circumstances including but not limited to:

- Serious illness or long-term sickness
- Pregnancy and birth-related leave
- Bereavement
- Emergency family situations requiring extended absence

Note: General capacity issues or standard school workload will not normally be considered sufficient grounds for deferral under the updated policy.

¹ For NPQ participants who are following the Apprenticeship Dual Qualification with NPQ, participants will need to contact the Apprenticeship Team, apprenticeships@bestpracticenetwork.co.uk for deferral/break-in-learning process

1.3 Non-Engagement Policy

Non-engagement on the programme for 3 consecutive months may result in automatic deferral or withdrawal from the course at Best Practice Network's discretion.

1.4 Deferral Timeframes and Return Requirements

All Deferrals from September 2025:

- Deferred participants must rejoin the next available cohort
- Final deadline to return is the last viable cohort of the current framework (expected November 2027)
- No deferrals will be permitted in the final cohort of the framework under any circumstance
- Participants who have not returned from deferral by the framework deadline will be withdrawn. Their place on the programme, existing assignments/ work toward the qualification and any associated scholarship funding will not carry forward to any new NPQ commercial framework

For Existing Deferrals (Cohorts 1-8):

- Participants who deferred prior to September 2025 retain their existing 12-month re-engagement window but are subject to all points above.

1.5 Programme Access During Deferral

By requesting a deferral, participants agree to immediately pause their access to course content and events. When reengaging:

- Completed learning cycles will be retained
- Incomplete cycles will either need to be restarted or, previous learning evidence/submissions will need to be re-uploaded for reference

1.6 Automatic Withdrawal Risk

Critical: If a deferred participant does not re-engage on the date agreed, they are at risk of being automatically withdrawn from the programme. This would result in:

- Loss of funding for that programme
- Liability for any existing fees (if appropriate)
- Need to reapply for an NPQ and check funding eligibility at the time of application

1.7 Programme Availability Notice

Please note: For DfE (Department for Education) accredited courses, Best Practice Network cannot guarantee the availability of programmes or scholarship funding² outside of the current contract

² For those who were eligible for scholarship at the start of their NPQ.

period. If a participant defers their place on a programme which becomes unavailable, Best Practice Network will work with the participant and the DfE to agree an alternative solution.

2. Requesting a Deferral

2.1 Application Process

Participants wishing to request a deferral will need to contact Best Practice Network by emailing npq@bestpracticenetwork.co.uk.

An online form will then be sent to the participant who then completes and submits the form providing:

- The exceptional circumstances requiring deferral
- Supporting evidence where applicable
- The date when they wish to re-engage

2.2 Assessment and Approval

The participant will then be informed by email if their request has been accepted, or if any further clarification is required. **The deferral is only valid after approval by the NPQ Candidate Support Team**, who will assess whether the circumstances meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances.

All sensitive and personal data will be treated in accordance with data protection guidelines -

<https://www.bestpracticenetwork.co.uk/privacy-notice>

3. Re-engagement

3.1 Return Process

The participant will be contacted prior to their chosen re-engagement date with information about the cohort they will be joining. Participants will re-engage from the start of the last incomplete cycle of their NPQ.

3.2 Confirmation Requirement

In preparation for workforce planning related to re-engagement, our team will contact participants prior to the course resuming following a deferral period. To prevent an automatic withdrawal (as set out in 1.6), participants are advised to respond to this correspondence to confirm their return to the programme on the agreed date.

3.3 Face-to-Face Events

Participants may attend a Face-to-Face event they previously attended prior to deferral but a fee of £100 per event will apply.

3.4 Record Keeping

Agreed re-engagement dates are based on individual circumstances. We encourage participants to retain a copy of their deferral request form and any correspondence regarding their re-engagement dates, so it is clear when they are expected to return to the programme.