

Break in Learning Procedure

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 This procedure must be followed when assessing individual requests from apprentices for a Break in Learning during their course. The procedure is only intended for requests made by apprentices; where the University thinks an apprentice would benefit from a break, the Cause for Concern policy applies.
- 1.2 The procedure is applicable to all apprentices enrolled on a Health Sciences University Award.
- 1.3 The form associated with this procedure must be used by individual apprentices whenever a request for a Break in Learning is submitted. The procedure ensures that any justified individual situation is considered and allows for fair and equitable management of apprentices' circumstances.

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 Apprentices: to understand the implications of taking a Break in Learning in discussion with their Course Leader and line manager. To discuss other options with their line manager, and Course Leader, and agree an action plan wherever possible to support them to continue in learning. To submit any request on the Break in Learning/withdrawal form and complete the form in full after their employer has signed to support their request (electronic signature is acceptable).
- 2.2 Course Leaders: to assist and support apprentices who may need a Break in Learning to engage their employer in a discussion and to consider formal requests in line with the University's procedure. To ensure that the last date in learning is evidenced and agreed with the apprentice and employer
- 2.3 Employer: to ensure that only the agreed last date in learning is used to pause the apprenticeship on their apprenticeship service, and that this is done promptly, when advised by the university
- 2.4 Tri-partite progress review Lead: to agree the timetable of contact prior to return.
- 2.5 Course Administrator: to ensure that the Break in Learning request is completed correctly and compile the evidence of the last date in learning before approval is confirmed. The Course Administrator can advise apprentices on the process and will confirm in writing to the apprentice the outcome of the Break in Learning request and of any conditions which may apply. The Course Administrator also updates the student record system to reflect that the apprentice is on a Break in Learning and informs relevant staff. The Course Administrator ensures the apprentice is invited to undertake online registration when appropriate for their return.
- 2.6 Assessment Board: to consider apprentice assessment outcomes and profiles including those of apprentices who have taken a Break in Learning over the period of time under consideration. To confirm unit marks and/or identify and confirm units where further work is required, and to ratify apprentice outcomes.

3. PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 A Break in Learning is a pause in an apprenticeship for a short period of time to allow the apprentice to return to their apprenticeship when they are able to do so. A Break in Learning is a last resort option for an apprenticeship, every effort must be made to enable the apprentice and their employer to maintain their course before a break is agreed, where the apprentice is willing to agree to this action
- 3.2 All other options short of a full break must be explored with the employer and their apprentice, for example,
 - apprentice circumstances may justify an extension under the Exceptional Personal Circumstances Policy.
 - an apprentice may be able to continue their studies with additional learning support / with a referral to Student and Wellbeing Services for additional support.
 - the employer may agree to more off the job learning time,

- apprentices may attend lectures remotely,
 - Support may be arranged from the tri-partite progress review lead, unit lead
 - All actions agreed must be documented in an action plan agreed with, and signed by, the employer and apprentice
- 3.3 A Break in Learning must be agreed for as short a time as needed. Apprentices may not return from a long break. All arrangements must be agreed with the apprentice, and their employer. The employer must support the break and the apprentice must involve them in the agreement and planning. Where the apprentice is absent, for example due to illness, discussions must take place with the employer.
- 3.4 The break will pause apprenticeship funding and there are key evidence requirements which must be met by the University when the break is agreed.
- 3.5 A Break in Learning can be requested by an apprentice, and where supported by their employer, the presumption is to agree to this after a plan of action for their return, and a return date has been agreed with the apprentice and their employer.
- 3.6 As part of the break the employer pauses the apprenticeship on their Apprenticeship Service digital account. It is important that the employer knows how to do this correctly. The apprenticeship lead must be contacted immediately when an apprentice requests or looks likely to request a break
- 3.7 When the apprentice returns, their apprenticeship programme will be replanned and extended to take account of the Break and its impact on the planned end date of the apprenticeship. The apprentice's Training Plan must be updated and reissued, signed and a copy held by apprentice, employer, and university.
- 3.8 Any period of planned learning stops funding. It is important that a date of final learning where it can be evidenced that the apprentice participated in learning is established as the start of the break – the start date is not the date of discussions or the date that the university was informed about the break by the apprentice or employer. It is also important that employer and apprentice understand that any off the job learning undertaken whilst on a break does not count towards their apprenticeship planned learning hours and cannot be recorded as such in their off the job learning log.
- 3.9 Apprentices need to request permission for a Break in Learning and consult with an appropriate key member of staff (see appendix 1).
- 3.10 All requests for Break in Learning will be considered in line with this procedure to ensure parity and equity for all apprentices and avoid any apprentice gaining an unfair advantage by taking a Break in Learning before major pieces of assessment. Apprentices should therefore be aware that it may not always be possible to permit a break, and a full withdrawal may be the only option.
- 3.11 When deciding whether an apprentice should be permitted a Break in Learning, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements should also be considered. The University needs to be confident that by extending the registration period, the apprentice's experience, and the award that they will eventually receive will still be relevant to the workplace. In cases where the time remaining would not allow the apprentice to complete their studies within the period of registration if the apprentice were to have a Break in Learning, the decision on whether to permit the apprentice a Break in Learning, and to extend the registration period accordingly, must be taken by the Course Leader (or equivalent) in consultation with the relevant Assessment Board Chair.
- 3.4 A Break in Learning might mean that the University would have to deliver units that are equivalent to units which are no longer running or the apprentice may be required to take units that were not part of their original degree structure. These situations should be managed and care should be taken to ensure broad equivalence of intended learning outcomes.
- 3.5 Apprentices seeking a Break in Learning cannot opt to repeat a unit which they have already successfully completed. Apprentices will have to attend from the start of any units they have not achieved, i.e. at the start of semester 1 if there are any semester 1 only units or units which span both semesters; and Semester 2 start if only Semester 2 units are outstanding. Apprentices would normally be encouraged to attend (without assessment) in all units so that they keep up their knowledge base.
- 3.7 Apprentices should be supported wherever possible to complete units before interrupting their study where possible although it is accepted that there will be instances when a break mid-unit is unavoidable, especially when studying units which span both semesters.

- 3.8 Where an apprentice has completed the taught part of a unit(s), the apprentice should normally be required to complete the unit assessment(s) (by extension if necessary). This is to ensure parity and equity for all apprentices and avoid any apprentice gaining an unfair advantage by taking a Break in Learning before major pieces of assessment. The Course Leader has the right to grant extensions based on the valid reasons documented and evidenced on the Break in Learning/withdrawal request form (which may or may not align with the definition of exceptional personal circumstances within the Exceptional Personal Circumstances Policy).
- 3.9 Breaks in learning can be up to 12 months in length. Extensions to a Break in Learning may be considered by following the same procedures. Any request that would result in a Break in Learning for longer than 12 months must be referred to the Academic Registrar for approval.

4. CONSIDERATION OF A REQUEST FOR BREAK IN LEARNING

- 4.1 In all cases of a Break in Learning the following principles should be adhered to:
- a) Apprentices need to demonstrate a clear and valid reason for their request.
 - b) Each apprentice's situation will be different and should be dealt with on an individual basis.
 - c) The Apprentice employer must be involved in the planning, agreement, and execution of the break. This action plan will include the planned date of return and any contact points during the Break. Planning for a return wherever possible must be part of the action planning process.
 - d) All evidence requirements must be met by the Course team in agreeing the break
 - e) Staff should be careful to ensure that apprentices are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by the decision as compared with apprentices who are continuing with their study.
 - f) Any apprentice wishing to request a Break in Learning is required to discuss and agree this with their employer, seeking their signature as part of the Break in Learning/withdrawal request form (electronic signatures are acceptable). In situations where the period of registration may need to be extended, the decision on whether to permit the apprentice a period of interruption should be made in consultation with the relevant Assessment Board Chair.
 - g) Where possible, apprentices should be required to complete units before interruption (by extension if necessary). Where this is not possible, each apprentice should be advised on their individual position and the Break in Learning request form updated accordingly, for example where a apprentice takes a break mid unit, they are expected to repeat the unit with attendance (see 3.5).
 - h) There may need to be a mixed solution if more than one unit is affected, dependent upon the types of unit involved and the assessment schedule for the programme as well as the situation of the apprentice. For instance, a Break in Learning may be granted but the apprentice may be able to complete some but not all units through extension arrangements.
 - i) If a Break in Learning is agreed upon mid-unit, then the apprentice should be clear at the point of the break what their position will be at the planned point of return to study and the decision recorded on their apprentice record (see 3.5 above). The apprentice should be advised that the situation may be different if they were to return at a different time than originally intended.
 - j) If assessment has taken place, or there is a record of achieved practice competencies (where relevant), or substantial work has taken place within a unit, an academic judgement will be made as to whether the apprentice is able to return to complete the unit at a later point, or whether the apprentice will be required to start the unit again. If there is any doubt a second academic opinion should be sought. In addition, the apprentice must be advised that all assessment outcomes are subject to ratification by the next Assessment Board.
 - k) The apprentice profile should be considered by the next Assessment Board for ratification and noted on the apprentice record, to ensure clarity in terms of the apprentice's position at the point of return to study (and marks are ratified if there is a mark involved). Where there is a possibility that the apprentice's registration period on the course might be exceeded, the guidelines in section 4.2 should be followed.
 - l) Course Teams must make the employer and apprenticeship lead aware that a Break in Learning is in progress / is likely immediately this becomes evident to ensure that employer and apprentice actions are compliant with the requirements of the apprenticeship. Course Teams are accountable for evidence requirements
 - m) Apprenticeship Lead must liaise with the employer to make them aware of their responsibilities to pause the apprenticeship on the Apprenticeship Service.

- n) Apprentices must be made aware of the implications of taking a Break in Learning, such as the cessation of access to Health Sciences University campus and facilities and free chiropractic treatment.
- o) The outcome of the request will be put in writing as an action plan to the apprentice, including information outlined in f, g, h, and j above, if applicable.

Version	1.0
Summary of changes	NA- new
Approved by	Academic Board
Policy Owner	Academic Registrar
Reference /source	Internal
Date approved	29 August 2023
Effective from	01 September 2023
Review date	2025/26 Review period extension approved by ASQC in July 2025
Target	All apprentices, staff
Policy location	SIP/VLE/ public website
Equality analysis	No direct impact. The policy provides for reasonable adjustments to be made, where appropriate, for apprentices with specific protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Monitoring will be undertaken to assess whether there is any differential impact in the handling of cases.

Thinking of Pausing your Apprenticeship?

