

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.

This guidance relates to examinations. Students with queries regarding reasonable adjustments should contact their College Tutorial Office in the first instance.

A Guide to Reasonable Adjustments for Students

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1. Basic Principles

The University has a [Code of Practice: Access and Inclusion for Disabled Students](#) and the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC) is responsible for approving any reasonable adjustments (also referred to as examination arrangements). Unless otherwise stated, the Code applies to all matriculated students studying at the University and University examination regulations still apply to all students including those who have reasonable adjustments. Colleges are familiar with the Code, and it outlines several adjustments permitted in respect of assessment. Please note that all requests are considered on a case-by-case basis based on the evidence provided, and **all students are gauged against normal practice in the UK.**

Due to the changes in paper format and modes of assessment, requests **do not carry over from year to year** and as a result of this you and your College will need to discuss and review the adjustments in place and consider if these are still the most appropriate or if you require something different.

2. Reasons for Reasonable Adjustments

Applications for reasonable adjustments may be made if you:

- If you have a declared disability and hold a Student Support Document (SSD) issued by the Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre (ADRC) or other documentary evidence supporting an adjustment.
- If you have not disclosed to the ADRC and so do not hold an SSD but do hold medical or psychological evidence or a full diagnostic report written by an educational psychologist, psychiatrist or specialist teacher detailing recommended adjustments to examinations.

Many examinations sites are large, and you can expect an 'examination atmosphere'. Most students feel nervous about examinations, and this alone is not grounds for reasonable adjustments. Equally, Saturdays and Bank Holidays are normal examination days during the examination period, and you may have up to two examinations per day - this is standard and is not in itself grounds for reasonable adjustments. Where the mode of assessment is online, this may negate the need for many specific reasonable adjustments, for example the need to type examinations, or bring food or medication requirements.

The ADRC experience many students seeking their help and advice and therefore trying to obtain a last-minute appointment in order to get an SSD is not advised. Please make an appointment with them in the Michaelmas term, well before the deadline for reasonable adjustment (exam arrangement) applications. Evidence from Secondary School or Sixth Form is not accepted unless from a specialist teacher.

3. Making a request for an adjustment: you and your College's roles

If you hold a Student Support Document (SSD), your College should discuss it with you as soon as you take up your place at Cambridge, and regular review thereafter. Your discussion should determine what examination arrangements (if any) you seek in the forthcoming academic year.

If you do not hold a SSD but believe that you require reasonable adjustments, then you should discuss this with your College directly. As a result of your discussions, the College might refer you to the Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre (ADRC), to the University Counselling Service (UCS) or to another relevant body. If the College does not refer you, they may discuss the case with the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC) to determine what documentation would be needed to apply for reasonable adjustments. Without the supporting documentation from a relevant professional it is unlikely that a request for reasonable adjustments would be approved.

In both instances, whether you hold an SSD or not, you must ensure that you provide the necessary supporting documentation to your College for any application for reasonable adjustments that you require.

Following the examination period, you should consider and review with your College the reasonable adjustments that you had in place and discuss whether or not to apply for the same one(s) in the next academic year or if you should request different arrangements.

Your College is responsible for applying for reasonable adjustments on your behalf and will submit any required supporting documentation by the agreed deadline for the term in which you have examinations, and this is communicated to Colleges by the Exam Arrangements Team. The deadline is in place to allow you time to practice with any approved adjustment(s) as necessary before your examinations. Consequently, it may not be possible to accommodate all aspects of a request if it is received after the deadline.

Where the supporting documentation for an application for reasonable adjustments is not available by the communicated deadline, it must be submitted to your College by the deadline they tell you so that your application for reasonable adjustments can be duly and properly considered. The EAMC understands that some circumstances which might require adjustments to an examination may not become known until later in the Lent term and that your College may therefore only be able to apply at that point. **The case will be considered but it may not be possible to accommodate the request, especially where it requires an adjustment that you must practice.**

4. Provision: examples of reasonable adjustments to examinations

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.

The reasonable adjustments that you require may determine where you are able to sit your examinations. If you are approved to have one or more of the below adjustments, then you normally 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 you. 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

Extra Time

If you are entitled to extra time, allowances in excess of 25% are unusual in the UK. If you submit 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.

Extra time is awarded at the end of the examination not the beginning. Therefore, if you have 25% extra time for a three hour examination then you will finish 45 minutes after the main cohort. Please be reminded that this may lead to having only a short break between examinations if you are sitting two in one day. In a central University reasonable adjustments venue you should also be aware that within this site there may be a variety of end times 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.

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, you are only permitted to take a small bottle of non-carbonated drink to the examination room. If you require any additional food, drink or medication your College will need to apply for this on your behalf via a Food, Seating and Medication (FSM) application – **without approval you are not permitted to take anything additional into an examination.**

Food is **only** permitted if you have a medical condition that requires you to consume food at regular intervals, for instance diabetes. An application must also be made if you have other requirements, such as needing to take medication into the examination room or need to be seated 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 your desk ticket so that staff are aware and are expecting a non-standard item. Please note that if you have requested specific seating arrangements where possible the request will be reflected on the seating plan but you should be reminded that **specific seating arrangements cannot be guaranteed even if approved via an FSM application and nor should you expect to be able to move around on the day of the examination as this is not always possible.**

You should also be reminded 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 you require a specific item that would not be considered standard in an examination, then you should ensure that your College has submitted an FSM application, and this will thereby ensure you don't have items confiscated.

Amanuensis

An amanuensis writes down dictated answers to the questions within the examination and they should be able to produce an accurate record of the answers and write at an average speed. Further information can be found here: [Guidance for using an Amanuensis during University Examinations](#)

Readers

A reader reads the question paper. Further information can be found here: [Guidance for Readers during University Examinations](#)

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 you have been permitted to type an examination where the format of assessment is written, **you will be required to bring your own device**. In advance of sitting the examination you will usually be sent further guidance on typing your examination(s).

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

During the Easter term, if you have been approved to type your exams you are encouraged to attend a training session on a date fixed each year by the Exam Arrangements Team. **If you do not attend, you may be at a disadvantage.**

Use of noise cancelling headphones

You should only have noise cancelling headphones if you 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 you will need to be accommodated in College.

In typed examinations where students bring their own device you will have access to foam earplugs and should request these if necessary. Please be reminded however that **should you choose to wear earplugs you may miss announcements or corrections and it is your responsibility to ensure you 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 you should not expect to be separately informed should you miss something as a result of wearing earplugs.

5. Procedure: who approves the request?

The Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC) is authorised to adjust the arrangements or conditions under which an examination is taken such as the length, timing and place of examination, or typing instead of writing an examination. Requests for reasonable adjustments are submitted by Colleges on behalf of their students and the Exam Arrangements Team act on behalf of the EAMC with reviewing such requests. No other body, including Colleges and the ADRC, may authorise reasonable adjustments to examinations. Students are not permitted to apply directly for reasonable adjustments and where another body (such as Faculty, Department or Student Union) presents a case for you, the EAMC will direct you to your College.

The EAMC considers each request on an individual basis and the adjustments are determined case by case based on the evidence provided, and **all students are gauged against normal practice in the UK**. To reach a decision, further discussions may be held to determine the most appropriate arrangements. If necessary, the Secretary of the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee may arrange for the matter to be reviewed by a medically qualified member of staff and / or a Senior Tutor.