

York Online Repeat Study policy 2023-24



Purpose and scope:

The York Online programmes were developed as flexible programmes, aimed at working professionals, enabling students to balance their studies around work and other commitments. The University recognises that the nature of those other commitments may at times have a significant impact on a student’s ability to study. This document sets out the University’s policy for enabling students to repeat modules that were adversely affected by the student’s circumstances. This policy applies to all students studying on the York Online programmes, namely:

- MSc Computer Science, MSc Computer Science with Artificial Intelligence, MSc Computer Science with Cyber Security, MSc Computer Science with Data Analytics;
- MSc Finance, Leadership and Management, MSc Innovation, Leadership and Management, MSc International Business, Leadership and Management;
- Master of Business Administration, MBA Public Sector Management;
- Master of Public Administration, MPA International Development, MPA Public Policy and Management, MPA Social and Public Policy;
- and any other programmes that may be added to the portfolio from time to time.

Document control:

Approved	13/05/2022 Standing Committee on Assessment 31/05/2022 Special Cases Committee 09/06/2022 University Teaching Committee	This version applies from: 04/09/2023
Policies superseded by this policy:	The University’s Leave of Absence policy for taught students and guidance on repeat study Section 4.3 of the York Online programme characteristics 2017 The 2022-23 version of this policy	
In-year amendments	Date:	Details of change:
Related policies, procedures, guidelines and regulations		
The York Online Fit to Sit / Submit policy		
The York Online Study Break / Leave of Absence policy		
The York Online Policy on managing disruptions in the CPM		
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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Definitions	3
3. Definition and parameters of Repeat Study	4
4. Permitted periods of Repeat Study	4
5. Fees for Repeat Study	5
6. Requesting Repeat Study as part of a Leave of Absence application	5
7. Requesting Repeat Study without a Leave of Absence application	5
8. 'Good reason' for not taking action sooner	5
9. Reasons for rejection of Repeat Study requests	7
10. Evidence requirements	7
11. Approval	10
12. Impact on programme end dates	10
13. Student finance	10
14. Data protection and safeguarding	11

1. Introduction

1.1 As part of its commitment to enabling a lifelong journey of growth and development, the University of York offers a series of 100% online programmes, known as York Online, aimed primarily at mid-career professionals seeking to enhance their careers or transition into new ones. Students on these programmes represent a distinct population within the University, with the majority being mature learners with full-time work and family commitments that may need to take precedence over their studies from time to time. The University recognises the diversity of experience and barriers to attainment that our York Online students may encounter. In response, the University aims to provide a supportive environment that enables students to respond flexibly to changes in their circumstances and manage their learning and progression on the programme.

1.2 Studying at Masters level alongside employment represents a significant commitment and can often be challenging. Students have a responsibility to manage their time and workload effectively, monitor their engagement with the programme and plan accordingly. The University expects that all students who have selected and paid for a module in the current teaching period will be actively studying that module and able to engage effectively.

1.3 The University has policies in place to support students experiencing disruption to their studies and/or assessment. These are the York Online Fit to Sit / Submit policy and the York Online Study Break / Leave of Absence policy. Students experiencing difficulties are strongly encouraged to inform the University through one of these policies. However, where the impact of a student's circumstances is so severe that they are unable to effectively engage with these policies in a timely fashion, they may request repeat study via the appropriate form.

2. Definitions

2.1 Conditions of return - any requirement that must be met before the student is permitted to resume their studies. These may be academic, e.g. submission of outstanding assignments, exams, etc, or non-academic, e.g. providing independent evidence of fitness to return.

2.2 Teaching period - equivalent to a term for the York Online programmes; each teaching period lasts eight weeks and students study a single module in that time. The teaching periods are numbered OL1 (the September start) to OL6 (the June start).

2.3 Working days - standard working days for the University are Monday to Friday, 9.00 - 17.00 UK time, excluding Bank Holidays and University closure days.

3. Definition and parameters of Repeat Study

3.1 Repeat Study is the opportunity to take a previous module (or modules) again where the student's ability to engage with that module was affected by a significant disruption, and where the student was unable to engage with University processes at the time (e.g. the York Online Leave of Absence policy). Repeat Study is therefore only granted in exceptional circumstances.

3.2 Repeat Study can only be requested retrospectively. Students who know, or anticipate that, their ability to study will be impacted by an upcoming circumstance or event should always take time out from the programme through either a short study break or a longer leave of absence.

3.3 There are two circumstances where Repeat Study may be requested:

3.3.1 Where a student requests a Leave of Absence and believes one or more preceding, complete modules have been affected by their circumstances;

3.3.2 Where a student experienced a disruption to their studies in previous modules, which also prevented their engagement with University processes at the time. The circumstances have since been resolved, so the student is able to continue studying, but they wish to request mitigation retrospectively.

3.4 All students submitting a formal Request for Repeat Study will be required to evidence not only good grounds for repeat study, but also good reason for failing to take action earlier and for continuing to sign up for modules.

3.5 If a student does not have 'good reason' for failing to disclose their circumstances at the time, their Request to Repeat study will be rejected (see section 8 on what constitutes 'good reason' and section 10 on evidence requirements).

4. Permitted periods of Repeat Study

4.1 The minimum period of Repeat Study is one module; repeat of weeks within a module is not permitted.

4.2 Students who are considered to have grounds for repeat study of part of a module will be given repeat study of the whole module, and will always return to Week 1 of the module. Students will be expected to engage from the start of the module. Failure to engage from the

start of the module will not be considered adequate grounds to request in-module mitigation under the Fit to Sit / Submit policy, or to request further Repeat Study of the module unless there are other, extenuating circumstances which impact the student's ability to engage.

4.3 There is no maximum period of Repeat Study, but students who continue to sign up for modules when they are also experiencing complex and challenging personal circumstances will be required to demonstrate and evidence good reason for failing to take action earlier, and for continuing to sign up for modules despite struggling to engage with their studies (see section 8 on what constitutes 'good reason').

5. Fees for Repeat Study

5.1 If the Repeat Study request is approved, the student will not be charged tuition fees for the repeated modules.

6. Requesting Repeat Study as part of a Leave of Absence application

6.1 Where a student is requesting a Leave of Absence and believes that one or more previous modules were affected by the same circumstances, they should request Repeat Study via the Leave of Absence form. The Leave of Absence will be considered separately from the Repeat Study request and according to the York Online Study Breaks / Leave of Absence policy.

7. Requesting Repeat Study without a Leave of Absence application

7.1 Where a student is requesting Repeat Study for circumstances that have been resolved, and they do not need to take a Leave of Absence, they should make a request via the Repeat Study form.

8. 'Good reason' for not taking action sooner

8.1 The following are examples of 'good reasons' for not taking action sooner, through either the Fit to Sit / Submit policy or the Study Break / Leave of Absence policy:

- a complex and ongoing medical condition which would have clearly impacted the student's ability to make informed decisions, and/or judge risk;

- a medical condition where symptoms have been ongoing, and have impacted their studies, but which has only recently been diagnosed, or where the extent of the impact has only recently been realised;
- severe issues outside the student's control which meant they were unavoidably prevented from seeking support or taking a break from studies;
- where the student was given misleading advice or incorrect information regarding this policy by an employee of the University, or an employee of the Students' Union (YUSU) or Graduate Students' Association (GSA) (including full-time officers), or an individual or company employed or contracted to act on the University's behalf.

8.2 The following are not considered to be 'good reasons':

- a belief that the University would not take the issue seriously;
- ignorance of the Leave of Absence or Fit to Sit / Submit policies;
- that the student received a reminder about an upcoming payment deadline; such reminders are intended to help students plan and are an opportunity to report problems with their studies to the University;
- where the student was given misleading advice or incorrect information regarding this policy by another student;
- believing or hoping that they would do well enough in the module(s) not to need to take a break from studies;
- deciding not to disclose their circumstances because they wanted to demonstrate that they could succeed without help;
- general embarrassment or being reluctant to disclose their circumstances, including being reluctant because they belong to, or grew up in, a culture in which problems are not openly discussed or disclosed to others. *This is not accepted as a good reason for non-disclosure of exceptional circumstances at the appropriate time because it would be unjust to accept claims from some students but not others on the basis of assumptions about cultural norms based on a student's nationality, ethnicity or religious faith. The University does not discriminate against students on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, faith or any other protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.*

8.3 Evidence is required to support the student's reason for not taking action sooner, wherever possible. This may be evidence that is also submitted to support the Repeat Study request, or specific evidence to support the reason for the delay.

9. Reasons for rejection of Repeat Study requests

9.1 The following will usually lead to a rejection:

- where the student might reasonably be expected to provide evidence of the issue and has not done so;
- where the student has not provided evidence of good reason for not taking action sooner;
- where the timing of the issue would not have had an impact on the module(s) for which repeat study is being requested;
- where the student has failed to demonstrate that they were experiencing circumstances which impacted their ability to engage with their studies.

10. Evidence requirements

10.1 All requests for Repeat Study must include evidence that demonstrates the nature of the disruption, the timing and the impact on the student's studies. The student's own account of events is important evidence here, particularly for demonstrating the impact of events, however additional, independent evidence of the circumstances must also be provided.

10.2 All evidence must be in English or be accompanied by an English translation; translations should preferably be provided by an independent third party. It is the student's responsibility to source the translation.

10.3 Evidence must demonstrate that the student was affected during the module(s) for which repeat study is being requested.

10.4 Students will not be expected to provide independent evidence confirming the death of another person. Where the death is of someone other than a close family member, students will be expected to explain the relationship and the impact on the student's ability to engage in their studies. The following are considered close family members: parents and step-parents, siblings, spouse, children, grandparents, grandchildren, uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews, parents-in-law, and brother- or sister-in-law.

10.5 Students will not be expected to provide independent evidence confirming sexual violence or domestic or intimate partner abuse.

10.6 Students will not be expected to provide evidence of a miscarriage or of an abortion, or of complications arising from a miscarriage or abortion.

10.7 Where the student has been impacted by the serious illness or accident of a close family member (as defined in 10.4), they will not be expected to provide independent evidence confirming that illness. They will be expected to describe the situation and its impact on their ability to study. A serious illness is defined as anything involving inpatient hospital treatment, surgery, or several weeks outpatient treatment; an accident includes anything that requires emergency treatment. Acute incidents in chronic conditions will be considered in the same way.

10.8 The University recognises that students may encounter other circumstances where it is not possible for a student to get independent evidence. In such cases, a statement made by the student shortly after the event, along with an explanation of why independent evidence cannot be obtained, may be sufficient. In such cases, consideration will be given to whether the explanation as to why evidence cannot be obtained is plausible.

10.9 Where evidence is required, the following types of evidence will carry greater weight:

- a recent letter or certificate from a medical professional, dated and on headed paper; this includes GPs, consultants, midwives and nurses as well as psychiatrists and other mental health practitioners;
- an appointment letter, hospital discharge letter or other medical documentation, dated and on headed paper, or a screenshot from a patient app;
- a letter from the student's employer, dated and on headed paper or an email from the student's employer, sent from the employer's email address;
- for students running their own business, a letter, dated and on headed paper, from a business partner, solicitor or accountant or other independent evidence such as financial statements;
- a police crime report;
- a letter or other evidence from another professional service, such as the local council, a charity or independent advisory service, a family solicitor, etc;
- a supporting letter from another University of York service such as the Open Door Team, Disability Services or Student Hub;
- a written account from an independent third party from outside the University who directly witnessed the circumstances.

10.10 The following types of evidence carry less weight:

- a letter or certificate from a medical professional that simply repeats the student's own description of events and does not provide an independent assessment;
- a letter or certificate from a complementary therapist;
- written account from the student's family or friends who have directly witnessed the circumstances, or their impact on the student's wellbeing or ability to perform in assessment;
- for students running their own business, their own statement about the situation.

10.11 The following types of evidence are unlikely to be accepted:

- a letter from the student's academic supervisor, module tutor or another academic contact regarding the student's circumstances;
- a written account from the student's family or friends, if they have not directly witnessed the submitted circumstances or their impact upon the student.

10.12 Students should not wait for evidence to be available before submitting a Repeat Study request. Where evidence is not available at the time of application, students will be given four weeks from submission of the application to submit it. Where evidence is not received, the Repeat Study request will still be processed. If the request is rejected, the student will have two weeks from the date they are notified to challenge the outcome and submit evidence, in which case the decision will be reviewed. If a student wishes to challenge the decision after the two week period has elapsed, they may submit a Formal Stage Academic Appeal to the Special Cases Committee.

10.13 The University reserves the right to check the authenticity of all supporting evidence submitted. Where it is suspected that a student has submitted evidence that is not genuine, they may be referred for consideration under the University's [Regulation 7: student discipline procedure](#).

10.14 Where a student states that they were given misleading advice or incorrect information by an employee of the University, or of YUSU or the GSA, or an individual or company employed or contracted to act on the University's behalf, the York Online Support Team may attempt to verify the claim by requesting copies of emails or telephone recordings from the employees concerned.

11. Approval

11.1 Requests for Repeat Study will be checked by the York Online Support Team. Where it is clear a student has not met the requirements to demonstrate 'good reason' their request will be rejected by the York Online Support Team. Where a student has a case for their request to be considered, approval will be required from the Chair of Board of Studies. Where repeat study totals more than 10 weeks, or where teaching occurred more than 20 weeks prior to the request, additional approval will be required from the Special Cases Team.

12. Impact on programme end dates

12.1 Where Repeat Study is approved, the programme end date will automatically be extended by the number of months required to complete the programme. However, students are likely to need to take additional breaks from study in order to wait for modules to be offered again in order to complete their programme. When a student also takes a Leave of Absence, their programme end date will be updated to include their period of absence and any anticipated "default" Study Breaks.

13. Student finance

13.1 Where a student has financial support from a UK regional government funding body, such as Student Finance England, the University is obliged to inform the funding body if a student suspends their studies, either through a Study Break or Leave of Absence. Payments will be suspended during the period of absence.

13.2 When a student returns from a Study Break or Leave of Absence, the University will inform the funding body and payments will resume. Funding body rules require that students be actively studying before payments can resume. This means that students in England, Scotland and Wales are likely to have to pay for their next module before they receive their next loan payment.¹ The exceptions to this are students who have paid in full for their programme or students returning to a module they have already paid for.

13.3 The University will not inform the funding body if a student is granted Repeat Study, and the funding body will not take Repeat Study into account when setting funding payment

¹ Student Finance Northern Ireland pays the funding directly to the University so a different process is in place for these students.

schedules. As a result, students may have a period of time towards the end of their studies where they have received all funds due to them and will still have to pay for modules.

13.4 Where students are in receipt of other types of funding, it is their responsibility to ensure that the proposed period of absence is compatible with the regulations of any granting agency from which funding would normally be received, and that such agencies are informed of the proposed leave.

14. Data protection and safeguarding

14.1 Information and documents provided by students under this policy will be treated confidentially in line with the University of York [Data Protection Policy](#) and the [University's privacy notice for students](#).

14.2 The York Online Support Team typically obtain personal information directly from students e.g. when they contact us by email, telephone or video call, or when they submit an online Exceptional Circumstances claim form, a Leave of Absence application form or a Repeat Study request form. We may also receive information or data from the student's academic department, their Student Success Coordinator or Disability Services.

14.3 Students' personal information is used to prepare and process Repeat Study requests applications; to inform application outcomes (e.g. to establish whether the student's application has grounds); to process application outcomes (e.g. to ensure to ensure the student record is correctly updated); and to establish whether they may benefit from additional support or signposting to other University services.

14.4 Personal information will be available to the York Online Support Team, and may be discussed within the team when one student case falls under multiple different processes (e.g. the Fit to Sit / Submit process; the Leave of Absence process; the Repeat Study process; or the appeals process). Evidence provided under one process may be used in support of a claim submitted through a different process, where applicable, with the student's permission (e.g. evidence submitted in support of a Fit to Sit /Submit claim may be used if a student submits a Repeat Study application on the same grounds, but provides no evidence).

14.5 Where a team member believes a student may benefit from, or requires, additional information or support, personal information will be shared within the York Online Support Team in order to facilitate the provision of appropriate support (e.g. advising a student about other policies that help them in their circumstances or checking in on a student's welfare).

14.6 Outcomes from claims made under this policy may be shared with a student's academic supervisor and / or their Student Success Coordinator to enable them to provide advice about progress and trajectory through the programme. Details of the claim itself (i.e. the reason for it and evidence submitted) will not be shared.

14.7 Personal information will be shared with the Chair of the Department's Board of Studies, or their deputy, in order for them to approve or reject a Repeat Study application. Personal information will also be shared with the Special Cases Team in cases requiring their approval.

14.8 In the event that an appeal is submitted regarding a Repeat Study outcome, personal information will be shared with members of the Special Cases Team considering the appeal; the Chair of the Board of Studies who will approve recommendations about the appeal; and occasionally members of the Standing Committee on Assessment, in order to respond to an appeal. To investigate an appeal, the York Online Support Team may need to request relevant information from module tutors and/or academic supervisors; in such cases, the tutors or supervisors will be aware that an appeal has been submitted but will not be provided with personal information.

14.9 In the event that a student submits a complaint about their experience of this policy, the request form, any evidence and the outcome will be reviewed as needed by the Head of Online Partnerships, or their deputy, in order to investigate the complaint and provide a response.

14.10 Where the York Online Support Team has a concern regarding the welfare of a student they may seek advice from the Open Door Team or Disability Services, and may share personal information where it is deemed necessary.

14.11 Where the York Online Support Team has a concern regarding the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult they will seek advice from a Safeguarding Designated Contact, and may submit a safeguarding report containing a student's personal information. Please see the [University's Safeguarding Framework](#) on the University website.