

NPQ and NPD Deferral Policy

Responsibility:	NPQ Programme Director	Date doc. Created	March 2022
Print name sign off:	Will Rogers	Last review date of doc.	April 2026
Signature:	Will Rogers	Next review date	March 2027

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 Qualifications) and the National Professional Development programmes delivered by Best Practice Network.

The policy applies to all participants enrolled on DfE-funded or commercially funded NPQ, EIRT and other eligible professional development programmes where a formal deferral process is available.

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

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

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

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.

Where a participant becomes non-responsive and repeated attempts to make contact have been unsuccessful, Best Practice Network may undertake wellbeing checks. This may include contacting the participant's sponsor, employing setting, school, organisation, or other appropriate professional contacts associated with their programme application or participation.

These contacts will be made where considered necessary to establish the participant's welfare, confirm their intentions regarding programme participation, or support appropriate programme administration.

Participants are therefore expected to keep their contact details up to date and respond to communications regarding their programme status. Failure to respond to communications from Best Practice Network may result in deferral, withdrawal, or progression to the next stage of the non-engagement process.

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):

- In line with Department for Education requirements introduced in 2026, Best Practice Network will actively review and contact participants currently recorded as deferred.
- Where a participant is able to return, they will normally be expected to re-engage with the next available cohort.
- Participants who do not re-engage when offered a suitable return opportunity may be withdrawn from the programme.
- Exceptions may be considered where there is a clearly evidenced reason preventing re-engagement, including pregnancy, maternity leave, long-term illness or other exceptional circumstances approved by Best Practice Network.

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:

Participants who choose not to return to their programme, or who do not respond to communications regarding re-engagement, may be withdrawn from the programme.

Participants who have not returned by the final permissible cohort of the current framework will be withdrawn from the programme.

This would result in:

- Loss of funding for that programme
- Liability for any existing fees (if appropriate)

Existing programme progress will not transfer to a future framework. So any participants wishing to undertake the qualification in future may be required to submit a new application and meet any funding eligibility requirements in place at that time

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 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

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

- 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>

Best Practice Network reserves the right to request additional evidence where necessary and to refuse deferral requests that do not meet the exceptional circumstances criteria outlined in Section 1.2.

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.

3.5 Funding Status on Return

Where a participant returns from an approved deferral, they will normally retain the funding status associated with their original registration, subject to Department for Education rules and programme availability.