

A Guide to Reasonable Adjustments for Staff and Colleges 2023-2024 Contact: exam.arrangements@cam.ac.uk

The guidance notes are relevant for 2023-2024, however the format is under review and a new version is expected to be published early in 2024.

### A Guide to Reasonable Adjustments for Staff and Colleges

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#### 1. Basic Principles

This guide is designed to support staff and Colleges in the management of students who may require reasonable adjustments. The guide covers Undergraduate students, some Postgraduate students and students on the Foundation Year and aims to outline information with regards to reasonable adjustments available to students and the processes/procedures required. It should be read, and used, in conjunction with the other guides that are available and provide more detail on specific topics. Additionally, staff are advised to familiarise themselves with the <a href="Code of Practice: Access and Inclusion for Disabled Students">Code of Practice: Access and Inclusion for Disabled Students</a>.

The guidance is intended to complement the relevant University Ordinances (<u>Ch. 3 - Allowances to Candidates for Examinations</u>) and the information should not be taken to imply that, given a specific set of circumstances, a particular decision will be reached and/or approved.

The guide will be updated annually and any information or good practice advice that Colleges would like to include should be emailed by the division of Lent Term in any year to <a href="mailto:exam.arrangements@admin.cam.ac.uk">exam.arrangements@admin.cam.ac.uk</a>.

### 2. Applying for Reasonable Adjustments

Where a student has a disability or Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) an application for reasonable adjustments in examinations may be required and it is the responsibility of the College to ensure that applications are made.

Specific Learning Difficulty is an umbrella term which is generally accepted to include:

- Dyscalculia
- Dyslexia
- Dysgraphia
- Dyspraxia
- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Common features to these typically include difficulties with motor skills, trouble with processing information and memory recall. As a result of this it often produces high or heightened levels of anxiety and when coupled with the specific difficulties it is likely to be more acute when facing an examination situation.

The Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC) considers all requests for reasonable adjustments on a case-by-case basis and the outcomes are based on the evidence provided will all students gauged against normal practice in the UK.

The Cambridge Tripos is examined predominantly by timed examinations. Saturdays and Bank Holidays are considered to be normal examination days and a student may have up to two examinations per day - this is standard and is not in itself grounds for reasonable adjustments. Most of the examination sites are large and students can expect an "examination atmosphere". It is important to recognise that most students feel nervous about examinations, and this in itself is not grounds for arrangements. The University examination regulations apply to all students including those who have reasonable adjustments.

### 3. Role and Remit of the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee

The Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC) is authorised to adjust the arrangements or conditions under which an examination is sat. The EAMC's overarching role is:

- To endeavour to ensure parity of treatment between applicants to the EAMC who share similar circumstances, whilst recognising that each case is individual.
- To be mindful of the interests of students taking the same examination but who are not applicants to the EAMC.
- To ensure that, particularly in relation to disregarding terms and repeating a
  period of study, an applicant is neither advantaged nor disadvantaged in comparison with
  other students.

The EAMC considers requests for reasonable adjustments from Colleges on behalf of their students who are on courses with a taught element and they are considered on a case by case basis. In the main this relates to students undertaking the Foundation Year, Undergraduate Tripos and certain Postgraduate courses. Where another body (such as Faculty, Department, or Student Union) presents a case for a student, the EAMC will direct the student to their College.

In addition to the EAMC there may be further groups who become involved in the examination arrangements for some students. Some of these groups include:

- The Mitigating Circumstances team are responsible for managing reasonable adjustment applications and implementing the decisions and outcomes.
- Colleges have direct contact with their students and are responsible for making the applications on their behalf. Colleges will also be involved in some operational aspects of implementing reasonable adjustments for their students.
- The Postgraduate Committee consider requests for reasonable adjustments for Postgraduate students on research programmes.
- The Counselling Service may offer support to students throughout the year and works alongside the Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre (ADRC) to develop self-help provision and guides.
- The ADRC work with students to consider and discuss adjustments and may produce a
  Student Support Document (SSD). The SSD is the basis on which many applications for
  reasonable adjustments are made the trends and outcomes of which are monitored by the
  EAMC.
- The General Board's Education Committee (GBEC) may also become involved in adjustments to examinations, and they receive a report from the EAMC.

# 4. Process for Colleges – Reasonable Adjustments for students on the Foundation Year, Undergraduate Tripos, and taught Postgraduate courses

The following provides information relating to the process of reasonable adjustments for students who are on the Foundation Year, Undergraduate Tripos or some taught Postgraduate programmes including, but not limited to, the Master of Business Administration (MBA), Master of Finance (MFin), Master of Law (LLM), Master of Corporate Law (MCL) and the Master of Advanced Study (MAST).

Colleges should ask all students as a matter of course whether they require reasonable adjustments during examinations, or if they have previously had them during their education. The College should discuss needs as soon as possible once the students have taken up their place at Cambridge and will determine what reasonable adjustments (if any) are to be sought in the forthcoming academic year. If a student requires reasonable adjustments, the College may wish to encourage them to approach to Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre (ADRC) for further advice. **Discussing and reviewing applications should be done with new and existing students every Michaelmas Term thereafter.** 

If a student discloses a disability to the ADRC the College will receive a copy of any Student Support Document (SSD) that may be issued in light of the disclosure. If a student believes that they require reasonable adjustments but does not hold an SSD then the College may wish to refer them to the ADRC directly or, should the student be unable to engage with the ADRC, may contact the Exam Arrangements Team to determine what documentation would be required to support the request.

In order to request reasonable adjustments, it is the responsibility of Colleges to request these on behalf of student(s) via the CamSIS functionality and by the deadline which will be communicated to Colleges. Applications for reasonable adjustments should be made as early as possible via the CamSIS functionality once the Exam Arrangements Team have confirmed that it is possible to do so. The deadline is required to allow students time to practice with the approved adjustment prior to the examination(s). It therefore may not be possible to accommodate all requests should the deadline not be met. Where supporting documentation is required but has been unavailable, and consequently the deadline is missed, the additional evidence may be able to be submitted at a later date.

In some circumstances the adjustments that are required may not become known until later in the Lent term and Colleges can therefore only notify the EAMC after the deadline. If this is a circumstance that becomes apparent, Colleges should seek advice from the Exam Arrangements Team as early as possible following identification of the need. The case will be considered but it may not be possible to accommodate the request, particularly if a period of practice is required or recommended.

Following the examination period, Colleges should meet with their students who had reasonable adjustments to review them and discuss whether these were sufficient and should be applied for again in the following year or if alternative/additional arrangements should be sought. It is important to note that due to the changes in paper format and mode of assessment, requests do roll over from year to year and a separate request must be made by Colleges on behalf of their student(s) each year. Applications which have been approved previously and feature a recurring condition will be pre-populated with the condition when any future applications are made.

The EAMC consider requests and any evidence contained therein in light of the principles outlined above. If necessary, a request may be discussed further with a College to ascertain requirements or to clarify needs. The applications made will be approved or declined via the CamSIS functionality.

To submit an application using the CamSIS functionality you should:

- Login to CamSIS and navigate to the Exams tile.
- In the Exam Navigations bar click on Exam Access Arrangements and then Requests.
- You should then follow the steps to complete and submit the application. Applications must include reference to uploaded medical evidence and/or any recommendations from an SSD as provided by the ADRC.

# 5. Process for Colleges - Reasonable Adjustments for students on other Postgraduate Courses considered by the EAMC

The following provides information relating to the process of reasonable adjustments for students who are undertaking examinations for postgraduate qualifications: MPhil by Advanced Study, Master of Research (MRes), Master of Education (MEd) and Master of Studies (MSt). The EAMC will also consider students doing the Postgraduate Diplomas (PGDip) in Economics, Legal Studies and International Law.

It is the responsibility of the College to make the appropriate application(s) for reasonable adjustments on behalf of the above listed Postgraduate students. As with other students, during the Michaelmas term the College should discuss reasonable adjustment requests and may wish to encourage approaching the ADRC to discuss their situation and following these discussions an SSD may be issued. Applications should be submitted by the deadline communicated to Colleges and this will precede the examination period. It is therefore encouraged to discuss requirements with Tutors, the ADRC or specialist professionals (i.e. an Educational Psychologist or GP as appropriate) in advance of the deadline. The Exam Arrangements Team may need to liaise with other parties to implement reasonable adjustment requests if the examination to be taken is managed centrally.

Following the examination period, Colleges should meet with their Postgraduate students who had reasonable adjustments to review them and discuss whether these were sufficient and should be applied for again in the following year or if alternative/additional arrangements should be sought. It is important to note that due to the changes in paper format and mode of assessment, requests do roll over from year to year and a separate request must be made by Colleges on behalf of their student(s) each year. Applications which have been approved previously and feature a recurring condition will be pre-populated with the condition when any future applications are made.

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- Login to CamSIS and navigate to the Exams tile.
- In the Exam Navigations bar click on Exam Access Arrangements and then Requests.
- You should then follow the steps to complete and submit the application. Applications must include reference to uploaded medical evidence and/or any recommendations from an SSD as provided by the ADRC.

Decisions for reasonable adjustments will be sent via email once all the requirements have been met. If approved, students should be encouraged to practice with the adjustment(s).

# 6. Process for Colleges - Reasonable Adjustments for Research Degrees examined by thesis and oral examinations only

The following provides information relating to the process of reasonable adjustments for students who are undertaking oral examinations and those undertaking examinations for the following postgraduate qualifications: Master of Philosophy (by thesis and oral only), Master of Letters (MLitt), Master of Science (MSc), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and the Certificate of Postgraduate Study.

The Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre (ADRC) will make recommendations for reasonable adjustments if requested by Degree Committees for students who have disclosed a disability. The disclosure could be via existing mechanisms (i.e. the Research-only Examinations Student Disclosure Form) or directly to the ADRC – this is normally as a result of a disclosure in an initial application. Where a Degree Committee requires support or advice from with regards to appropriate reasonable adjustments a request should be emailed to the ADRC.

The Degree Committee should email requests to <a href="mailto:disability@admin.cam.ac.uk">disability@admin.cam.ac.uk</a> and it should be headed 'Request for research-only examination access arrangement recommendations'. The subject header of the email should also include the name of the student or students so that they can be clearly identified. Within the body of the email, the contact name for whom the recommendations should be sent must be clearly identifiable. An ADRC Disability Adviser will then send the recommendations by email to the Degree Committee within the existing Student Support Document template which contains a section for examination recommendations. It should be noted that sufficient time should be allocated to allow the appropriate recommendation to be considered and communicated. A minimum of three weeks should be allowed. It is important to note that recommendations from the ADRC are advisory only. The Degree Committee or the Postgraduate Committee should decide if the recommendations are deemed appropriate and reasonable.

### 7. Supporting Evidence for Reasonable Adjustment Applications

If a student requires reasonable adjustments for their examinations supporting evidence will need to be provided. Supporting evidence may be in the form of either a Student Support Document (SSD), medical evidence (for instance a GP letter) or a diagnostic report attesting to their disability if they have not been engaging with the ADRC.

If a student provides an assessment report from a specialist (i.e. Educational Psychologist) it is recommended that the report:

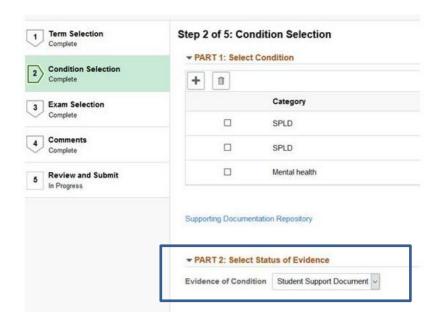
- Is based on diagnostic tests undertaken in the students first language testing undertaken in English may not be conclusive in terms of diagnosis and recommendations for examination purposes.
- The assessment report should not just be the pro forma used for examinations detailed information is required in order to accommodate needs. Recommendations should be explicit, for instance '25% extra time is required in an examination setting'.

If a student feels that their diagnostic report is no longer reflective of their disability or SpLD they should seek guidance from the ADRC and discuss their options as soon as possible.

Where a student is already engaged with the ADRC, they (the ADRC) may deem it appropriate to create an SSD. The SSD is created by consolidating the information available from evidence provided, usually in the form of medical reports, diagnostic assessments and subsequent recommendations. If a student is issued with an SSD a copy will be submitted to the College and it should then form the basis of discussions with the student about the reasonable adjustments that they may require for their examinations. Please note however that the SSD does not in itself constitute a request for reasonable adjustments.

Where an SSD has been issued, and it contains a recommendation and a record of evidence that the ADRC is holding on file, then the College does not need to provide any further evidence. That is not to say however that the College cannot provide further evidence if it is appropriate and readily available. The production and/or distribution of an SSD may be delayed for a variety of reasons and whilst this may be true, Colleges should not delay in making a request for reasonable adjustments for their students.

Where an SSD **is** the supporting evidence when submitting a request, please select 'Student Support Document' as the evidence of the condition in Step 2 of the application under the heading 'PART 2: Select Status of Evidence' as shown on the next page:



If an SSD is updated, this should be noted in the comments section so that the application can be reviewed and considered for any updated recommendations.

If an SSD has not been issued, or the student is not engaged with the ADRC, then the application will need to include medical evidence or a full diagnostic report written by an Educational Psychologist or Specialist Teacher and this will need to be uploaded to the repository when the College makes the reasonable adjustments application. **Evidence from Secondary School or 6th Form College is not accepted unless from a specialist teacher.** 

#### 8. Reaching a Decision on Reasonable Adjustments

All reasonable adjustments are determined on a case-by-case basis based on the evidence provided.

All applications are judged against normal practice in the UK and based on UK standards and guidelines.

To reach a decision on the reasonable adjustments required in any given case, further discussion may be necessary. The parties involved in the discussion will be dependent on the individual case but may include the College, the ADRC and the EAMC. Where needed, the Secretary of the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee may arrange for the case to be reviewed further by a medical advisor or a Senior Tutor. Any advice offered does not constitute approval or agreement. Reasonable adjustments can **only** be approved by the Exam Arrangements Team acting on behalf of the EAMC.

There is a misconception that the ADRC makes reasonable adjustment recommendations when in most cases they actually arise from the recommendations with the evidence provided. In exceptional cases where the ADRC **does** need to make a recommendation, it will be sent to the Senior Tutor in writing with sound reasoning and/or evidence to corroborate. The EAMC also has the right to overrule any recommendations they disagree with.

Colleges should, in collaboration with their student(s), revisit any reasonable adjustment recommendations annually to ensure that their needs are being met or to discuss any reasonable alternatives that may need to be considered.

## 9. Examination Arrangements – Provisions

Reasonable adjustments are awarded on a case-by-case basis with the evidence and recommendations provided determining the outcome. The following provides a synopsis of some of the reasonable adjustments that might be appropriate in any given case but please note that:

- The list of adjustments is not exhaustive and nor should it be taken to imply that given a
  certain set of circumstances the EAMC will automatically reach a particular decision or
  award one of these as an adjustment.
- Each case is judged individually, and the adjustment(s) deemed most appropriate to the situation will be based on the evidence with all students being gauged against normal practice in the UK.
- The information below provides an overview only and the application of the adjustment(s) may differ in and across different circumstances.

Where a separate procedure is available to run alongside the information below this will be made clear.

The Equality Act 2010 includes a statement to the effect that a person who is required to make a reasonable adjustment on behalf of an applicant is not entitled to require that applicant to pay any of the costs of that provision. There is no cost to the student (for example a disabled student cannot be charged for the cost of additional invigilation).

The reasonable adjustments required for students may differ and where they are able to sit their examinations may vary dependent on the adjustment being requested. If a student is approved to have one or more of the below adjustments, then they <u>normally</u> should be able to be accommodated in a central University reasonable adjustments venue:

- 25% extra time (15 minutes per hour which is considered to be standard in the UK)
- 10 minute rest breaks
- Bringing medications (if approved via an FSM application)
- Bringing food and/or drink (if approved via an FSM application)

If an adjustment is likely to disturb others within the venue, then the College is required to take responsibility for accommodating its student(s). Therefore, the following examples are unlikely to be able to be accommodated in the central University reasonable adjustments venue:

- Extra time in excess of 25%
- Rest breaks in excess of 10 minutes
- Use of a specific chair (for instance ergonomic)
- Use of a specific table (for instance height adjustable)
- Adjustments to lighting

If a student has an adjustment that is likely to cause disturbance to others or a communicable illness, then it is normally also necessary to place them in a separate room. The ADRC does not recommend that students should sit in a separate room from the outset unless it is specified in their evidence that they should have one-to-one invigilation.

### Extra Time

If a student is entitled to extra time, allowances in excess of 25% are unusual in the UK. If a student submits evidence obtained either from the UK or overseas, that indicates a recommendation for an allowance in excess of 25%, further consultation will be required and the recommendation will take into account normal practice in the UK which all cases are gauged against. If a student is not satisfied with the outcome, the EAMC may refer the case for independent adjudication by a relevant expert external to the University.

Extra time is awarded at the end of the examination not the beginning. Therefore, a student with 25% extra time for a three hour examination will finish 45 minutes <u>after</u> the main cohort. The student should be reminded that this may lead to having only a short break between examinations if they are sitting two in one day.

In a central University reasonable adjustments venue students should also be aware that in this site there may be a variety of end times (due to extra time and/or rest breaks) in any one session and students may be leaving at different times.

Reading time does not constitute extra time and is not permitted unless such time is stated explicitly on the front of an examination paper. It has been defined by the EAMC and states that the amount of reading time should be articulated in the rubric of each examination paper and should be in addition to the total length of the paper proper. The EAMC also asserts that the making of notes during reading time be explicitly debarred.

### Extensions to deadlines

Where the submission date for a dissertation or other written work is prescribed by Ordinance, a College may apply to the EAMC (<a href="mailto:eamc@admin.cam.ac.uk">eamc@admin.cam.ac.uk</a>) for an extension to the deadline. The following website provides further information: <a href="mailto:Examination Access and Mitigation Committee">Examination Access and Mitigation Committee</a> <a href="mailto:Student Registry">Student Registry</a> (cam.ac.uk).

For Postgraduate students if an extension is required to defer their thesis submission then they should use the different functionality to apply for a Change in Student Status application. Further information can be found here: Extending your Submission Date | Cambridge students.

#### Rest Breaks

Rest breaks provide separate time to rest whilst remaining under examination conditions. A single rest period can be taken at any time during the examination and can be any length (subject to 5 minutes minimum) as long as the total rest time taken does not exceed the approved maximum allowance.

Further information can be found here: Guidance for Rest Breaks.

## Food, Seating and Medication

As standard, and unless otherwise agreed via a Food, Seating and Medication (FSM) application, students are only permitted to take a small bottle of non-carbonated drink to the examination room. Fizzy drinks are not permitted so as not to cause disturbance to others.

Colleges need to apply for their students to take any food, drink or medication (or other non-standard examination item) into an examination room. Food is **only** permitted when the candidate has a medical condition that requires them to consume food at regular intervals. An application must also be made if they have other requirements, such as needing to take medication into the examination room or sitting near a door etc. Cigarettes, e-cigarettes and vaping is not a reason for an FSM application and is prohibited from **all** examination venues.

Where possible any approved FSM request will be noted on a student's desk ticket so that staff are aware and expect the student to have a non-standard item with them. Where specific seating arrangements have been requested these will normally be reflected on the seating plan if the request is possible but Colleges should remind students that specific seating arrangements cannot be guaranteed even if approved via an FSM application and nor should the student expect to be able to move around on the day of the examination as this is not always possible.

It should be noted that members of staff, including casual staff working at the examination site, have the authority to confiscate and withhold unauthorised items until an examination session has ended. If a student requires a specific item that would not be considered standard in an examination, then Colleges should ensure that an FSM application is submitted, and this will thereby ensure that students don't have items confiscated.

#### **Amanuensis**

An amanuensis writes down a student's dictated answers to the questions within the examination and they should be able to produce an accurate record of the student's answers and write at an average speed.

Further information can be found here: <u>Guidance for using an Amanuensis during University</u>
<u>Examinations</u>

### Readers

A reader reads the question paper to the student.

Further information can be found here: <u>Guidance for Readers during University Examinations</u>

#### Alternative format of question paper presentation

The form of an examination is prescribed in Statutes and Ordinances and apart from differences in presentation, the examination questions would remain identical as set by the Examiner and the rubric would remain unchanged. Some examples of adjustments that might be possible include printing the paper in braille, printing onto coloured or onto a different sized paper (for instance A3).

### Typing a written examination

If a student has been permitted to type an examination where the format of assessment is written, they will be required to bring their own device. In advance of sitting, students are sent further guidance on typing their examinations.

Typing an examination where the format of assessment is written is **only** permitted in cases involving a diagnosed disability. Students are expected to write legibly and are not permitted to type their scripts on the basis of poor handwriting. Colleges should therefore encourage students to practice handwriting under timed conditions as part of their preparation for examinations.

During the Easter term students who have been approved to type their exams are encouraged to attend a training session on a date fixed each year by the Exam Arrangements Team. **If a student does not attend, they may be at a disadvantage**.

### Use of noise cancelling headphones

Students should only have noise cancelling headphones if they have an approved reasonable adjustments application. Ideally, they should be non-Bluetooth or ear defenders and if approved to listen to noise during the examination the student will need to be accommodated in College.

In typed examinations where students bring their own device will have access to foam earplugs and should request these if necessary. Colleges should remind students however that should they choose to wear earplugs they may miss announcements or corrections and it is their responsibility to ensure they are alert to this. The responsibility to alert students to an announcement if they have earplugs in **does not** lie with members of staff and students should not expect to be separately informed should they miss something as a result of wearing earplugs.

#### 10. Examination Procedures for Practical Examinations

Practical examinations will be identified in CamSIS as either 'written practical' or 'practical'. A wet practical will be referred to as a 'practical' and a dry practical will be referred to as a 'written practical' so that the two may be distinguished.

Wet practical examinations which take place in a lab **can only be taken in Department** and therefore when applying for reasonable adjustments the location needs to be set clearly as Department as they **cannot** be taken in any other venue. A 'true practical' is the same as a wet practical examination.

A dry practical is the same as a written practical examination. These practical examinations are treated the same way as all written examinations and extra time / rest breaks are awarded in the same way as any other written exam.

Reasonable adjustments required for a practical examination (wet or dry) should be submitted in the usual way through CamSIS. If a practical has two parts (wet and dry) then students can take the written part in the centrally managed University reasonable adjustments venue(s) or in College and then be escorted to the Department to sit the wet part of the examination. Separate reasonable adjustment requests should be made for the practical examinations.

The Exam Arrangements Team sends a list of all approved Natural Sciences, Medical and Veterinary Sciences students with reasonable adjustments to the Secretary of the Natural Sciences Tripos Management Committee and the Department Administrators of the Medical and Veterinary Sciences Tripos for dissemination to Departmental contacts and/or the Chair of Examiners or Senior Examiner(s) responsible for practical arrangements.

For wet practical examinations the Natural Sciences Tripos Management Committee may have agreed fixed time allowances for students entitled to extra time- this ensures consistency and transparency. The specific details of the timings will be communicated directly when confirmed. Students who would normally have access to a computer in an examination should not expect this in a wet practical examination.

Students entitled to rest breaks should expect to receive these in their practical examination(s) and the normal procedure for these will apply. The practical examination(s) will start at the same time for all students. Those who have extra time as a reasonable adjustment will have this allocated as usual at the end as appropriate.

### 11. Further Information and Useful Websites

If you have any queries on reasonable adjustments or want to discuss a specific case, then please contact <a href="mailto:exam.arrangements@admin.cam.ac.uk">exam.arrangements@admin.cam.ac.uk</a>.

Examination Arrangements | Student Registry (cam.ac.uk)

Examination Guidance | Student Registry (cam.ac.uk)

Guides for Colleges | Student Registry (cam.ac.uk)

Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre | ADRC (cam.ac.uk)

Student Advice Service (cambridgesu.co.uk)

Examinations: Further Guidance for Staff | Student Registry (cam.ac.uk)

<u>Information for Students | Cambridge students</u>