



## **University of Cambridge Professional and Continuing Education Deferral Policy**

### **1. Purpose**

1.1. University of Cambridge Professional and Continuing Education (PACE) accepts that offer-holders may not be able to start their studies as planned and may therefore request a deferral of their place on a course. This document provides guidance as to when and how deferrals can be requested, and the rationale for accepting or declining this request.

### **2. Scope**

2.1. This policy applies to all individuals holding offers on Postgraduate matriculated and non-matriculated award-bearing courses administered by PACE, will take effect from October 2025 and will apply to those courses starting in 2026. This includes MSt programmes delivered by University of Cambridge departments.

2.2. This policy does not apply to individuals holding offers on Undergraduate award bearing courses, weekend courses, residential courses, the International Summer Programme or short online courses.

### **3. Definitions**

3.1. Deferral is the act of changing the year in which an offer holder will start their course from that stated in their application or offer letter.

### **4. Principles**

4.1. It is the general principle that PACE does not normally offer deferrals on its courses.

4.2. However, in limited cases, PACE will consider requests for deferral that are based on a change of circumstance that is outside the reasonable control of an offer-holder, could not have been foreseen, and that will prevent an offer-holder taking up their place on the original course start date.

4.3. Circumstances for considering deferrals are as follows:

4.3.1. An offer-holder encounters 'substantial difficulties' in joining their course, which would be considered unfair treatment under the Equalities Act 2010.

This would normally apply in two circumstances:

- a) An offer-holder is pregnant and for reasons to do with pregnancy or maternity a deferral would be appropriate
- b) An offer-holder has a disability where a deferral would be considered a reasonable adjustment

4.3.2. An offer-holder is unable to take up their place due to:

- a) a military posting (such as national service or military deployment), or



- b) a significantly unforeseeable or unchangeable work-related reason (such as NHS clinical placement rotation etc.), or
- c) a serious health problem or treatment, including acute episodes of a chronic condition (in a pandemic, an applicant with an interacting, underlying health condition could request a delay, but the pandemic itself would not be a reason to delay), or
- d) a time-limited crisis relating to a dependent child or family member for whom the offer holder is the sole carer, or
- e) paternity, or
- f) the actions or inactions of the University, or
- g) the offer holder is prevented from entering the UK through the arbitrary action of a third party (e.g. travel restrictions on an individual imposed by an overseas government), or
- h) an offer-holder is unable to take up their place due to unexpected redundancy from a job that impacts their ability to pay for the course, or because holding that job was a key criterion for undertaking the course.

4.4. Offer-holders may only defer once, and this may only be to the following academic year.

4.5. Deferrals can only be requested for the same course that was originally applied for.

4.6. All conditions of an offer must be met before a deferral is requested or considered.

4.7. Deferrals may only take place prior to registration. If a student has registered, they should contact their course administration team to discuss options, such as intermission.

4.8. If a deferral is granted, offers to study on a course may be amended with revised or new conditions as appropriate. For example, if evidence of English language will become out of date during the deferral period, PACE may request more recent proof. Similarly, an updated thesis or research proposal may be requested.

4.9. Course fees will be charged at the level set for the revised year of entry. The offer holder will, as far as possible, be given clear and precise information on fees applying to the new year of entry, in line with [Competition and Markets Authority advice on consumer protection law](#) for Higher Education providers.

4.10. For matriculated programmes, college places cannot be deferred and will need to be re-applied for as appropriate.

## 5. Process

5.1. All deferral requests must be submitted no later than 21 working days prior to the start date of the appropriate course.



- 5.2. All deferral requests will be considered by the Admissions team, in conjunction with any relevant teams at PACE, including academic teams. Requests will be processed within 21 working days of receipt and offer-holders notified of the outcome in writing.
- 5.3. Deposits paid will be carried over to the new course start date. Individual courses may require an enhanced non-refundable deposit to hold an applicant's place. This will be communicated to students when the deferral request is submitted.
- 5.4. Where a deferral is granted, the offer-holder will be informed in writing.
- 5.5. Where a deferral request is rejected, the offer-holder will be informed in writing as to the reason. This may include (but is not limited to) qualifications being too old, courses being oversubscribed, or courses which will no longer be running in the next academic year.