



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

Change of Circumstances Policy

Effective from September 2025



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Student and Academic Services

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1. Introduction

1. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Academic Regulations and Tuition Fees Payment Policy.
2. Birmingham City University takes a positive and proactive approach to supporting students who are considering leaving their course, transferring to another course, or taking a break in their studies. This Policy sets out the process for student-initiated change of circumstances.

2. Definitions

1. Student Change of Circumstances (referred to as 'ChoC' hereinafter) refer to:

Break in Study (BiS):

- The formal process by which a student can request a temporary break in their studies or where there is a university led decision which requires a student to take a temporary break in their studies.
- For an apprentice this may also be referred to as a Break in Learning.
- A student will be on a break from their studies for an agreed period, up to one academic year. During this time the student will not have access to teaching, resources or buildings. This means that a student will not be able to continue with their studies or submit assessments or take exams.
- International students on a Student Route Visa will be required to return to their home country whilst on a break in study.

Permanent Withdrawal (PWD):

- The formal process by which a student can request to permanently withdraw from their course to leave the University.
- Access to BCU resources, teaching, systems and buildings will cease when a student is permanently withdrawn from their course.

Course or Route Transfer:

- The formal process by which a student can transfer to a different course or route/pathway within the University.

Resumption of Studies

- The date, agreed between the University and student, when the student will return and resume their studies. For apprentices, the date will also be agreed with their employer.

2. 'We', 'Our' and the 'University' refers to Birmingham City University.
3. When referring to processes which are the same for students and apprentices, the term used will be "students". Where the policy relates to apprenticeship provision only, the term "apprentice" will be used.
4. APTM is the university record system for apprenticeships.
5. Faculty Student Centre (FSC). This is the is a one-stop-shop for all student support and guidance. FSC can be located in Faculties across our campus buildings and contact details are located [here](#).

3. Principles

1. This Policy applies to all undergraduate (UG), postgraduate taught (PGT) courses including continuous professional development (CPD) courses. For students studying at partner institutions in the UK or overseas, they should refer to the partners process.
2. This Policy does not include university-initiated change of circumstances which result from situations including (but not limited to):
 - Academic performance as outlined in the Academic Regulations.
 - Attendance and Engagement monitoring as outlined in the relevant policy (see Student and Apprentice Attendance and Engagement policies within the [Student Contract](#)).
 - Fitness to study, fitness to practise or precautionary suspension under the University's student disciplinary procedure outlined in the relevant policy: (see [Student Governance Procedures](#) within the Student Contract).
 - Non-payment of tuition fees as detailed in the [Tuition Fees Payment Policy](#).
 - Where you are an apprentice, withdrawal because you have lost your job and are therefore no longer able to continue your apprenticeship.
 - Withdrawal for failure to comply with enrolment terms.
 - For apprentices where there is no plan for active learning to take place within a calendar month or where there is no active learning for two consecutive months and a retrospective break in study (learning is applied).
3. This Policy is owned by Student and Academic Services (SaAS), specifically Delivery Services, whose role is to work collaboratively across Student and Academic Services to oversee and support the co-ordination of this policy and associated processes, in conjunction with the Faculty Student Centres (FSC).
4. The FSC manages all ChoC requests by working with key BCU departments. The FSC will provide students with full support, advice and guidance throughout the process, this will include facilitating academic input via course teams into ChoCs requests.

5. For Postgraduate Research (PGR) students, the Doctoral Research College (DRC) manages the processes relating to PGR requests for ChoC's.
6. Students will be supported to continue their studies where possible and/or appropriate.
7. Where possible and appropriate, students should be proactively supported to continue their studies in the first instance. Where individual personal circumstances are likely to prevent a student from continuing with their course, students will be fully supported to make an informed and timely decision to either take a Break in Study, explore options to transfer to another course at the University, or withdraw from their course. We may make use of the [Fitness to Study Procedure](#) to place a student on a Break in Study where individual personal health circumstances are likely to prevent a student from continuing with their course and time away from study is considered to be in the student's best interests.
8. Apprentices who may need to take a Break in Study will be supported with input from their FSC, their employers and the Apprenticeships Delivery and Compliance Team.
9. This Policy ensures that we are compliant with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements and that the relevant PSRB is informed when a student's ChoC has been confirmed. This includes;
 - UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) for Student Route Visa Holders,
 - Student Finance England (SFE) or equivalent funding body,
 - Third Party Sponsors and employers,
 - The Department for Education (DfE) for apprentices.
10. Where a student is a new entrant and has not fully enrolled on their course, any transfer should be dealt with via Admissions. For continuing students, any course transfer should be dealt with via Faculty Student Centre. For apprentices, this would be dealt with by the FSC and the Apprenticeships Delivery and Compliance Team.

4. Requesting a ChoC

1. A student can make a request for a ChoC by contacting their FSC.
2. Details on how to submit a ChoC are available from the FSC, this will be submitted online.
3. At the point a request is made, the student will receive an acknowledgement email. The student request will be individually triaged and based on a student's circumstances and reasons for requesting a ChoC additional support, advice and signposting will be provided where deemed appropriate.

4. The FSC will also assist in arranging a meeting, where necessary, between the student and a member of the Academic Course Team to discuss their request and provide academic advice and guidance. Where a discussion has already taken place with the Academic Course Team a further discussion may not be necessary.
5. The FSC will ensure that the student is provided with the appropriate information needed to make an informed decision about their ChoC request. This will include understanding any funding implications that their request may have, such as fee liability (see section 11. Fee Liability) and access to funding and services that will cease once their ChoC is agreed, for example disability support. Advice will also be available for students with SFE funding (or equivalent funding body) and maintenance loan implications. Student Route Visa holders will be advised of any immigration and visa implications when requesting a ChoC.
6. For apprentices, there may be implications for their employment and the FSC will co-ordinate the provision of advice and guidance by liaising with the employer and the University's Apprenticeships Delivery and Compliance Team.
7. Following the provision of advice and guidance via the FSC, students are expected to respond to any requests for further information from the University in a timely manner. Failure to respond will result in delays in processing the ChoC request and could impact the final ChoC date recorded in the student record system. Any fee liability for the student will be calculated on the basis of this date, this means that the student will be liable for tuition fees up until the agreed ChoC date. Please note that apprentices are not liable for tuition fees. See section 11 Fee Liability for more information.

5. Processing a ChoC request

1. Student ChoC requests will normally be completed (i.e., open ChoC requests closed with a decision) within 14 days of initiation. The request will be finalised after a maximum of 14 days to allow time to ensure that the student has received advice, guidance and support in relation to their request.

We will consider the official ChoC date as the date the ChoC is formally agreed between the University and the student (normally the date the change of circumstances is requested/initiated). For any university-initiated ChoC, the date recorded in the student record system will determine the tuition fee liability. In exceptional circumstances the ChoC may be backdated, for example, where there is evidence of zero attendance on the course.

2. The timeframe for completion of a ChoC for an apprentice will normally be 28 days, additional time may be required to ensure that the apprentice receives the input required from the University and their employer.

3. Due to the requirements of the DfE, the final date of an apprentice's ChoC is recorded in APTM and the student records system, will be the last date of evidenced learning detailed in the apprentices off the job logs.
4. If the student has not engaged with the process within the 14-day timeframe, the FSC will contact the student to re-confirm the student's intention after 14 days. The student will be required to respond to the FSC within 7 days to formally confirm their ChoC request in writing. If the student fails to respond and is no longer attending and engaging with their studies, we reserve the right to process the ChoC on behalf of the student. The official ChoC date will be recorded as date of initiation plus 14 days. If there is evidence of attendance and engagement, the ChoC request will be closed without being processed and the FSC will follow up with the student to confirm this action.
5. Applying a timeline of 14 days to this process, ensures compliance with UKVI requirements and provides a timely update of a ChoC to SFE (or equivalent funding body) if required (see Section 11 Fee Liability).
6. Where apprentices fail to respond, attend and engage we reserve the right to process the ChoC on their behalf as agreed with the employer using the last date of evidenced learning.
7. The FSC will be responsible for overseeing the student record processing following the agreement of a ChoC, see appendix 1.

6. Sources of support for students

1. Students are encouraged to engage with relevant support services in advance of submitting their ChoC request, to help ensure that the request represents an informed decision, see appendix 2.
2. The FSC will support the student and course team where required by signposting to appropriate services that may assist the student in making their final decision when initiating a ChoC..
3. Any student experiencing a mental health crisis should seek help and support from the university's Mental Health and Wellbeing team via [Report and Support](#).

7. Break in Study

1. A Break in Study is an agreement between the University and the student to temporarily pause their studies. Students are recommended to only pursue a break in study when they have a clear intent and/or plan to return to study. When a student requests a Break in Study, the FSC, in collaboration with the Academic Course Team will review the students request and confirm the agreed return date based on the scenarios outlined below.
2. An undergraduate or postgraduate student can request a break in study at any point during a teaching period. A teaching period is defined as the time during which scheduled teaching sessions are still taking place. For standard course provision, this aligns with the designated teaching weeks outlined in the academic calendar. However, for non-standard provision that does not follow the standard calendar, the teaching period refers to whether full teaching for the semester has been completed or not.
3. Where a student is requesting a break in study during the teaching period, the student will be required to return to the start of the semester of their return date, to avoid any gaps in teaching and ensure academic continuity and will again be liable for any fees for that semester at the re-entry point. (The student may only return at the appropriate re-entry point, either at the start of a semester or, in the case of block delivery, at the beginning of the relevant module. For example, if a student takes a break in study from 13th March (or partway through Semester 2) and requests a break in study they will need to return at the start of Semester 2. Tuition fees will apply from the point of re-entry, either at the start of the semester or the commencement of the module (see Section 11 Fee Liability). Where a student is resuming their studies at the start of the semester/module, any prior assessment marks will not be retained and the student will be required to complete these assessments as part of the course and modules when they recommence their studies. This would be deemed as the same attempt at the assessment for the module.
4. For Undergraduate students, re-entry is permitted at two key points in the academic year: the start of Semester One or the start of Semester Two. Postgraduate Taught students may be eligible to resume studies at the beginning of any of the three semesters, subject to curriculum delivery patterns.
5. If a student has completed all their teaching but has not completed all their assessments and wishes to take a break in studies, the request will need to be reviewed by a member of the Academic course team to assess the viability of returning to complete assessments only, before commencing the next semester for the level of study. This could include a review of attendance and meeting learning outcomes, any potential changes to the curriculum and Professional Statutory and Regulatory body requirements, please note this list is not exhaustive and the Academic course team will outline all areas to be considered.

6. For apprentices, the resumption date will also be agreed in consultation with the Apprenticeships Delivery and Compliance Team and the employer.
7. When requesting a break in studies students should be aware of the following:
 - **Support Services:** Before requesting a break, students are encouraged to seek support from their Academic Course Team, Personal Tutor, Wellbeing Services, and/or Educational Development Services. These teams may be able to help you remain on your course or complete your current semester before taking a break. The FSC will also ensure appropriate advice and guidance has been provided when a student requests a ChoC.
 - **Tuition Fee Implications:** Students should carefully consider any potential fee implications associated with taking a break (see below and Section 11 – Fee Liability). Please note that apprentices are not subject to tuition fee liability.
 - **Fee Liability:** Students are liable for their tuition fees up to the date their break in study commences. If a student is in receipt of a maintenance loan, then funding may be recalculated following the request for a break in studies, and students may be required to repay any maintenance loan overpayment. The Student Loans Company (SLC) or equivalent funding body will contact students directly once BCU confirms the break in study, (see Section 11 Fee Liability).
 - **Course Availability:** Please be aware that your original course may not be available upon return. The Faculty Student Centre (FSC) will inform you of any significant changes to your course structure in collaboration with the Academic course team. Where major changes have occurred, you may be required to restart the semester or year, see sections 7.5, 7.9.
 - **Student Route Visa Holders:** International students must return to their home country whilst on a break in study and there will be cost implications to the student (see section 7.13),
 - **Duration of Break:** A break in study is normally approved for up to one year. Requests for a second year will only be considered in exceptional circumstances (see Section 7.10).
 - **Access to University resources during a Break in Studies:** Students on a break in study will no longer have access to BCU buildings and will have limited access to services and resources provided by the University until they recommence and re-enrol on their course. This includes no access to teaching and learning and therefore students will not be permitted to submit assessed work or take examinations. Appendix 3 outlines services available during a break in study.
 - **If a Break in Study is Refused:** Where a break in study request is declined, the FSC or Apprenticeships Delivery and Compliance team will provide a rationale outlining the reasons for the decision.

8. Tuition fees are calculated from the point of resumption, potentially covering the full academic year and incorporating any fee increases. For example, if a student takes a break in study within semester 1, they will be liable for tuition fees for the period prior to the break in study. Upon resumption, if the student resumes at the start of semester 1 in the following academic year, tuition fees will again be liable from semester 1, therefore resulting in full tuition fees for the academic year (see Section 11 Fee Liability). If the student resumes their studies to take assessments to be able to progress to the next semester, the fee liability will be checked and 100% of tuition fees will be charged for the level of study.
9. Please note that we cannot guarantee that the availability of the original course upon the student's return to study. Where a student or an apprentice is taking a Break in Study, the FSC will ensure any updates in relation to changes in the course structure are communicated, and where required, the employer will be informed (normally for an apprentice). Whilst we aim to ensure minimum disruption, where major modifications have been made to the curriculum, the student may be required to restart at the beginning of the semester/stage to enable the new credit requirement to be met. In such cases, there may be a fee liability for the student and they will be advised by the FSC in line with the [Tuition Fees Payment policy](#), see Section 11.
10. A Break in Study may be approved for up to one academic year of study. In exceptional circumstances, and on approval by the Dean of School or nominee, a student may be permitted to extend their Break in Study for one further academic year, provided the student is able to complete their course within their maximum registration period. The student will be required to provide supporting evidence for any extension requests, evidencing the reason which is preventing them from returning within the agreed time frame, e.g., medical records for cases related to ill-health.
11. After discussing taking a Break in Studies with their FSC, if the student then decides that they no longer wish to continue with the course, the FSC will discuss alternative options and provide appropriate guidance.
12. The FSC will remain in contact with students on a Break in Study twice during a one- year break in study and then approximately 2 months prior to their agreed return date. The FSC will re-confirm the student's intentions in returning to their studies, ensure that the student's record is ready for re-enrolment and provide advice and support to facilitate their transition back to their studies. For an apprentice, the FSC point of contact will either be the apprentice or with the employer.
13. Student Route Visa holders will be required to return to their home country when on a break in study. The FSC will remain in contact with all Student Route Visa holders, see in section 7.12 and then approximately 4 months prior to their agreed return date to ensure there is sufficient time for the student to apply for a new Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) and visa. Costs for the CAS and visa will be incurred by the student.

14. Where an apprentice is aware in advance that they will not be able to engage in learning for a period of 2 consecutive months or more, they must initiate a request for a Break in Study. We may also instigate a Break in Study where there is no evidence of active learning for a period of 2 consecutive months or more. This is in line with ESFA requirements (see Apprenticeship Attendance and Engagement Policy).
15. Students appointed as Sabbatical Officers by the BCU Students' Union should inform their FSC of this as soon as possible, by confirming the details of their appointment via a ChoC request. If the student holds a Student Route Visa, the FSC should notify the University's UKVI Compliance Team of this appointment.
16. Where the student is returning to complete their studies from the start of the Semester or module (for block delivery), the student must re-enrol by Friday of week 4 of teaching (of the semester in which the student is due to return). Any student who has not re-enrolled in this timeframe will be permanently withdrawn and will be notified via email. Please note if a student is returning to complete assessments before they commence their next semester they must re-enrol before their assessments can be taken. For apprentices, the FSC will ensure that discussions have taken place with the employer before a permanent withdrawal is processed.
17. Students on a break in study will no longer have access to BCU buildings and limited access to services and resources provided by the University until they recommence and re-enrol on their course. This includes no access to teaching and learning and therefore students will not be permitted to submit assessed work or take examinations. Appendix 3 outlines services available during a break in study.

8. Transferring to another course at Birmingham City University (BCU)

1. Students can transfer from their course up until Friday of week 4 from the course start date. In exceptional cases there may be instances where an in-year course transfer is permitted e.g., where the courses may have a common year of study.
2. A course transfer request does not guarantee a transfer will be approved. Whilst a request for a course transfer is being considered, students must continue to attend and engage with their original course where possible. There may be serious implications for non-attendance during this time, for example breaking the conditions of a Student Route Visa which may lead to visa curtailment for international students or withdrawal from course (see [Student Attendance and Engagement Policy](#)). If there are issues preventing a student from attending, the student should inform their FSC when a ChoC is initiated.

3. Course transfer decisions within the first semester are subject to our Admissions entry requirements, availability of spaces, and adherence to any deadlines for application (which may vary by course). The FSC will assist in the request and ensure a meeting is arranged with the Academic Team/s prior to a course transfer being approved. In some instances, course transfer decisions may depend upon successful completion of the current stage of study or other criteria being met, including for example rules set out by UKVI.
4. Decisions will normally be available to students within 14 days of receipt of the request. Therefore, students must ensure their request to transfer is submitted at least 14 days prior to the Friday of week 4 of the course start date.
5. Depending on the academic cycle, the student may be placed on a Break in Study until they are able to enrol onto their new course.
6. Apprentices are permitted to transfer at any point within the academic year providing this is in line with the academic course requirements. For example, if up until the point of the transfer, both courses share a common year of study, a course transfer will be permitted. However, where there are differences in the curriculum which cannot be accommodated at the point the transfer request is made, then the apprentice can only transfer at the next available academic course opportunity.

9. Seasonal Transfers

1. The University does not permit seasonal transfers. This type of 'course' transfer is one where a student would transfer within the same academic year to a different intake, e.g., a September start student, changes their intake to a January intake. This impacts undergraduate students who have a maintenance loan and/or have their fees paid by the Student Loans Company (SLC).
2. A seasonal transfer does not meet the definition of a course transfer and therefore the DfE have confirmed that a new academic year of funding is not available if a student was to transfer and have a change in seasonal intakes, therefore detrimentally impacting a student's maintenance loan payment and/or tuition fee payment.

10. Permanent Withdrawal

1. A permanent withdrawal cannot normally be processed without a formal ChoC request, the exception to this will be university initiated permanent withdrawals. FSC's will support students in seeking appropriate advice when taking a Permanent Withdrawal. Failure to inform us of a planned or actual course withdrawal may have serious implications for students such as financial, employment (apprentices) or immigration issues (student route visa holders). Students who leave their course without initiating a formal ChoC may subsequently be withdrawn via other university processes such as withdrawal for non-attendance (see Student and Apprentice Attendance and Engagement policies within the [Student Contract](#)).
2. Students requesting to transfer to a course at another institution should permanently withdraw from their course at BCU before they enrol elsewhere. Failure to do so may have serious implications for the student, for example in terms of receiving appropriate and timely funding. It is the students' responsibility to ensure that they understand their fee liability and funding remains in place to cover their studies at a new institution. For Student Route Visa holders, transferring to another institution will result in the student being required to return to their home country and re-applying for a new CAS and visa.
3. Re-application to a programme of study or apprenticeship programme at BCU after permanent withdrawal is outlined in the Admissions Policy. A student requesting a permanent withdrawal should carefully consider the criterion for returning to study at BCU after a permanent withdrawal (see Admissions policy). If you make a new application to a programme of study at BCU, the University's Admissions policy and criteria that are in force at the time of the application will apply (see Admissions policy). Please note that for an apprentice, a new application would be via the employer in the first instance before an invitation to apply is sent via APTM.
4. Depending on the reasons for a Permanent Withdrawal, returning to study at BCU for Student Route Visa holders is unlikely to be possible.
5. When a student is permanently withdrawn from their course all access to BCU systems (including BCU email account) ceases within 14 calendar days after their withdrawal date. Access to buildings, teaching and support services ceases with immediate effect.

11. Student Route Visa Holders

1. Where a Student Route Visa holder either takes a Break in Study or Permanent Withdrawal the BCU UKVI Compliance team will inform UKVI of the students ChoC within 14 days of the final decision. This will mean that Student Route Visa Holder's will need to make arrangements to leave the UK.
2. For Student Route Visa holders, the details of any course transfer will be reported to UKVI by the University's UKVI Compliance Team within 14 days of the final decision.

12. Fee Liability

1. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Tuition Fees Payment Policy.
2. Fee liability is not applicable to apprentices.
3. Students taking a Break in Study or a Permanent Withdrawal may be liable for a proportion of the tuition fees for the academic year. Students will be reminded of their fee liability obligations by the FSC when requesting a ChoC. Students transferring courses may also be liable for fees. Where a student is funded by SFE, or equivalent funding body, the change in their circumstances is communicated to the funding body so that their records can be updated and the student's funding account/s adjusted accordingly.
4. Where a student takes a Break in Study or is permanently withdrawn and is in receipt of a maintenance loan from SFE, or equivalent funding body, a proportion of that loan may be clawed back depending on the timing of the ChoC. For example, if maintenance has been released for all of semester 2 but a student takes a Break in Study after two weeks of the semester, it is likely SFE, or equivalent funding body, would claw back the amount of maintenance intended to cover all but the two weeks of that semester.
5. Following a Break in Study, students will normally restart at the beginning of the semester that they did not complete to avoid any gaps in teaching. The student will be liable for additional tuition fees when they are returning to restart from the beginning of the semester, see section 7 for more information on a Break in Studies.
6. We will agree the student's official ChoC date and this date will determine the fee liability.
7. The University reserves the right to increase fees in subsequent years in line with increases in inflation (capped at 5%) or to reflect changes in Government funding policies or changes agreed by Parliament. In situations where the Government raises the cap on tuition fees, the University will usually increase fees to the maximum level. Therefore, if you are returning to your course after a Break in Studies you will be subject to fee increases where these are applied by the University. Please see the latest [Tuition Fees Payment Policy](#) for more information.

Appendix 1

Student Record Processing

The FSC will manage the maintenance and processing of the student record normally within 5 days upon receipt of confirmation of final ChoC decision. Once student records are updated, notifications will be sent to relevant professional services where further action is required. Further record updates may include:

- i. Central Finance.
- ii. Fees and Funding team.
- iii. University UKVI Compliance Team (for Visas and Immigration monitoring purposes, if appropriate).
- iv. University Accommodation.
- v. Practice Placements Team (if appropriate).
- vi. Disability Support Services (if appropriate).
- vii. Apprenticeships Delivery and Compliance Team (ESFA funding and monitoring purposes)

In addition, we are obligated to inform relevant third parties of a confirmed student ChoC. This includes but is not limited to:

- viii. Student Finance England or other appropriate and relevant funding bodies e.g., ESFA.
- ix. UKVI.
- x. Employers (apprentices only).

Appendix 2

Support Services

Service	Nature of support
Mental Health and Wellbeing team	Access to wellbeing advisers, mental health advisers, and counsellors; workshops; self-help resources; safeguarding support
Money and Childcare Advice	Advice on finance and childcare issues,
including support in seeking additional funding	Support for students with a disability, Specific Learning Difficulty (such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD), a long-term health condition or a mental health difficulty.
Disability Support	Support for students with a disability, Specific Learning Difficulty (such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD), a long-term health condition or a mental health difficulty.
Student Governance	Team overseeing the administration of the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure, for use where personal circumstances impact a student's ability to complete an assessment
Centre for Academic Success	Support to develop academic, technical, and numerical skills
BCU Wellbeing	Downloadable app to support student wellbeing and help students achieve balance, create healthy habits, and reach their potential.
Students' Union Advice Centre	Independent advisers can provide guidance on
academic issues, financial issues, and housing	You can seek academic support from your Personal Tutor, who can also signpost you to other sources of support.
Security Services	Personal safety advice and support
Personal Tutors	You can seek academic support from your Personal Tutor, who can also signpost you to other sources of support.
Centre for Academic Success	Supports students with academic skills.

Appendix 3

Services available during a Break in Studies

Services, system access and resources available to a student on a break in studies include access to:

- xi. Money and Childcare advice services.
- xii. All Student Governance procedures.
- xiii. Online Mental Health and Wellbeing resources
- xiv. Disability support services.
- xv. BCU student account including email.
- xvi. Support from FSC prior to returning from a break in studies, to enable a timely return to their course with any advice and guidance needed to facilitate the students return.

Please note that a student will not have access to BCU buildings or any teaching or learning during their break in study and this includes completing examinations and submitting assessments.