Deferral, Interruption, and Withdrawal Policy and Procedures

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1 Purpose and objectives

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to establish a transparent and consistent framework for managing student requests and institutional decisions related to deferral, interruption, and withdrawal from higher education programmes. It aims to ensure fairness, compliance with regulatory requirements, and the safeguarding of academic integrity while supporting students in making informed decisions about their studies.

1.2 This policy will be applied in a manner consistent with ECT's obligations under the OfS regulatory framework (where applicable), consumer protection legislation, the guidance of the Competition and Markets Authority, and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's Good Practice Frameworks. It is intended to ensure that decisions are fair, transparent, reasonable, and in the best interests of students, while safeguarding academic standards.

1.3 The operation of this policy is underpinned by the following principles:

a) Accessibility and clarity of information and processes.
b) Consistency and proportionality of decision-making.
c) Timely consideration of requests and communication of outcomes.
d) Recognition of individual circumstances, including the needs of disabled students and other groups with protected characteristics.
e) Protection of students' contractual and consumer rights.

1.4 Definitions for the purpose of this policy are as follows:

Deferral	Postponement of a programme (either prior to enrolment, before the start of teaching, or within the cooling off period)
Interruption	Temporary break from a programme with the intention to return
Withdrawal	Permanent ceasing of a programme of study initiated by the student

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to:

a) Applicants who have accepted an offer but have not yet enrolled, in relation to deferral of entry.
b) All enrolled students, including those studying full-time, part-time, blended or online.
c) All staff involved in considering or administering deferral, interruption, or withdrawal decisions.

2.2 This policy should be read alongside the:

Admissions and Enrolment Policy
Higher Education Fees and Refund Policy
Mitigating Circumstances Policy
Academic Regulations
Student Disciplinary and Academic Misconduct procedures
Appeals and Complaints policies
Student Protection Plan

3 Deferral of a Programme of Study

3.1 Deferral of an offer to study on a programme with ECT prior to commencing a programme, may be permitted for up to one academic year. Applicants who wish to apply for a longer deferment must withdraw and reapply for admission in the same manner as the original application for admission, should they wish to commence or continue study at a later date.

3.2 Deferral will not be permitted to allow commencement of another tertiary/higher education programme offered by ECT.

3.3 Students who decide to defer their programme must submit a Deferral / Interruption Form within the fourteen-day cooling off period for undergraduate programmes, and twenty-eight days cooling off period for postgraduate programmes in order to not incur any academic or financial penalty. The Deferral / Interruption Form must be received and acknowledged in writing back to the student by the Learning Support Officer (LSO) on or before the end of the cooling off period. A decision on the application will usually be made and communicated in writing within ten working days with any conditions clearly stated.

3.4 Students who submit a Deferral / Interruption Form after the cooling off period has ended will have a 'Deferred Withdrawn' (DW) grade recorded against the module(s) they are enrolled in. A 'Deferred Withdrawn' grade signifies that a student has withdrawn from the module(s) due to late deferral and will incur the full tuition fee for that module(s).

3.5 Students should refer to the ***Higher Education Fee and Refund Policy*** for financial information in relation to a deferral of a programme.

3.6 The effective date of any approved deferral will be the date on which ECT receives the completed Deferral / Interruption Form, or a later date agreed in writing. This date will be used for the purposes of tuition fee liability and funding.

3.7 Where a deferral is requested after the statutory cooling-off period, tuition fee liability will be determined in accordance with the Higher Education Fees and Refund Policy to ensure that fees charged are transparent and reflect the tuition and services provided up to the effective date of deferral.

4 Interruption of Studies

4.1 If a student needs to interrupt studies after they have commenced, but intends to continue the programme in the future, the student must complete a Deferral / Interruption Form. A student may normally interrupt their studies for up to twelve months in the first instance. Any extension or repeated interruption beyond a total of twenty-four months across the programme will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances, considering academic currency, professional body requirements, and the best interests of the student.

4.2 Students should refer to the ***Higher Education Fee and Refund Policy*** for financial information in relation to an interruption to studies.

4.3 Students who apply for an interruption to their studies will have an 'Interrupted Withdrawn' (IW) grade recorded against the module(s) they are enrolled in. The effective date of interruption will be the date on which ECT receives the completed Deferral / Interruption Form, or a later date agreed in writing. ECT will not normally backdate interruptions except where there is clear evidence of earlier cessation of engagement and administrative or communication error.

4.4 The following conditions will apply for approved applications for interruption of study:

4.4.1 The interrupted year will count towards the maximum period of registration for the programme.
4.4.2 Interruptions of study will only be agreed for the current academic year.
4.4.3 Interruptions are subject to ECT continuing to run the programme up until the point that the person making the request would be completing the programme.
4.4.4 During an approved interruption, a student's enrolment status will be recorded as "interrupting". Access to core communication channels (student email) and agreed support services will be maintained as appropriate, and conditions for return to study will be confirmed in writing. Students will be unable to access materials, sessions, or academic guidance throughout this period.
4.4.5 Before returning, students must confirm their intention to resume by the specified deadline and meet any academic or professional requirements notified at the point of interruption. The earliest return date will be the start of the next study period in accordance with the academic calendar.
4.4.6 Tuition fee implications of an interruption will be determined in line with the Higher Education Fees and Refund Policy, with liability calculated transparently by reference to the point in the teaching period at which the interruption takes effect.

5 Valid grounds for deferral and interruption

5.1 Students may apply to defer their studies if they are unable to commence their programme on the start date or interrupt their studies for a specified period of time, due to compassionate or compelling circumstances. If the programme has not yet started, and is within the cooling off period, no reason is required beyond the deferral request. If the programme has already started, students must provide a clear reason and supporting evidence for the interruption request.

5.2 Compassionate or compelling circumstances are generally those beyond the control of the student and which have an impact upon the student's progress or wellbeing. These could include, but are not limited to:

5.2.1 Serious illness or injury, where a medical certificate states that the student is unfit to attend classes
5.2.2 Bereavement of close family members such as parents or grandparents (in such circumstance, a death certificate should be provided where possible)
5.2.3 Major political upheaval or natural disaster occurring in the student's home country requiring emergency travel and this has impacted on the student's studies
5.2.4 A traumatic experience which could include:
- Involvement in, or witnessing of a serious accident, or
- Witnessing or being the victim of a serious crime, and this has impacted on the student (these cases should be supported by police or medical

reports).

5.3 Students should seek advice from the LSO to determine if their circumstances meet the compassionate or compelling circumstances criteria. If the student's circumstances are ongoing then it may be in their interest to consider whether an interruption of studies may be the best course of action so that they can return to their studies later, once their circumstances have improved. Decisions on deferral or interruption will consider the nature, timing and evidence of the circumstances, the student's academic progress, any reasonable adjustments in place, and whether alternative support would be more appropriate. Any supporting evidence will be handled in line with ECT's Data Protection Policy and stored securely, with access limited to staff involved in the decision. ECT will apply this policy consistently and sensitively, with due regard to its duties under the Equality Act 2010, ensuring that no student is disadvantaged because of a protected characteristic, caring responsibilities, pregnancy or maternity, or other relevant factors.

5.4 All applications for deferment or interruption must be approved by the Programme Leader.

5.5 Students should be aware that ECT's programmes are under continual review. If they apply for deferral or interruption, their programme may be revised or, closed during the student's deferral or interruption period. All students will be consulted on any major changes to the programmes. If the programme is closed, ECT will make every attempt to provide the original programme to the student upon their return. If this is not possible, ECT reserves the right to offer the student a place on an equivalent or near-equivalent programme. Where a student's programme is revised, suspended or closed during a period of deferral or interruption, ECT will act in accordance with its Student Protection Plan (where applicable) and consumer protection obligations. ECT will:

a) Provide clear and timely information about any proposed changes.
b) Take all reasonable steps to enable students to complete their studies as planned or on a suitable alternative programme.
c) Ensure that any alternative or exit arrangements do not place students at an unfair financial or academic disadvantage.

5.6 Students should also refer to the *Higher Education Fee and Refund Policy*. Students should note that tuition fees may change during their period of deferral or interruption. If this occurs, the students will incur the new tuition fees once they return to study.

6 Withdrawal from a programme

6.1 A withdrawal from studies is the process by which a student is formally withdrawn from their studies at ECT. If a student is withdrawn, they will no longer have access to their programme or to ECT services.

6.2 Students must formally notify ECT of their decision to withdraw by completing the 'Withdrawal Declaration Form' and returning it to the LSO. A withdrawal is not effective until the 'Withdrawal Declaration Form' has been received and acknowledged in writing back to the student by the Student Experience Manager.

6.3 If a student formally withdraws from a programme within the 14-day cooling off period for undergraduate programmes, and 28 days cooling off period for postgraduate

programmes they will not incur any academic or financial penalty for the current module(s) they are studying and will have a 'cancelled' status recorded against the module(s) they are currently enrolled in. A 'cancelled' status signifies that a student has discontinued without academic or financial penalty. The 'Withdrawal Declaration Form' must be received by the LSO before the end of the cooling off period.

6.4 If a student submits a Withdrawal Declaration Form after the cooling off period has ended, they will have a 'Withdrawn' (W) grade recorded against the module(s) they are currently enrolled in. A 'Withdrawn' grade signifies that a student has withdrawn, and will incur the fee for that module(s) as provided in the ***Higher Education Fee and Refund Policy*****.** The effective date of withdrawal will be the date on which the completed Withdrawal Declaration Form is received by ECT, or a later date agreed in writing. Withdrawals will not normally be backdated except where there is clear evidence of an earlier last date of engagement and administrative error. Tuition fee liability and eligibility for refunds on withdrawal will be determined in accordance with the Higher Education Fees and Refund Policy, which sets out how fees are calculated by reference to the withdrawal date and the proportion of the course already delivered.

6.5 Students should also refer to the ECT's ***Higher Education Fees and Refund Policy*****.**

6.6 If a student has withdrawn and decides to return, they will need to be re-admitted on to their programme via the admissions process. Please refer to the ***Admissions and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy*** for further information.

6.7 Students are strongly encouraged to seek advice, where relevant, from their LSO; Student Support services and an appropriate independent advice body before confirming a decision to withdraw.

7 Student Support

7.1 A student can access support with their decision to defer, interrupt, or withdraw by contacting their dedicated Learning Support Officer and support services (including wellbeing and disability support). Staff involved in implementing this policy should take reasonable steps to ensure that students understand their options, the implications of each option, and sources of independent advice.

8 Monitoring and Review

8.1 ECT will monitor the operation of this policy, including outcomes of deferral, interruption, and withdrawal decisions, and any related complaints or appeals, to identify trends, ensure consistency, and improve practice.

8.2 This policy will be reviewed at least every three years, or sooner if required by changes in legislation, OfS regulatory requirements, or OIA good practice guidance.

Document Control	
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Revision History		
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