



University of
St Andrews

Deferral Guidance

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1.1	Minor update – addition of 4.9 to clarify arrangements regarding deferrals	Published	Academic Policy Officer (Taught), ESE	6/2/2026

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1. Statement

- 1.1 This guidance document details the University's position on deferral arrangements.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 This guidance document provides information regarding expectations and practical arrangements concerning deferrals. Schools are expected to follow the guidance set out in this document.

3. Scope / jurisdiction

- 3.1 This guidance document applies to Schools. Any colleagues with responsibilities over deferred assessments ought to familiarise themselves with the provisions within this document.

4. Overarching rules for all modules in Arts, Divinity and Science¹

- 4.1 Deferrals should be in the same format as the original assessment unless express permission is given by the Dean of Learning and Teaching/Provost (or delegate).
- 4.2 The Exams Office will only organise deferred exams during the centrally timetabled exam diet.
- 4.3 Disability support plans must be closely followed in all types of examination, including where exams are held in School.
- 4.4 Deferral of one component of a module (exam and/or coursework) constitutes a grade of OD on the student's record and even if other components of the module assessment have been submitted the credits for the module are counted in the limits to deferred assessment (outlined below).
- 4.5 All deferred coursework deadlines must be set for a time prior to the end of a central exam diet (Dec/April-May/Aug).
- 4.6 When approving a deferral, Schools should plan for how re-assessment would be delivered if needed.

¹ The School of Medicine have alternative arrangements.

- 4.7 Typically, reassessments in all years should be done online (via either written or oral assessment) in the August exam diet. Some Schools may require in-person oral re-assessment; these should be organised for a time when a student is generally expected to be present in St Andrews.
- 4.8 Extensions to agreed deferred deadlines are not permitted and students should be informed that the agreed deferral date is final.
- 4.9 Deferrals usually result in a delay to the publication of module results, but not always - for example, when a student can take the deferred assessment within the same exam diet. The designation of a decision as a 'deferral' does not depend on whether the publication of module results is delayed.

5. Modules with in-person exams

Sub-honours modules. In-person deferrals from Semester 1 or 2 that cannot be completed during the final days of the original exam period will normally be scheduled in the extended May diet. If a student is unable to take the deferred exam(s) in the extended May diet and the module is progression critical, Schools will be permitted to organise in-person assessment in-house in Week -1. Deferrals may be offered online in exceptional circumstances (for instance, progression critical need) in the August diet at the discretion of the School and with the approval of the Dean of Learning and Teaching (or delegate). Schools must publish their approach in their School Handbook(s).

Honours modules (level 3, 4 and 5 for Integrated Masters). In-person deferrals from Semester 1 that cannot be completed during the final days of the original exam period will normally be scheduled in the extended May diet. If a student is unable to take the deferred exam(s) in the extended May diet, then the School may permit a deferral into the next academic year (subject to the limits on deferral permitted to be carried into the following academic year, see below). In-person deferred exams from Semester 2 may be scheduled in the extended May diet, if appropriate. If a student is unable to take the deferred exam(s) in the extended May diet and the module is progression critical, Schools will be permitted to organise in-person assessment in-house in Week -1, the week before Orientation Week. Alternatively, students will be expected to take a period of Leave of Absence if they are unable to sit progression critical modules before the start of the academic year. Semester 2 deferred exams, which are **not** progression critical, may be offered centrally in the December diet or may be offered by the School in-house in ILW. A deferred examination in the next academic year ideally should be made available at the next available diet, however, it should be no later than the subsequent December diet (for Semester 1 modules) or the subsequent April/May diet (for Semester 2 modules).

Deferrals for final-year students will generally delay graduation, although Schools *may* be able to report grades from exams in the extended May diet in time to allow graduation.

Modules taken by PGT students. In-person deferrals will normally be scheduled for the extended May diet, if they cannot be completed during the final days of the original exam period. If a student is unable to take the deferrals in the extended diet, the School may arrange an in-person deferred examination in the August diet (given that students will still be in attendance within St Andrews). Any deferral beyond the August examination diet requires the permission of the Associate Provost (Students).

6. Modules with Coursework and/or Online exams

All years. For modules with online exams, deferrals will normally be scheduled in the extended diet (as an online exam) when they cannot be completed during the final days of the original exam period. They may be scheduled in the August diet (as an online exam) at the discretion of the School. For coursework only modules, Schools will set their own deferred submission dates. These must be set no later than the end of the May diet for Semester 1 modules and the end of the August reassessment diet for Semester 2 modules, but Schools may set earlier deadlines if appropriate. Schools must publish their approach in the School Handbook.

For deferred coursework where students have not engaged in the learning required to complete the assessment (e.g. fieldtrips) approval to defer beyond August must be given by the Dean of Learning and Teaching/Provost (or delegate). Deferrals for final-year students will generally delay graduation, although Schools *may* be able to report grades from online exams or coursework in the extended diet in time to allow graduation.

7. Reassessments following a failed deferred examination or failed coursework

Sub-honours modules. If a deferral is taken online or submitted, in the case of coursework, in the extended May or August diet and failed, reassessment may take place in the next available diet and no later than the subsequent December diet (for Semester 1 modules) or subsequent April/May diet (for Semester 2 modules) in the same format as it was originally scheduled for the module. The only exception to this is if a module is critically required for progression to Honours, in which case Schools will organise reassessment in-house in Week -1. Alternatively, students may be expected to take a period of Leave of Absence.

Honours modules and 5000-level modules taken by Honours level and Integrated Masters students. If a module is deferred and failed, students will generally take the reassessment as an online assessment in the following August reassessment diet. If a deferral is held as an online exam in the August diet and failed, reassessment may take place in the next available diet and no later than the subsequent December diet (for Semester 1 modules) or subsequent April/May diet (for Semester 2 modules) in the same format as reassessment was originally scheduled for the module. Where Schools carry out honours in-person oral reassessment this should be scheduled for a time when a student is generally expected to be present in St Andrews. Schools may, at their discretion, make alternative arrangements for graduating students.

Modules taken by PGT students. If a module is deferred and failed, the School will arrange for a reassessment in the same format as the initial re-assessment at the earliest practicable opportunity and no later than the August reassessment diet. If a PGT student's circumstances require a later reassessment, the School should consult with the Provost or their delegate. Under the Classification Policy, PGT dissertations and final projects cannot be reassessed, and students may not retake modules or take additional modules to substitute for failed modules.

8. Rules on limits to deferrals:

No student shall be permitted to defer more than 60-credits of assessment in a given academic year, unless in exceptional circumstances and only following approval by the Dean of Learning and Teaching/Provost (or their delegate, the relevant Associate Dean/Provost (Students)). Students who have reached this deferral limit will be flagged by Registry in January and a list of such students will be sent to the relevant Associate Deans, School's exam's officers, and DoTs (see next section below).

In addition to this, no Undergraduate student will be allowed to defer more than 45 credits into the subsequent academic year unless in exceptional circumstances and only following approval by the Dean of Learning and Teaching (or their delegate, the relevant Associate Dean (Students)). This limit will be reduced to account for any modules failed without the right to reassessment. This limit will be checked after the August diet.

For example, if 30 credits were not completed and a deferral had been requested and a further 20-credit module was awarded a grade less than 4, the student would not be permitted to defer credits into the next academic year.

Students who request deferrals beyond the limits outlined above will generally be expected to take Leave of Absence and should re-engage in advance of the relevant exam diet to complete all outstanding exams/coursework.

Requests for deferrals that would take a student beyond their programme end date should be discussed with the relevant Associate Dean/Provost (Students).

9. New process to support students who reach deferral credit limits

The Associate Deans/Provost (Students) will review all cases of deferral after grades have been reported. Students who have deferred 60 credits in Semester 1 will be monitored closely in Semester 2. They may be required to meet with the appropriate AD/AP to discuss their deferrals and the potential for LOA in Semester 2. Students who have deferred 60 credits after the May/August diets will be flagged to the appropriate AD/AP. The AD/AP will liaise with Student Services and Schools as appropriate.

10. Guidance to students on the impact of deferrals

When a deferral is requested and the School is considering approving such a request, students should be informed of the following in writing by the Exams Officer/DoT or their Depute. Please forward a copy of this email to moduleresults@st-andrews.ac.uk and record a short note on MMS.

1. When the deferral will be offered.
2. The format in which a module will be reassessed if the deferred assessment is failed, and when a reassessment is likely to be scheduled. This information should be published in the School handbook and the student referred to this information.
3. The limits on the amount of credit that can be deferred.
4. What the consequences of failure of this deferral would be on the student's progression should they pass all other modules. (This point may be more relevant to some programmes/modules than others.)
5. Consequences if the student is unable to complete assessment at first attempt in two consecutive semesters.

An example text would be:

Your deferral for module (insert module code) has been approved. You will be offered a deferral in the (insert XXX) diet. This deferral will be assessed by means of a (insert assessment type e.g. in-person exam). Please see School Handbook (insert link). No student shall be permitted to defer more than 60-credits in a given academic year, unless in exceptional circumstances and only following approval by the Dean of Learning and Teaching/Provost or their delegate. In addition, no student

will be allowed to defer more than 45 credits into the subsequent academic year. If you fail any modules without the right to reassessment, this limit will be reduced to account for the credits not gained in the failed modules. This limit will be checked after the August diet. If you fail this deferred assessment with a grade of 4 or more, reassessment will be offered as (format) (when). Extensions to agreed deferred deadlines are not normally permitted. If you are unable to complete this deferred assessment at first attempt in two consecutive semesters, you will be expected to take Leave of Absence to focus on your health and wellbeing.

Once a deferral is agreed, the School should report 0D for the student and add a note for Registry in MMS clearly stating the proposed date/period when the deferral is expected to be completed by, so that Registry and the School have a clear record of this. Please note that the Assessment and Awards Team may request School/Module handbook evidence of deferral details at any time for their records and communications with students.

11. Version control

Version number	Purpose or changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and School or unit	Date
1.0	New guidance document	Published	Deputy Head Education Policy and Quality, ESE	13/10/2025
1.1	Minor update – addition of 4.9 to clarify arrangements regarding deferrals	Published	Academic Policy Officer (Taught), ESE	6/2/2026