

Deferral of inspections: learning and skills providers and colleges

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The Common Inspection Framework 2012

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The principles of inspection

In common with other Ofsted inspections, inspections of learning and skills will:

- support and promote improvement
- be proportionate
- focus on the needs of users
- focus on the needs of providers
- be transparent and consistent
- be accountable
- demonstrate value for money.

Definition of deferral and cancellation

Deferral

A deferral is where it is decided after the provider/college has been notified to move the start date of the inspection by more than five working days.

Cancellation

A cancellation arises where it is decided that the inspection of a provider/college should not go ahead at all – now or in the future – perhaps because it is closing, ceases to operate altogether or ceases to receive relevant funding.

Criteria for deferral or cancellation of inspections

To fulfil these principles and in the interest of all involved, deferral or cancellation of an inspection may only take place in exceptional and fully justifiable circumstances.

A deferral or cancellation will be considered only if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

- the principal or a member of the provider's senior management team is subject to a current police investigation which would be compromised by an inspection of the provider
- the college or provider is due to merge or close and it is decided that no useful purpose will be served in inspecting it
- the college or provider is no longer in receipt of funding or will not be in receipt of funding at the time of the proposed inspection
- at least three quarters of the learners will not be at the provider, or with their employer, for at least half of the period for which the inspection has been scheduled
- the provider is closed to all learners, and learners are not available at their employers' premises, for at least half of the period for which the inspection has been scheduled
- there are other very exceptional circumstances which, in the judgement of the relevant inspection divisional manager or regional director, justify deferral or cancellation of the inspection.

Other commonly cited factors

Absence of principal/senior representative

If a principal/senior representative of the provider is away from the provider's premises, Ofsted requires that the inspection proceed on the basis that the learners at the provider are still receiving education and training.

Building work

Building work is not a reason for deferral.

Illness or death

In the case of illness or death of the principal/senior representative of the provider, the relevant senior manager or director at Ofsted will exercise their professional judgement.

Referral of requests

Colleges or providers who are considering lodging a request for deferral or cancellation of their announced inspection should study the criteria above carefully and ensure that at least one of the criteria applies before they make a request.

Any request for deferral should be made by the principal or most senior representative of the organisation or equivalent. It should be made in writing to the inspection services provider administrator named on your inspection notification letter.