

Break in Learning (BIL) Guidance 2025–26

Updated by:	Head of Student Administration and Fees, Higher Education Quality Enhancement Manager, Senior Data Quality and Compliance Officer and MIS Administration Manager
Approved by:	CLT
Date of approval:	30/09/25
Updated date:	July 2025
Review date:	July 2026

Break in Learning (BIL) Guidance & Form

Scope

This document entails current CCC guidance on Break in Learning (BIL).

A Break in Learning (BIL) is when the curriculum team and the learner or apprentice have agreed to suspend learning while the learner or apprentice takes a break from learning. This allows the learner or apprentice to continue later with the same eligibility that applied when they first started their learning.

Whether a learner qualifies or not will depend on the length of the course and their attendance. Requests for a BIL must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

BIL qualifying periods with positive attendance	
Course length	Qualifying period
24 weeks or longer	6 weeks (42 days)
2 to 24 weeks	2 weeks (14 days)

Apprentices only

The 6-week qualifying period applies to apprentices at the start of their programme. However, if a significant volume of training has taken place within those first 6 weeks a shorter break may be approved by the Assistant Principal for Apprenticeships or Group Principal Apprenticeships, Partnerships & Innovation as appropriate.

Learners aged 16–18 or 19–24 with an EHCP on an FE course (below Level 4)

- This category of learners can agree to a leave of absence with the curriculum which falls outside of the BIL process.
- Leave of Absence: allows the learning aim records to remain open and be closed only upon completion. Authorisation and agreement from the Head of School (HoS) and the learner is required. A Leave of absence form must be completed and submitted to WebReg, with the Data Quality and Compliance Manager CC'd.
- Withdrawal and Return: A learner that returns by December of the following academic year can resume their studies under their original fee assessment, maintaining their initial financial arrangements and funding eligibility without requiring a new fee assessment.
- The learner must have a return-to-college 1:1 meeting, conducted by the Curriculum Manager (CM) or HoS and sign a new Learning Agreement.
- If they do not return by December of the following academic year, they must be withdrawn, re-assessed, and re-enrolled through the normal process.

Apprenticeships (including level 4 and above)

- Apprentices can request a BIL if they plan to return to the same programme later. The reason and expected duration must be discussed and agreed with their employer and recorded in the Exit Review Form.
- The start date of the BIL is the last date the learner was engaged in active off-the-job learning (or functional skills if they originally started before 01/08/2025.) It is not the date the BIL was agreed or requested.

- A BIL must only be used if the expected return date is more than a full calendar month after the start of the BIL. For example, the BIL start date is in January, and the expected return date is in March. As there is the calendar month of February between these two dates, this would be a break. If the learner returns to active learning before a full calendar month has passed, (in the example above, returning in February) the break can be removed.
- Where the delivery model is day release, CCC must record a retrospective break in learning where there is no active learning for 2 consecutive calendar months, or if the training plan shows no planned learning within a calendar month. However, if the apprentice is on a term-time only contract, and has no learning planned in August, a break should not be applied.
- Where the delivery model is block release or front-loaded training, CCC must record a retrospective break in learning where there is no active learning for in a 3-calendar month period or if the training plan shows no planned learning within a 3-calendar month period.
- Where a retrospective break has been applied, the apprentice and employer must be informed, but they do not have to approve the break. If they object and cannot provide evidence of active learning that would shorten the period of inactivity to allow the break to be removed, the break must be maintained.
- All learning activity, including functional skills, must stop while the apprentice is on a break. If this is not followed and learning is logged during the break period, it is ineligible to be counted as off-the-job or functional skills learning.
- If a learner is at gateway, then all learning is over, and no funding is being drawn down, therefore someone at gateway must not be recorded as being on a break, but as at gateway.
- The break date CAN be after the planned end date.
- The maximum length of break will vary depending on when they went on break, but the method applied is the same for all:
From the last date in learning (break date) they have:
 - (i) the rest of that funding year; and;
 - (ii) the full funding year after that.

E.g. if the break date is January 2025, they must have returned by the end of July 2026. This gives them the rest of 24/25 (up to 31/07/2025), and all of 25/26 (up to 31/07/2026).
- The planned end date is not relevant to the maximum length of break.
- All apprentices who went on break on or after 01/08/2024 must be withdrawn if they exceed the maximum length of break. They may return after being withdrawn.

Apprenticeships – apprentice is unemployed

- If an apprentice has a temporary period of unemployment, they may continue learning if the new employment has commenced within 30 days of the last date of employment. Where new employment has not commenced within 30 days, CCC must, after 30 days, record the apprentice as on a break in learning. Where the apprentice does not re-start with a new employer after 12 weeks, CCC must withdraw the apprentice.
- The break date will be the last date of active learning while the apprentice was still employed, however, the 30 days or 12 weeks start on the last date of employment.

Apprenticeship administrative steps for going on break:

- The Delivery team must complete the Exit Review form (Smart Assessor, or manual if SA not used) including the last date in learning, the reason for the break, and the intended return date.
- Employer confirmation must be obtained via email, or if it is a retrospective break due to lack of learning activity; proof must be retained that the employer and apprentice were notified of the break.

- The form must be approved by the relevant manager (usually but not confined to being a Head of School). Depending on the delivery area, there may be involvement from an administrator.
- Once approval is granted, the Data Quality and Compliance Team must be sent a request to put the learner on break. This must include the last date in learning and expected BIL return date. The expectation is that the break and expected BIL return data will be recorded within a week of receipt, or if the request is received by the Data Quality and Compliance team before the end of the month, by the time the relevant ILR return closes.
- Assessors/managers must follow up if apprentices do not return within the agreed time. The Apprenticeships Starts Details report can be used to track the expected BIL return dates.

Apprenticeship steps for returning from break

- The relevant Delivery team must update the Training plan and Apprenticeship Agreement to contain only the learning remaining for the apprentice. The Return from Break Planning form or Return from Break section of the Training plan must be used to decide the remaining length & planned hours.
- While in most cases, the overall length will remain the same, it can be extended or reduced when returning from break if there is sufficient reason to do so. The reason for this adjusted length must be clearly explained in the Return from break planning form, or Training Plan.
- The price will remain the same as for their previous episode of learning, unless a new price has been negotiated with the employer or they have changed employer while on their break. In these cases, the schedule must be completed too.
- If the break has been longer than 18 months, a new Skills Scan is required, as this might indicate that the length (and price) needs to be increased or decreased (if the overall length still meets the minimum).
- Once new paperwork is signed, the restart can be processed.

Apprenticeship steps for returning from a withdrawal

- Should an apprentice whose break exceeded the maximum length, resulting in a withdrawal wish to return, the time they originally spent on the apprenticeship will count toward the overall length. Therefore, the restart episode of learning by itself may be shorter than the minimum length of an apprenticeship, if all episodes taken together meet the minimum length.
- Restarting from a withdrawal requires all the same evidence that a new start does.
- Funding received during the previous episode/s of learning must be removed from the new price, even if they need to repeat some learning due to an extended length of inactivity, or they were behind when they were withdrawn. E.g. if £1000 was received before the withdrawal, £1000 must be reduced from the new price. The funding band maximum will remain the same as when they originally started even if they are returning on a new version with a different funding band maximum.
- The rules regarding the minimum length of an apprenticeship, or the age that applied when they originally started will continue to apply. E.g. an apprentice who was 18 when they originally started, and restarts when 19+ will still be required to achieve English and/or Maths, and an apprentice originally starting before 01/08/2025 will not be able to achieve their apprenticeship with an overall actual length of less than a year.

All other FE and HE Learners (not Apprenticeships)

The **Break in Learning Request Form** must be completed by learners at CCC who wish to take a break or interrupt their programme of learning.

If the learner is studying a Foundation Degree or BA (Hons) or BA Top Up, the validating university may require the use of its own application form in applying its academic regulations. Refer to the HE Student Handbook for more

details and discuss concerns in good time with the course tutor. Please also read the financial and visa implications below.

Guidance – Stages

A learner who wishes to take a break or interrupt their learning can do so at any point during the academic year. A BIL will normally be permitted for a maximum of 364 days.

1. **The learner MUST discuss their situation with the course tutor as soon as possible** who will be best placed to advise of available options. If the learner decides to go ahead, they must complete the BIL Request Form and submit it to the Head of School (HoS) for consideration.
2. Once received, an acknowledgement will be emailed to the learner by the HoS.
3. **A written decision should be issued to the learner within 14 working days** of receiving a request. Until a decision is issued, the learner **remains enrolled** in their programme and is expected to **attend classes and complete any assignments** due.
4. If a BIL is agreed, the HoS should:
 - a. Sign the BIL Request Form and inform the learner of the approval in writing. If the request has not been approved, the learner must be informed of the reason in writing.
 - b. Send a copy of the completed BIL form to the learner.
 - c. Learner to return the approved signed form to the Curriculum Manager or HoS
 - d. The HoS to send the form to the WebReg team.
5. The WebReg team will process the form and notify the Head of Student Administration and Fees, Accounts Receivable, and the HoS, plus the 'MISCourseCodes' team for HE learners.

Submission of Work/Assessment Board

Any units the learner has completed before the BIL would be considered at the nearest Assessment Board. For Higher Education courses, if a mitigating circumstances request has been submitted – a BIL is usually due to mitigating circumstances that need time to resolve – the BIL will override this. Once a BIL starts no further work can be submitted until the BIL is completed and the learner returns.

Financial Implications

If the learner receives a loan from either Student Finance England (SFE) or Advanced Learner Loans (ALL), the learner should be aware that their funding arrangements may be affected. Therefore, the learner should seek advice from the relevant organisation **before** they formally request a BIL. The learner will need to ask the difference that a 'break in learning' or a 'withdrawal' will make in terms of their student loan interest and repayments. If the learner is receiving a maintenance loan, they will need to ask what the terms of the repayment will be.

International learners with a Student visa seeking to take a BIL will be required by the Home Office to leave the UK for the period of their BIL and re-apply for a visa before returning to the UK. The College is legally obliged to inform the Home Office of the BIL. The College's Home Office Sponsor Licence is subject to inspection, quotas and continuing to meet eligibility criteria. As such we cannot guarantee we will be able to sponsor the visa of a learner who wishes to return from a BIL at the time it is requested and cannot take responsibility if this prohibits them from returning to their learning. The learner should seek advice from the International Office.

Re-enrolment

The learner must contact the College to arrange their re-enrolment to continue their learning. If the learner does not re-enrol within 364 days from the day their BIL started (last positive attendance), the learner will be **withdrawn**.

Occasionally, changes may be made to the programme of study which will be in the best interests of the learners. Efforts will be made to contact any learners on a BIL for consultation regarding any changes, but the learner accepts that they may return to an amended programme following a BIL.

The HoS/Curriculum Manager (CM) should aim to remind the learner of the due return date 42 days before the learner is expected to be back.

Once the learner has taken a break from their learning, they will not be able to access College library facilities and other resources as the College ID card will have been deactivated. **The learner must re-enrol when they return to the College for their ID card to be reactivated.**

Further Guidance for Curriculum and Admin Staff

- i. *The learner must have a **return-to-college 1:1 meeting**, conducted by the **CM or HoS**. This meeting is essential to **review the work completed** during their absence, **identify any necessary catch-up tasks**, and **confirm their timetable** to ensure a smooth transition back into their studies.*
- ii. *Following a short BIL, the relevant curriculum staff should determine whether the learner can complete the course by the original planned end date. If so, the learner's status can be changed back to **active**, **if the learner returns within the same academic year** at the end of the break. An **attendance target should be set**, as another BIL will not be permitted if the learner struggles again; instead, they will need to be **withdrawn**.*
- iii. *If not, the learner will require a new enrolment with an updated occurrence code. The start date will be the date that learning resumed with a revised planned end date. However, the learner's **Original Learning Start Date** should also be entered against the new course code to indicate that a BIL has ended.*
- iv. *If the learner returns **within the same academic year or within 364 days of taking a break**, the **CM or HoS must email WebReg** with clear details of the **learning aim/course and learner information**, including the **date of re-instatement**.*
- v. *All learners must sign a learning agreement upon returning from BIL.*
- vi. *The learner must return to the same learning aim within 364 days of taking a break. If they do not return within this timeframe or the agreed BIL period, the learner must be withdrawn and re-enrolled with a new residency/fee assessment. If the original learning aim becomes obsolete before the return date, the learner will be enrolled on the most appropriate new one. This will require a new residency/fee assessment and the original BIL must be changed to a withdrawal.*

BREAK IN LEARNING / LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM		
To be completed by the learner	LEARNER DETAILS	
	Current Academic Year:	
	Name:	Learner ID Number:
	Personal Email Address:	Contact Telephone Number:
	Course Title(s) and Course Code(s):	
	What is the main reason for your break in learning? <i>This should be a short explanation concerning your request. Please attach any relevant supporting documentation.</i>	
	When do you expect to start your break in learning? (dd/mm/yyyy)	
	When do you expect to return from your break in learning (must be within 364 days*)?	
	* If you do not return within 364 days you will be withdrawn and any fees paid will not be refunded.	
	For HE only: Please state whether you would like any units which you have completed during this academic year to be considered at the Assessment Board in July. YES/NO (delete as appropriate) <i>Please ensure you have read the Guidance as there are possible funding implications. Also, if these units have been affected by extenuating circumstances, the break in learning will override these. You must discuss this with your Course Manager/Programme Leader/Head of School.</i> Please provide the unit code and title of any units you would like the Assessment Board to consider:	
To be completed by HoS	To be completed & emailed* to WebReg by Head of School <i>* Head of School email will be considered confirmation of signature.</i>	
	Head of School Name:	
	Approved / Not Approved (delete as appropriate)	
	----- If not approved, please state reason:	
	Last positive attendance date of learner:	
	Date form completed:	