

# Adjusted Modes of Assessment

## Guidance Notes for Staff and Students 2023-24

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## BACKGROUND

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This guide is designed to provide detail of the operational process as mentioned in the Code of Practice: Access and Inclusion for Disabled Students found online [here](#). It does not replicate the information or background available in the Code, and it is expected that all users have read the Code before this document.

The detail and examples laid out in this guide should not be taken to imply that, given a particular set of circumstances, a particular request would be approved and there is no guarantee that the AMA requested will be awarded.

As a result of feedback received from stakeholders and of regular internal review, the AMA application process has been amended for 2023-24. The primary changes are:

- Removing the need for a case conference in most cases with the expectation that this will speed up the process.
- Implement deadlines for responses to applications.
- Schedule regular updates to Colleges and students on outstanding applications.

The new process can be viewed in [Appendix A](#)

The deadline for AMA applications for the academic year 2023-24 is **Friday 24th November 2023**.

## PURPOSE OF AN AMA

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The Adjusted Mode of Assessment (AMA) process is for all students where standard or enhanced reasonable adjustments<sup>1</sup> to the standard mode of assessment do not adequately address the specific, substantial disadvantage experienced by a disabled student. This will, in most cases, entail setting aside the regulations for examination and determining an adjustment where to do so is an effective and reasonable means of avoiding or offsetting the disadvantage.

Requests for consideration of adjustments to the mode of assessment will be for exceptional cases and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Cases previously considered will not set any precedent for a particular disability or adjusted mode.

An AMA application should not be submitted as an alternative for a student intermitting. The College is expected to identify whether a student is fit to study and an application for intermission should be submitted to the EAMC for consideration.

For all students, study should be the primary focus of attendance, even those with an AMA in place. Engagement with extra-curricular activities is not prohibited and the University encourages students to have a positive work / life balance. However, it is advised that participation in extra-curricular activities should not prevent a student from meaningful engagement with their studies and / or impact the student's ability to perform academically. Any extra study time awarded under the AMA procedure is to address the substantial disadvantages experienced by disabled students and is not for engaging in extra-curricular activities to the detriment of their studies.

The University may call for a review of an approved adjustment where the nature and extent of a disability has changed and / or where the approved adjustments are not enabling students to progress and succeed.

## COMPETENCE STANDARDS

Any AMA should meet the competence standards being measured through the current assessment method and there is no requirement to adjust the competence standards of the course.

A common example of assessment, particularly for undergraduates, is a written assessment under timed conditions. For many subjects, this is to demonstrate a particular standard of knowledge of certain areas of their subject in response to unseen questions without access to reference materials. For others, a competence standard may be demonstrating a certain level of ability in music performance or medical dissection.

In most cases, a competence standard is not connected to the mode of assessment, that is, the mode of assessment is simply the method which has been chosen to assess the competence standard. There is no legal compulsion to make adjustments to a true competence standard.

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<sup>1</sup> See [Appendix B](#) for examples

# **1. THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

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## **APPLICATIONS**

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The AMA process is initiated by the completion of the application form and evidence submitted.

### **APPLICATIONS MADE VIA COLLEGE**

Applications will only be considered when made through the College on the student's behalf, except in the most exceptional circumstances. Prior to the request being made, it is expected that the student and Tutor have considered and discussed the different types of AMA available.

All applications must include a letter from the Senior Tutor.

### **DIRECT APPLICATIONS FOR AN AMA**

Applications made directly by a student rather than via their College need to briefly explain why it has not been submitted by their College. Direct applications should only be made in exceptional circumstances, such as where the relationship between the student and the College has broken down. In these instances, the student's College will be required to be informed and consulted throughout the process as the University and College have joint responsibility for the delivery of education and pastoral services and as such, one of those Institutions cannot approve these processes independently of the other.

Postgraduate research students may submit an application directly to the Committee, however Tutors of Postgraduate students are encouraged to submit an application on their behalf. Where an AMA application is received regarding a Postgraduate student, for consistency, the Committee will review the application to determine if it meets the threshold for an AMA. In such cases, the application will then be sent to the Postgraduate Committee and the request will be further considered.

### **APPLICATION CONTENTS**

Applications must include a completed application form together with current and comprehensive medical evidence and / or an assessment from the appropriate expert. If applications are incomplete, they will be returned, which will delay any progress on that application.

Additionally, each application must include examples of previous study and arrangements that have previously been awarded, and evidence of where standard or enhanced reasonable adjustments available have not been or would not be successful.

The student may, if they wish, seek to have their own statement or other supporting evidence included in the application. It is in all parties' interests that any such statement is clear and concise and outlines how the student's disability impacts their daily and academic life.

Some students find a letter from the student's ADRC adviser helpful to be included with the application.

The EAMC consider it essential that the student is fully aware of the documentation being submitted in the application and that both the College and the student have read the published guidance notes.

Completed applications should be sent by the deadline to [exam.arrangements@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:exam.arrangements@admin.cam.ac.uk)

## MEDICAL EVIDENCE

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The purpose of providing evidence is to help the University understand the impact the current mode of assessment has on an individual student. The wide array of standard or enhanced adjustments will accommodate the majority of student disabilities and an AMA is for the most exceptional cases that require setting aside University regulations. Information on how a disability impacts a student is critical to the process.

Therefore, clear medical evidence of a disability or chronic illness and how it impacts their study in Higher Education is required as part of the application process, and any applications that are sent without such evidence, will be returned as incomplete. Such evidence is important to inform the AMA discussion and ensure that any adjustment would alleviate the disadvantage.

The evidence required varies according to the disability/health condition, as detailed below.

- For a physical disability, confirmation of disability from a specialist practitioner or GP together with relevant details on any limitations to the student's ability to undertake assessments. In these cases, evidence is only required once, rather than for each application for an AMA, unless there is a change to the student's condition, or a new diagnosis.
- Where a request is due to a Specific Learning Difficulty, a diagnostic assessment report from an educational psychologist, with evidence of the student's abilities. In these cases, evidence is only required once, rather than for each application for an AMA, unless there is a change to the student's condition, or a new diagnosis.
- For a chronic or relapsing / remitting condition, or for reasons of mental health, a diagnosis by a consultant or specialist alongside a treatment plan (where appropriate). Such evidence should be current and dated within the last year. If an AMA is sought each year, then the evidence should be either a statement by the consultant/specialist to reaffirm that the condition has not changed, or updated evidence to summarise the changes and any new treatment plan.

For consideration of an AMA, evidence from a College nurse or Counsellor on its own is not adequate. Where there may be difficulty in attaining medical evidence, the student should be advised to try and gather updated evidence where possible. In cases of query regarding evidence, the College should contact the Secretary to the EAMC for guidance.

If a student's SSD is being reviewed, do not wait for this to be completed before applying.

Obtaining medical support should not be onerous or costly to the student. If this is found to be the case, the College should contact the Secretary to the EAMC immediately.

Medical evidence will be made available to the following:

<b>EAMC Medical Advisers</b>	To consider the application made and to ensure that the medical evidence provided meets the guidelines for an AMA.
<b>Administrative support to the EAMC</b>	For administrative purposes when preparing Committee papers.
<b>Postgraduate Committee (where applicable)</b>	To consider the application made and the request being sought.
<b>Examiner(s) from the relevant Department or Faculty</b>	To understand the disability and to ensure that any AMA recommended addresses the disadvantage caused by the student's disability.
<b>Invitees of the case conference (when called)</b>	To understand the disability and to ensure that any AMA recommended addresses the disadvantage caused by the disability.

## TIMING

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Applications must be received by the deadline, **by the end of week 7** in any year. This is to ensure that any adjustments to teaching and other support can be put in place and that adjusted modes can be discussed with the Faculty or department concerned.

However, Colleges are strongly encouraged to submit applications as soon as possible and not to wait for the deadline.

Requests or evidence submitted later than the end of week 7 in Michaelmas term will not be accepted unless there is a valid reason for delay, which will be judged on a case-by-case basis by the Secretary, as appropriate.

The process can be lengthy, and some cases can take weeks or months to resolve. Some Faculties require their Exam or Faculty Board to approve recommendations, and those meetings can only occur once or twice a term. Until the point of an approved recommendation, the student should continue their study without any changes.

Due to the flexibility of the Tripos system, the wide array of papers available to students and the diverse methods of assessment, AMAs do not roll over to future years and the process requires repeating for each Tripos Part. This ensures that the adjustments put in place remain appropriate for the student and the Department.

## CASE CONFERENCE

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From 2023-24, a case conference will not be arranged unless specifically requested by one of the stakeholders in the application or the EAMC when considering the case.

### CONSIDERATION WHEN DECIDING WHETHER TO REQUEST A CASE CONFERENCE

When completing the application form, the College and student should carefully consider whether a case conference is required. The following should be considered:

<b>Timing</b>	<p>Finding a time for a case conference that all stakeholders can attend can be difficult and will delay consideration of the case whilst a date is identified.</p> <p>Data gathered over the past 5 years indicates the average time from submission of an application to a case conference being held was 38 working days.</p> <p>Feedback on the process highlights these delays as a source of anxiety for students.</p>
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>If the student or College consider a case conference would be useful, consider what would be discussed at the meeting that could not be explained in the application.</p>
<b>Discussion</b>	<p>The purpose of the case conference is for open discussion on the course content, competence standards being assessed, any practical issues and what other adjustments might be possible. Students are welcome to attend but are not disadvantaged if they choose not to. Feedback from students indicates that they can find case conferences stressful and this is not the intention or purpose of the case conference.</p> <p>When considering whether a case meets the threshold for an AMA, the EAMC may request a case conference is held. Examples where this may occur are where the student has complex needs and it's their first request or where previous adjustments have not been successful.</p>

## 2. CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATIONS

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### CONSIDERATION BY THE EAMC

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Once a completed application has been received, it will normally be sent to the next meeting of the EAMC to be considered. Applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis, reviewing the request as well as any historical information on that student's previous mode of assessment and any previous applications that have been made to the EAMC. Until the EAMC approve the application, no further action is taken.

The Committee, including its Medical Advisers, will consider the application and the medical evidence provided and if content, approve the application to have met the threshold for an AMA.

If the application does not contain enough or appropriate medical evidence, then the advisers may request further information.

In some circumstances, it may not be necessary for an application to be considered at an EAMC meeting. This may include where a student has had an AMA previously and there is no change to their condition or their request. Instead, such an application will be considered under delegated authority.

If the EAMC determine that an application does not meet the threshold for an AMA, they may approve enhanced reasonable adjustments instead. Further, the student can request a review of the decision under the procedure [here](#).

When the EAMC considers an application to meet the threshold for an AMA, the application will either be circulated to the relevant Department or Faculty or moved to case conference for further discussion. This will be dependent on whether the student and/or College requested a case conference in the AMA application or where the EAMC requests a case conference to be held.

Throughout the process, the Mitigating Circumstances team may meet with the Department or Faculty to offer advice on the process.

### POST-EAMC DECISION

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#### CASES WHERE A CASE CONFERENCE IS NOT REQUESTED

Once a case has been considered to meet the threshold for an AMA, the case will be sent to the Chair or Senior Examiner(s) with a request for an update<sup>2</sup> within 28 working days.

The Mitigating Circumstances team will send updates at regular intervals to the College, who are responsible for passing onto the student, the status of their application under circulation. These will continue until a recommendation is made and the application is closed.

If the Department or Faculty request further information on the application or for a case conference to be organised, the Mitigating Circumstances team will arrange this.

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<sup>2</sup> An update is not necessarily a recommendation although departments are encouraged to submit recommendations as soon as possible.



## CASES WHERE A CASE CONFERENCE IS REQUESTED

### Preparing the case conference:

Where a case conference was requested in the application form submitted or by the EAMC, stakeholders will be invited to a case conference to discuss the AMA application made. This is an opportunity for the Chair<sup>3</sup> to request further information from the student and / or College and to discuss what other modes may also be possible. Whilst the student is welcome to attend, their attendance is optional.

The College should discuss with the student whether they wish to attend. This is especially important as students are welcome to attend but are not disadvantaged if they choose not to. Feedback from students indicates that they can find case conferences stressful, and this is not the intention or purpose of the case conference. If a student decides not to attend the case conference, this will not have a detrimental effect on the discussion or outcomes of the case conference, or the AMA being sought.

The Department may also wish a Course Director or similar to attend to gather further information or explain competence standards for specific parts of the course.

If the student intends to sit papers borrowed from other subjects, the Department will need to consult with that Department prior to the case conference, and / or request for that 'parent' Department to also attend the case conference.

Prior to the case conference, it is expected that the Chair has identified the competence standards for the current mode of assessment, specifically what is being measured and how.

### During the case conference:

The purpose of the case conference is for open discussion on the course content, competence standards being assessed, practical issues that require addressing and what other adjustments might be possible.

**It is important to note** that the purpose of the case conference is fact finding only. No decision is made at the case conference. Also, whilst the request made by the student and College in the application may form the basis of the case conference, the request may not necessarily be awarded.

Only those invited via the EAMC can attend the case conference. Anyone else wishing to attend should contact the Mitigating Circumstances team at [exam.arrangements@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:exam.arrangements@admin.cam.ac.uk). All attendees will be held in a waiting room before the case conference begins and will only be admitted if expected.

Case conferences should not be recorded in any way either within the Zoom or Teams functionality or on a secondary unseen device, unless required as a reasonable adjustment. In those cases, permission should be sought from the Secretary to the EAMC and the recording will be done by the facilitator.

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<sup>3</sup> Of Examiners or of Degree Committee. Assistant Chair or Senior Examiner may replace Chair.

## After the case conference:

After the case conference, a summary of the key points discussed will be circulated to all attendees to check for accuracy. These notes will not be a detailed account of all points discussed and any changes suggested by the stakeholders should retain the summary nature of the discussion.

The Chair (or deputy) will then consult colleagues of their Exam or Faculty Board on the request made, and what AMA would be recommended for each module being requested.

## RECOMMENDATION

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Once the Chair has concluded their consultation, they will inform the Secretary of their recommendation for an adjusted mode of assessment. Any recommendation will list in detail the AMA for each module for which the student is enrolled and offer a rationale as to why this recommendation has been reached.

It is important to note that;

- Recommendations may differ between modules.
- The recommendation may not match the request.
- A recommendation may be made which was not discussed at a case conference.
- There may be a delay in receiving a recommendation, if it is required to go through a Faculty's governance process (such as a full meeting of the Faculty Board).

Once a recommendation has been received, the Secretary performs a check to ensure that each enrolled module is considered, and the competence standards are met. In some cases, the Secretary will consult further with the Chair on the recommendations made.

**Colleges and students are reminded that** any approved AMA recommendation is an adjusted mode of assessment. The design of the adjustments are in place to take into account the very specific circumstances based on the application and the evidence presented for the AMA and should, therefore, not be compared to the rest of the cohort. The design for the cohort is different, considering their circumstances.

## APPROVAL

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Recommendations may be approved under delegated authority or in some circumstances, the recommendation may require further consideration and therefore will be considered at the next meeting of the EAMC.

In these cases, the full case with the original application and Chair's recommendation will be considered by the Committee members and an outcome determined. At this time, the College will receive an outcome letter to share with the student.

## Inclusion in standard processes

Whilst a student's AMA is bespoke to them, they will also remain included in the standard processes for the rest of the cohort which may result in the student receiving incorrect information. Examples include:

- Examination confirmation forms will continue to be issued with the standard exam timetable information.
- Links to exams on Moodle (where the exam is on Moodle and the students timetable is bespoke).

In these instances, the student should ignore these incorrect items, but in case of doubt, check with their tutorial office who can confirm with the Mitigating Circumstances team if needed.

### 3. TYPES OF ADJUSTED MODE OF ASSESSMENT

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#### Consideration prior to application

AMAs are specific to a student based on their disability and how it affects them. Colleges are expected to have discussed with the student what AMA might be appropriate prior to an application being made.

The request should be based on a student's previous study and arrangements that have previously been awarded to that student, and evidence of where the standard or enhanced reasonable adjustments available have not been or would not be successful.

Colleges should not submit applications based on previously approved cases for other students. If a student and Tutor don't know what to request, that part of the application form should be left blank.

Cases previously considered will not set any precedent for a particular disability or an adjusted mode of assessment.

[Appendix C](#) shows examples of AMAs that have been approved previously which Colleges may find useful when discussing AMAs with their student.

#### Adjustments to the examination timetable

Previous AMA applications have requested a change to the examination timetable to accommodate a student. The timetable is complex to produce and is scheduled to accommodate the whole cohort, not an individual. Therefore, if it is a requirement for a student to not sit examinations on consecutive days or in the morning or afternoon, enhanced reasonable adjustments for the student will be considered instead.

Where a student has been permitted a bespoke timetable whereby, they are sitting the same examination papers but on different days to the rest of their cohort, the student is required to sign a declaration form confirming that they will not discuss the examination papers with anyone until they have completed their examinations.

Further, where the cohort complete the examination on Moodle, standard processes such as automatic emails will continue. Faculties and Departments will continue to send the links to the examination in Moodle, however, these should be ignored. The student is not permitted to view the examination papers on Moodle when released to the main cohort as this would compromise the integrity of the examination.

If the student is suspected of viewing the paper(s) on Moodle, they may be subject to investigation under the University's Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals for consideration under the University's disciplinary regulations.

## Extended period of study

The most common adjustment under the extended period of study is to take one Tripos Part over two years instead of one. Other applications have included extending the period for dissertation into the long vacation or even the following Michaelmas Term. Examples can be found in [Appendix C](#). Applications for students to extend their period of study, to take two Tripos Parts over three years, would not normally be approved as this would require the setting aside of Tripos standing regulations and thereby allowing students to start the next Part of the Tripos, prior to completing the current Tripos Part. It is also expected that there would be alternative, equally effective, or reasonable means of avoiding the disadvantage caused by a student's disability.

## Replacing examinations with essays or coursework

Where a closed book examination is to be replaced with a piece of coursework or essays, students should expect to work to a word limit, and attend a viva for the Examiners to be satisfied with the originality of work submitted. It is expected that the viva will be held with the Chair or Senior Examiner and at least one other Examiner.

The viva held will not have an impact on the marks awarded but will allow the student to demonstrate the originality of their work.

Where an open book examination is being replaced with a piece of coursework or essays, the student would not normally be required to undertake a viva.

## REVIEW PROCESS

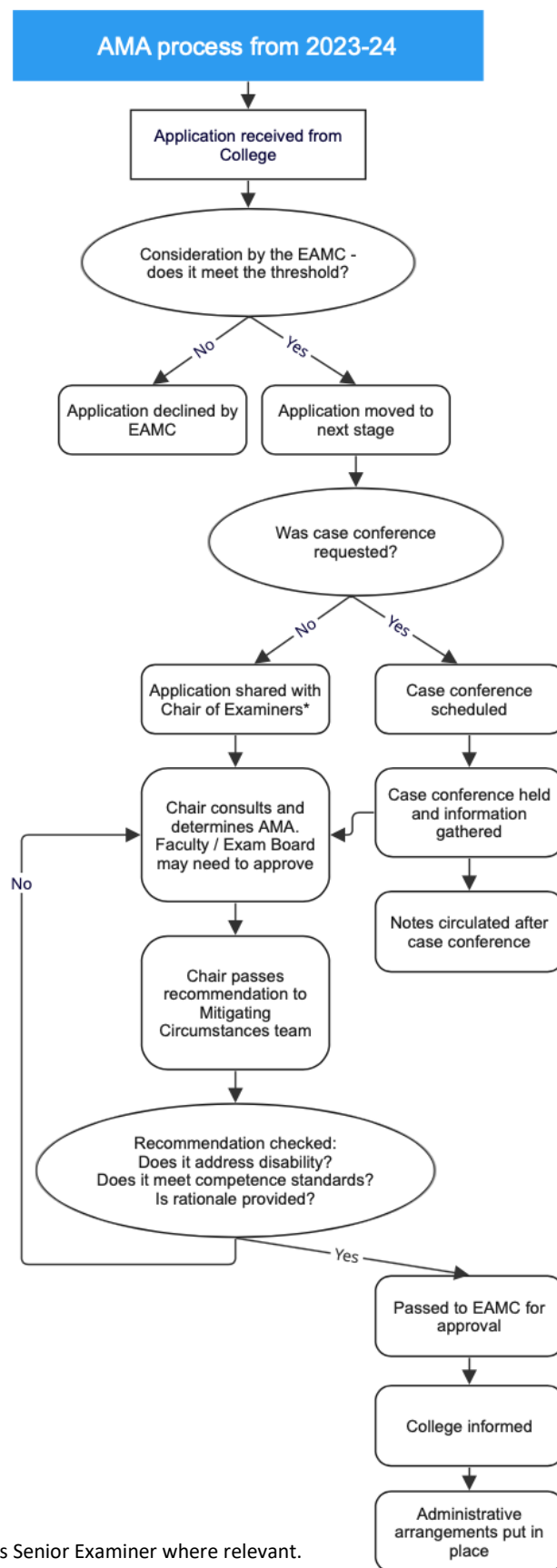
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If the student is not content with the final AMA, they can request a review via the '[Review of University Body decisions](#)' mechanism. Details will be included in the outcome letter and requests for review should be submitted via the published process within 14 days of the formal decision being issued.

The review will essentially be of a procedural nature i.e. the Reviewer will consider whether in reaching its decision(s) the Committee has observed the relevant Ordinances and these Notes of Guidance and whether or not it has come to a reasonable decision in that context. The Review Procedure is the final stage before the student may take their case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

The student is responsible for alerting their College as soon as possible if they feel that the AMA in place does not alleviate the disadvantage caused by their disability. It would not be considered appropriate to apply for an examination allowance following examination results on the basis that the student did not consider the AMA to alleviate the disadvantage during their studies. Any concern should be raised as soon as possible after an AMA is approved.

## APPENDIX A – FLOWCHART OF PROCESS



\*For these purposes, Chair also includes Senior Examiner where relevant.

## APPENDIX B: EXAMPLES OF STANDARD AND ENHANCED REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

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### EXAMPLES OF STANDARD REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS:

- Additional writing time.
- Rest breaks.
- Ability to type where exam is handwritten.
- Use of assistive technology including voice recognition software.
- Use of a scribe.
- Use of a reader.
- Low density or separate room (1:1 invigilation).
- Question paper in alternative format (e.g., colour of paper, size of font or Braille).
- Use of a prompter.
- Access to food, medication during the examination

### EXAMPLES OF ENHANCED REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS:

- 'Stop the clock' for an examination.
- Bespoke timetable<sup>4</sup>
- To extend the length of the examination.
- Long extension to coursework.

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<sup>4</sup> This would require a student to complete the declaration as described in [adjustments to the examination timetable](#).

## APPENDIX C: EXAMPLES OF AMAS

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AMA	To consider
<p><b>To replace a written examination with an essay or a portfolio of essays</b></p>	<p>Essays should have a word limit set that is equivalent to any word limit outlined in that subject's regulations. Supervisors would offer a level of supervision for these essays that is similar to that for dissertations, i.e. brief comment rather than full feedback. Such essays should be marked using the Faculty's General Assessment Criteria and should be marked with the expectation of a level of research referencing and presentation consummate with coursework, rather than examination essays.</p> <p>Examiners would be expected to hold a viva to be satisfied of originality. This is a requirement of the EAMC. It is noted that the viva held will not have an impact on the marks awarded but will allow the student to demonstrate the originality of their work. However, for parity of treatment across the whole of the cohort, if the rest of the cohort are sitting an open-book format examination, the student would not normally be required to complete a viva.</p> <p>Where a student is approved to replace a written examination with an essay or a portfolio of essays, if an extension to the deadline is subsequently required, an application should be made to the EAMC via the normal mechanism. Further information can be found here: <a href="https://www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us/EAMC">https://www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us/EAMC</a>. There is no guarantee that any extension will be granted as the AMA is already in place to alleviate the disadvantage faced by the student.</p>
<p><b>Bespoke paper to be written and broken up into smaller chunks</b></p>	<p>Student may expect to undertake a section at the same time as other candidates, with the other sections bespoke, to be taken at a previously agreed time.</p> <p>Standard reasonable adjustments may also be applied for the examination, such as extra time (written or rest).</p>



<b>To reduce the number of questions to be answered and submit an essay</b>	<p>To reduce the number of questions to be answered (with time scale), such as instead of 3 questions in 3 hours, to answer 2 questions in 2 hours.</p> <p>Submission of an essay may also be required to supplement the examination, with the criteria applicable as listed above, i.e. word limit, viva and marking guidelines.</p>
<b>Long Extension of Dissertation / coursework / submitted essays</b>	<p>Delaying submission until after the examination period requires the Exam Board to meet again, post submission. The student could not be classed with their cohort and it may delay any application or approval for selection for the next year, particularly relevant for Management Studies, Part III courses, Part II Natural Sciences etc.</p> <p>In these cases, it is common for an Exam Board not to meet until late September, with a student's class not determined until the start of the next academic year. For finalists, this means that they would not be able to graduate with their peers.</p>
<b>Extended period of study</b>	<p>Most commonly, to split one year over two, however may also be exams as scheduled then a long extension on Dissertation. Same issues as listed above apply. To also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implications regarding fee liability can be discussed via the Fee Remission Panel at <a href="mailto:feestatusandpolicy@admin.cam.ac.uk">feestatusandpolicy@admin.cam.ac.uk</a>.</li> <li>• Additional living costs will be encountered, and the student's peers would move through the Tripos faster.</li> <li>• Students are expected to be working full time, just on a reduced workload. This is not part-time study.</li> <li>• Availability of papers in Tripos across years cannot be guaranteed and Faculties will not be required to run a paper specifically for a student. Students should select their papers based on what is available in any year.</li> <li>• Students will normally be expected to sit examinations in each year, reflective of the teaching and supervisions received in that year of extended study.</li> <li>• Marks for work completed in the first year will be released at the end of the first year of study. However, these marks will be provisional only and subject to change when the student is classed at the end of the second year of study.</li> <li>• Students will not be able to access the Exam Review process or apply for 'Reconsideration of an Original Result' until they are Classed at the end of their Extended Study.</li> </ul>