

Student Advice Service's

# GUIDE ON EXAMINATION ALLOWANCES

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**STUDENT  
ADVICE SERVICE**

# WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

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This information guide is for students who have experienced mitigating, extenuating or special circumstances, or factors that have affected their performance in their examination.

This information guide applies to students on the following courses:

- Foundation Year Students
- Tripos
- EMBA
- LLM
- MAs
- MBA
- MCL
- MEng
- M.Fin
- MMath
- MMus
- MSci
- PGCE
- MPhil by Advanced Study
- MEd
- MSt
- Certificate of Postgraduate Study (CPGS)
- Postgraduate Diplomas in Economics
- Legal Studies and International Law
- MPhil by Advanced Study
- MRes
- MEd or MSt degrees
- Diploma in Economics
- Postgraduate Diplomas in Legal Studies and in International Law
- Certificate of Postgraduate Study (CPGS)

# WHAT IS AN EXAMINATION?

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## WHAT IS AN EXAMINATION?

The term 'examination' can include any assessment you submit that receives marks that are counted towards your University of Cambridge award.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU FAILED, UNDERPERFORMED OR DID NOT ATTEND YOUR EXAM?

The first thing is to determine why. Did you fail, underperform or not attend the exam due to mitigating circumstances (such as medical reasons or grave cause) or was it something to do with the conduct of the examination?

## WHAT IS A MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCE?

In the context of an examination allowance, the University defines mitigating circumstances as 'serious illness or other grave cause which has clearly impacted upon the examination itself.

Some examples of mitigating circumstances are:

- Short illness such as a bad cold or the flu.
- A long term or more serious illness which has recently been diagnosed and which affected your preparation and/or the performance in the examination.
- A recently diagnosed disability for which you did not have reasonable adjustments in place to mitigate any impact this may have had on your studies.
- A bereavement in the family or close friend.
- A family emergency such as illness of a family member.

# IF A MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCE DID AFFECT YOUR PREPARATION, PERFORMANCE OR ATTENDANCE, WHAT CAN YOU DO?

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The first thing to consider in this situation is did you get any help at the time; did you see your GP, College Nurse, Counsellor or other health professional? Or if it was an issue of grave cause, what evidence can you collect to prove this?

This is because students, themselves or through their College, can present their case and make the University aware of their circumstances by laying out exactly what happened and providing evidence to support this.

This is why it is very important for students to access support if their health is impacted during the examination period, not only for them to benefit from any advice and support a medical professional can provide but also to serve as evidence should the exams have been negatively affected.

## HOW WOULD MY CASE BE PRESENTED?

Presenting a case that relates to exams and mitigating circumstances for undergraduate, foundation year students and certain postgraduate courses is called applying for an examination allowance. Applications for [examination allowances](#) can be submitted by you or the College on your behalf to the EAMC (Examination, Access and Mitigation Committee) within three months of receiving the examination results. It would be a good idea for you to provide a personal statement to accompany the application.

## WHAT IS AN EXAMINATION ALLOWANCE?

Examination allowances can be applied for where a student's exams were affected by medical or grave cause, also known as mitigating circumstances - for example, mental health issues, bereavement, or sudden short illnesses. An examination allowance does not affect the marks received. Its purpose is to allow students a chance to obtain the qualification they have been registered for if the EAMC accepts that their performance in the examination has been affected by serious mitigating circumstances.

# WHAT WOULD BE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION FOR AN EXAMINATION ALLOWANCE?

## WHAT WOULD BE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION FOR AN EXAMINATION ALLOWANCE FOR UNDERGRADUATES AND STUDENTS ON THE FOLLOWING POSTGRADUATE COURSES: EMBA; LLM; MAST; MBA; MCL; MENG; M.FIN; MMATH; MMUS; MSCI; PGCE?

If you have a case and evidence to support that case, there are a range of possible examination allowances. Your Tutor or the Student Advice Service can provide information and guidance on these.

### **To be allowed to progress**

This allowance is available to students who are on courses that are more than one year in length and student who is not in their final year.

### **Declared to have deserved honours (DDH)**

### **Awarded an Ordinary BA degree**

### **Allowed the examination**

This credits the student with the examination (the degree you are registered for) even though you have not met all of the normal requirements.

### **Reconsideration of an original result**

This is intended for a student who has performed at the standard of a higher class in all but a relatively small part of the examination (around 25%), where that small part of the examination was affected by mitigating circumstances and where this is apparent in the student's profile of results.

### **Re-sit opportunity**

Only in very exceptional circumstances will students be allowed to re-sit an examination. As a result, applications for an assessment re-sit will only be considered where disregarding terms, 'allowed the exam' or 'disregarding a paper' would not be possible.

### **Request a paper to be marked**

This mitigation will be considered where confirmation has been received that a paper will not be considered for marking due to late submission. Applications should be made as soon as possible and do not need to be delayed until other marks awarded to the student are known.

# WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES?

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## **WHAT WOULD BE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION FOR AN EXAMINATION ALLOWANCE FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS ON TAUGHT PROGRAMMES WHICH INCLUDES THE MPhil BY ADVANCED STUDY, MRes OR MSt DEGREES, DIPLOMA IN ECONOMICS, POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMAS IN LEGAL STUDIES AND IN INTERNATIONAL LAW, CERTIFICATES OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY (CPGS)?**

If you have a case and evidence to support that case, there are two possible examination allowances. Your Tutor or the Student Advice Service can provide information and guidance on these.

Depending on the examination allowance, outcomes could include:

### **To approve the candidate for the qualification without further examination**

This is only possible if the relevant Degree Committee has judged the student to have performed with credit in a substantial part of the examination.

**To allow candidates to be examined or re-examined under such conditions and at a time determined following consultation by the EAMC with the relevant Degree Committee**

# WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES?

## WHAT WOULD BE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION FOR AN EXAMINATION ALLOWANCE FOR FOUNDATION YEAR STUDENTS?

To qualify for the Certificate of Higher Education in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, students must pass the following:

- a synoptic written examination of three hours duration.
- written work, consisting of three essays of no less than 2,000 words and no more than 3,000 words in length.
- an extended project, of no less than 4,500 words and no more than 6,000 words in length.

Subject to approval from the Board of Examiners, there will be one re-sit opportunity for the examination component (a) and/or submission of one component (b) in July for the following reason:

- candidates that do not pass the course overall.

Students who were permitted to take the resit of the examination (a) and/or submit a summative essay (b) because they did not pass the course overall are not eligible to progress to Tripos regardless of whether their resit mark would mean they subsequently obtained 65% overall.

Students who were permitted to take the resit because their final grade was below the 40% Pass threshold are not eligible to progress to Tripos regardless of whether their resit mark would mean they subsequently obtained 65% overall.

There is also no mitigation available for students to be re-examined on the coursework components (assessments & project) of the course.

# WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES?

Subject to approval from EAMC, there will be one re-sit opportunity for the examination component (a) in July for the following reasons:

- candidates whose performance in the first sitting was affected by illness or grave cause.
- candidates who were unable to undertake the first sitting due to illness or grave cause. A re-sit in such instances would be the student's first sitting.

There is also no mitigation available for students to be re-examined on the coursework components (assessments & project) of the course.

Students who did not attain 65% after the first sitting due to illness or grave cause would be deemed to have met the requirements for progression to Tripos if they were to obtain 65% following a re-sit.

This information is available [here](#).

## WHAT OUTCOMES CANNOT BE APPLIED THROUGH THE EXAMINATION ALLOWANCES PROCESS?

- Change the mark for a paper by either adding extra marks or removing marks.
- Award or instruct a Chair of Examiners to change an overall Class based on how a student might have performed.
- Change or move grade boundaries for an individual student or cohort.



# WHAT KIND OF EVIDENCE IS REQUIRED?

## MEDICAL EVIDENCE

Medical evidence could be a letter from the GP, College Nurse, or any other relevant medical professional, confirming you were unwell before and/or during the examination and explaining the impact the health issues had on your performance or attendance. Medical support should be sought before the completion of the examination as post hoc evidence will not be given the same weight as evidence that predates an examination.

In line with University recommendations the supporting evidence should be:

- **Relevant** - relating to the time in question.
- **Contemporary** - produced close in time to the period affected.
- **Specific** - where possible, it should explicitly relate to the impact the circumstances described have had on the examination.

## EVIDENCE OF GRAVE CAUSE

Evidence of grave cause could include for example a death certificate of a parent or medical evidence proving that a loved one has been hospitalised.

## ACADEMIC EVIDENCE

Applications for examination allowances should include academic evidence. Depending on your course this could be supervision reports for the year or years on which the allowance is requested, and any other coursework completed throughout the year.

You can also consider asking supervisors or other academics you work with to provide letters of support. You can also use emails you may have received from these individuals about the quality of your work.

# WHAT IF I DO NOT HAVE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT MY CASE?

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## MEDICAL EVIDENCE

If medical issues affected your exams and you did not seek medical support at the time, post hoc evidence is better than no evidence. You could explain the situation to your health professional (how you were feeling, when and what impact this had on your exams) and ask them to write a letter.

It would be helpful if in the letter the doctor offered their professional opinion that your experience would have had an impact on your studies.

## EVIDENCE OF GRAVE CAUSE

If you do not have evidence to support the actual 'grave cause' (e.g. death certificate, hospitalisation of a loved one, increased caring responsibilities), consider speaking to a health professional about what impact this had on your exams.

The health professional may be able to write a letter of support on the impact the grave cause has had on your physical and/or mental health. A letter from your Tutor may also be helpful to confirm, for example, that you had increased caring responsibilities during the examination period.

## ACADEMIC EVIDENCE

Applications for an examination allowance will usually include supervision reports, the examinations timetable and any previous examinations/assessments results.

In addition, you could also consider asking supervisors or other academics you work with to provide letters of support. You can also use emails you may have received from these individuals about the quality of your work.

# IF I AM UNHAPPY WITH THE OUTCOME, CAN I REVIEW THE DECISION?

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If you are unsatisfied with the outcome and reasons behind the decision, you can request a [review of this decision](#) within 14 days of receiving the decision letter on the following grounds:

- Procedural irregularities that occurred during the reconsideration which were material or potentially material to the decision being reached;
- The decision is unreasonable in that no reasonable person or body could have reached the same decision on the available evidence;
- The availability of new evidence, which materially impacts the decision and which, for valid reasons, could not have been submitted at an earlier stage.

You can submit the review yourself, although the College can provide advice and support with the application.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM UNSATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE REVIEW OF THE DECISION?

If you are unsatisfied with the outcome and reasons behind the decision, you can make a representation to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#) (OIA).

To do this, you will need a Completion of Procedures letter (COP) from the University.

The deadline to submit a complaint to the OIA is 12 months from the formal decision being issued.

# WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT?

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Consider speaking to your College Tutor about the issues you experienced and the impact they had on your studies.

You may also wish to get one to one advice from one of our Advisors at the Student Advice Service.

You may wish to access the University guidance yourself. Links to the relevant information are listed below.

## HOW CAN STUDENTS ACCESS ADVICE FROM THE STUDENT ADVICE SERVICE?

You can email [advice@cambridgesu.co.uk](mailto:advice@cambridgesu.co.uk) or use our [website contact form](#) to make an appointment to speak with an Advisor. Appointments can be conducted in person, over the phone or via video call.

We are also happy to communicate with students by email only if that is what they prefer.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

Guidance Notes and Application Forms for students whose cases are considered by the Exam Access and Mitigation Committee  
[www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us/eamc/guidance-notes-and-application-forms](http://www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us/eamc/guidance-notes-and-application-forms)

Reviews of Decisions of University Bodies:  
[www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk/reviews-decisions-university-bodies](http://www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk/reviews-decisions-university-bodies)

Student Advice Service - Exams information:  
[www.cambridgesu.co.uk/support/advice/information/exams](http://www.cambridgesu.co.uk/support/advice/information/exams)

University of Cambridge Mitigation:  
[www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/examinations/mitigation](http://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/examinations/mitigation)

Information on mark checks:  
[www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk/staff-support/marks-checks-and-investigating-plagiarism](http://www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk/staff-support/marks-checks-and-investigating-plagiarism)

University Statutes and Ordinances (Chapter III; Examinations):  
[www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/pdfs/2020/ordinance03.pdf](http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/pdfs/2020/ordinance03.pdf)

University Statutes and Ordinances (Chapter VII: Degrees, Diplomas and Other Qualifications):  
[www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/pdfs/2020/ordinance07.pdf](http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/pdfs/2020/ordinance07.pdf)

OIA Good Practice Framework: Requests for Additional Consideration:  
[www.oiahe.org.uk/media/2544/oia-gpf-requests-for-additional-consideration.pdf](http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/2544/oia-gpf-requests-for-additional-consideration.pdf)