

Student Advice Service's

GUIDE ON EXAMINATION ALLOWANCES

Information Guide on Examination Allowances for undergraduate students and students on certain postgraduate courses



WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

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:

- Students on the Foundation Year Programme
- Undergraduates
- Postgraduate taught courses:
 - EMBA
 - LLM
 - MAcc
 - MAST
 - MBA
 - MCL
 - MEng
 - M.Fin
 - MMath
 - MMus
 - MSci
 - PGCE
 - MArch
 - MPhil by Advanced Study
 - MRes or MSt degrees
 - MEd
 - Diploma in Economics
 - Postgraduate Diplomas in Legal Studies and in International Law
 - Certificate of Postgraduate Study (CPGS)

WHAT IS A MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCE?

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A mitigating circumstance is a serious illness or difficult personal circumstances that negatively affected your preparation and/or the examination.

Some examples of mitigating circumstances are:

- Short-term illness or injury
- Worsening of an ongoing illness or disability, including mental health conditions
- Symptoms of an infectious disease that could be harmful if passed on to others
- Death or significant illness of a close family member or friend
- Unexpected caring responsibilities for a family member or dependant
- Significant personal or family crises leading to acute stress
- Witnessing or experiencing a traumatic incident
- A crime which has had a substantial impact on you
- Accommodation crisis such as eviction or the home becoming uninhabitable
- An emergency or crisis that prevents you from attending an exam or accessing an online assessment

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

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.

WHAT IS AN EXAMINATION ALLOWANCE?

An examination allowance is a remedy for a student whose assessment(s) (exam, coursework or other formal assessment where the marks contribute to the student's formal examination result) are impacted by illness or grave cause. In such circumstances the University can grant an examination allowance so that the student is not substantively disadvantaged.

HOW WOULD MY CASE BE PRESENTED?

Presenting a case that relates to exams and mitigating circumstances 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 formal examination results.

Information from the University on applications for examination allowances and copies of the relevant application forms are available [here](#).

HOW DO I APPLY

APPLICATIONS THROUGH THE COLLEGE

If you apply through the College, the first thing you need to do is to discuss your situation with the College Tutor and/or a Wellbeing Advisor. They can help you understand your options and build your application.

In this case, the College will complete the application form, will write a supporting statement explaining your circumstances and will include your supervision reports and/or any other academic evidence.

Your College will ask you to send the supporting evidence (medical or other), sign a declaration form and provide a copy of your Student Support Document if you have one. You could also write your own personal statement to support your application. Our [Guidance on Writing Your Personal Statement for an Examination Allowance](#) and the [Template](#) to assist you in writing your statement.

DIRECT APPLICATIONS

Direct applications need to include the following:

- A completed and signed [application and declaration form](#)
- A personal statement explaining your circumstances and how these affected the examination
- Supporting evidence (medical or other)
- A Student Support Document where applicable
- Your supervision reports and/or any other academic evidence

Students are also encouraged to seek support and make their College aware of any direct application submitted.

Applications need to be sent by email to the EAMC EAMC@admin.cam.ac.uk by the deadline for the next EAMC meeting. The dates of meetings and the respective deadlines are available [here](#).

In the case of direct applications, your College will be informed of the application and the allowance requested, as well as the outcome course. The College may be asked to provide further information for the application where relevant, e.g. all supervision reports, or confirmation of relevant College action.

HOW APPLICATIONS ARE CONSIDERED

The EAMC receives copies of applications seven days before a meeting. Before the Committee meeting, the EAMC may contact the Department or Faculty for further information, e.g. information on grade boundaries.

The EAMC will consider the application presented (directly or through the College), any additional information received from the Department, Faculty or relevant University office, and any previous applications that have been made to the EAMC.

Where the criteria of a requested examination allowance have not been met, the EAMC may grant a different exam allowance.

Once the EAMC has made a decision an outcome letter will be sent to the College and the student via email, with the College receiving at least 24 hours' notice of the decision.

Outcome letters will normally be issued within ten working days of the EAMC meeting at which the application was considered.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES?

Possible outcomes of successful applications for students on the following courses: tripos, MBA and Executive MBA, LLM, MAcc, MAST, MArch, MCL, MEng, M.Fin, MMath, MMus, MSci, PGCE

ALLOWED TO PROGRESS

This allowance is for undergraduate students who are not in their final year. This allows you to progress to the next part of the course if you fail an examination.

To be allowed to progress, the University needs to be satisfied that your mitigating circumstances affected your exams and that there is sufficient academic evidence, for example, supervision reports, that you would have passed the examination and progressed onto the next part of the course, were it not for the mitigating factors.

A temporary 'allowed to progress' may be granted if your examination results have not yet been finalised, for example, because a Student Disciplinary Procedure is ongoing. You can choose whether to continue with the course considering you may be withdrawn partway through as a result of the ongoing procedure.

Although 'Allowed to progress' is unavailable for certain fourth-year courses, the EAMC could provide a letter confirming that your circumstances meet the criteria for illness or grave cause (if the EAMC is satisfied that your circumstances meet the criteria for illness or grave cause). You can provide the letter to the relevant University academic authority considering progression onto the relevant part of the course.

What appears on the transcript? 'Allowed to progress' appears on the student's academic transcript as the result for that examination. The enrolled papers and marks attained by the student are retained and displayed.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES?

DECLARED TO HAVE DESERVED HONOURS (DDH) OR AN ORDINARY BA DEGREE

This allowance is for undergraduate students in their final year, or postgraduate students taking an honours degree (for example, the Master of Law).

This applies if you could not attend assessment(s); or attended but either failed or achieved results that were unrepresentative of your abilities.

If the academic evidence shows that you would have achieved at least a Class III, or pass for postgraduate students, if it was not for the illness or grave cause, you can be declared to have deserved honours and receive the award of an honours degree (DDH).

For undergraduate students only, if the academic evidence shows that you would have passed the examination at Part II, IIA or IIB, you can be granted an Ordinary BA degree. DDH is not a classed award and may not be acceptable for some professional requirements. You could consider obtaining a detailed reference letter from the College which might be better than replacing the Class with a DDH. Before deciding to apply for DDH, it would be a good idea for you to get advice from the [Careers Service](#) that could help you decide whether DDH or a Class would be a better option for your future plans.

What appears on the transcript? 'Declared to have deserved honours' appears on the student's academic transcript as the result for that examination. The enrolled papers and marks attained are retained and displayed. The following statement explaining the 'DDH' is added to the transcript; This candidate has been awarded an allowance in accordance with the University's regulations. The authorities concerned are of the opinion that, for good reason, it would be unfair to classify the candidate since they believe that this would not adequately represent the candidate's attainment. They have accordingly agreed to declare the candidate to have deserved honours in this examination.

'Ordinary BA Degree', appears on the student's academic transcript as the result for that examination. All papers and marks are retained and displayed and the degree awarded on a transcript is titled 'BA Degree (Ordinary)'.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES?

ALLOWED THE EXAMINATION

This allowance is for postgraduate students who are not taking an honours degree (e.g. the MBA or the MAST degree).

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

This allowance is granted if the academic evidence shows that you would have passed the examination were it not for the illness or grave cause, for example, partial results at pass level and supervision reports or a letter from the Supervisor.

What appears on the transcript? 'Allowed the Examination' appears on the student's academic transcript as the result for that examination. The enrolled papers and marks attained are retained and displayed.

RECONSIDERATION OF AN ORIGINAL RESULT

This allowance is available to undergraduate or postgraduate students who receive a Class of 1, 2.i, 2.ii, or 3; or for postgraduates where the course is not classed but there are higher awards available e.g. Merit and Distinction.

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.

This option is only available if by being re-classed on the basis of the unaffected assessments, the class changes from, for example, 2.i to 1st.

What appears on the transcript? All of the original marks shall remain on the student's record and on the transcript, including the marks of any papers that have been disregarded in the re-classification. This allowance will not change the student's total mark.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES?

REQUEST A PAPER TO BE MARKED

For a student who has submitted an assessment past the deadline due to illness or grave cause, where it will not be marked 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.

TO BE ALLOWED THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE EXAMINED OR RE-EXAMINED

A re-sit may be offered if your mitigating circumstances have impacted more than a small part of your assessments.

Applications for a re-sit will be considered where an alternative allowance e.g. allowed to progress, allowed the exam, a DDH or BA Ordinary Degree is not possible. Or if other allowances would cause substantial disadvantage. For example, if this is not acceptable for external accreditation to professional, statutory and regulatory bodies for your course

.Where a substantive part of the student's course has also been affected by the illness or grave cause a student should not apply for an examination allowance. Instead, a student should apply to 'disregard' the term(s) of study affected by the circumstances, and return in the following academic year to repeat study in the terms impacted by the illness or grave cause and then re-take the exams. While this option results in a further opportunity to sit the examination, it also includes study and therefore, is different from the examination allowance of 're-sit opportunity'.

Further information and guidance for students on the following courses: tripos, MBA and Executive MBA, LLM, MAcc, MAST, MArch, MCL, MEng, M.Fin, MMath, MMus, MSci, PGCE is available [here](#).

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES?

Possible outcomes of successful applications for students on the following courses: MPhil by Advanced Study, MRes, Diploma in Economics, PG Diploma in Legal Studies, PG Diploma International Law, CPGS, MSt, MEd

TO APPROVE THE CANDIDATE FOR THE QUALIFICATION WITHOUT FURTHER EXAMINATION

Where students have not met the criteria to be awarded the qualification for which they are registered, this allowance grants the student the degree.

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

This allowance can only be granted once all exam marks are known.

What appears on the transcript? The transcript will confirm the awarded degree. The marks attained, including any fail marks, are retained and displayed. On request, the EAMC will provide a letter to complement the transcript detailing the exam allowance.

TO BE ALLOWED THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE EXAMINED OR RE-EXAMINED

Where a student's circumstances require it, it may be appropriate for the student to return to study in the next academic year to re-sit the exam(s) in question, providing this will not provide unfair advantage to the student in comparison to their peers.

In exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the Degree Committee, permission may be granted for a student to re-start the course afresh. In this circumstance, the student is able to choose different paper options or topic choices, where available, and normally repeats all forms of assessment and examinations. Exceptional circumstances would involve significant and sustained mitigating circumstances throughout a student's final year or a significant change to the course.

Further information is available [here](#).

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES?

Possible outcomes of a successful application 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.

RE-SIT FAILURE

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.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES?

Possible outcomes of a successful application for Foundation Year Students

RE-SITS AS AN EXAM ALLOWANCE

If during the first sitting your examination was affected by mitigating circumstances, you would be eligible to re-sit the examination component (a) in July.

If you achieve 65% following the re-sit examination, you can progress to the course.

If a student is permitted to sit the exam component (a) as a first sitting in July, there will be no further opportunity for a re-sit during that academic year.

In exceptional circumstances, where students have been granted a re-sit but are unable to sit the exam in July and wish to do so in the following academic year, this may be permitted.

There is also no mitigation available for students to be re-examined on the coursework components (assessments & project) of the course. This is because extensions may be requested. In exceptional circumstances and where the criteria for illness and grave cause are met, extensions for project (c) may be permitted into the long vacation period, with the assessment being examined at the second Examining Board (in late July/early August).

This information is available [here](#).

WHAT KIND OF EVIDENCE IS REQUIRED?

Contemporaneous evidence from an independent, appropriately qualified, source must be provided in order to be granted an exam allowance.

Evidence should include the nature, severity and impact of the illness or grave cause; it should state how the condition is likely to have affected the student's examination preparation and / or performance. The evidence should be precise, self-explanatory and where relevant, should offer a clear diagnosis from a medical professional.

MEDICAL EVIDENCE

Medical evidence could be a letter from the GP, College Nurse, College Welfare Staff 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.

Evidence is treated sensitively and confidentially and is only seen by decision-makers and those staff administering the decision-making processes.

Evidence must be from an independent source, not family or friends, and the author must be sufficiently qualified to provide the relevant evidence.

Evidence must be in English or include an official translation from a third party (not generated or translated by AI).

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?

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. However, please note that the University states that evidence obtained after the impact of the illness or grave cause which explains that the student 'reported' they were impacted by illness or grave cause is unlikely to be sufficient.

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?

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?

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 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

Reviews of Decisions of University Bodies:

www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk/reviews-decisions-university-bodies

Student Advice Service - Exams information:

www.cambridgesu.co.uk/support/advice/information/exams

University of Cambridge Mitigation:

https://universityofcambridgecloud.sharepoint.com/sites/UoC_CambridgeStudentsExams/SitePages/Mitigation.aspx (Raven access only)

Information on mark checks:

www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk/staff-support/marks-checks-and-investigating-plagiarism

OIA Good Practice Framework: Requests for Additional Consideration:

www.oiahe.org.uk/media/2544/oia-gpf-requests-for-additional-consideration.pdf