

Applications for an Adjusted Mode of Assessment

Notes for Guidance for Staff and Students 2020-21

This guide is designed to enhance the detail of the operational process as laid out in the Code of Practice: Reasonable Adjustments 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 outcome would be approved.

The EAMC are keen to ensure that the AMA process is efficient and every effort is made to avoid delays in every part of the process, from application to approval, however this is only possible with the engagement of all of the stakeholders.

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1 The Examination Access and Mitigation Committee

1.1 Introduction

The Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC) is a committee of the General Board which meets monthly throughout the year to consider applications for examination and assessment related matters. There is also a large volume of student casework undertaken under delegated authority much of which involves the expert opinion of its Medical Advisers. Prior to October 2018, most of this work was undertaken by the Council's Standing Committee on Applications (known as the Applications Committee).

The EAMC has the following overarching aims:

- To endeavour to ensure parity of treatment between applicants to the Committee 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 Committee.
- 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 are committed to ensuring that the AMA process is transparent for all stakeholders and should address any disadvantage caused by a student's disability, without compromising academic or competence standards.

1.2 Eligibility

The EAMC considers applications from colleges on behalf of undergraduates and also on behalf of students on the following postgraduate courses: EMBA; LLM; MAST; MBA; MCL; MEng; M.Fin; MMath; MMus; MSci; PGCE.

Following the dissolution of the Board of Graduate Studies from 1 October 2020, the EAMC will also consider applications for students on postgraduate courses (research and taught programmes).

1.3 Purpose of the EAMC

The purpose of the EAMC is to consider the cases of students relating to applications for;

- (a) Examination access arrangements (including adjusted modes of assessment);
- (b) Coursework extensions;
- (c) Disregarding terms;
- (d) Examination allowances
- (e) Consideration of non-standard combinations of papers;
- (f) Remission of University Composition fees.

2 The Adjusted Mode of Assessment process – Applications

2.1 Introduction

The Adjusted Mode of Assessment (AMA) process is for all students where the examination access arrangements 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.

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

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.

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 and in particular, 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 delivering parity of judgement.

2.2 Application

Applications will only be considered when made through the College on the student's behalf, except in the most exceptional circumstances, for example where the relationship between the student and the College has broken down. Prior to the request being made, the student is expected to have discussed their request with their Tutor.

The College must submit a formal request that includes 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 the standard exam access arrangements available have not been or would not be successful. In all cases, a letter from the Senior Tutor must be included with the application.

The Committee regards it as good practice that the student should be fully aware of all the documentation being submitted by the College.

Completed applications should be sent to the Secretary of the EAMC at exam.arrangements@admin.cam.ac.uk

2.3 Medical evidence

Clear medical evidence of a disability or chronic illness 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 students 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 students 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 students 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 it is expected that updated evidence to summarize 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. In cases of query, the College should contact the Secretary to the EAMC for guidance.

The Committee notes that there may be challenges in gaining medical evidence due to the current situation of COVID-19. As a result, regardless of the date stated on any medical evidence previously obtained by the student, this may be included as part of their application.

Medical evidence will be made available to the following:

EAMC Medical Advisers	To consider the application made and to ensure that the medical evidence provided meets the guidelines for an AMA.
Secretary and Assistant Secretary to the EAMC	For administrative purposes
Invitees of the Case conference	To understand the disability and to ensure that any AMA recommended addresses the disadvantage caused by the disability.

2.4 Timing

Applications must be received by the end of full Michaelmas term in any year. This is to ensure that any teaching and support can be put in place and that adjusted modes can be discussed with the Faculty / Department concerned. However, Colleges are encouraged to submit their AMA applications as soon as a student's condition is known and has the medical evidence to support the AMA application.

The process can be lengthy - cases can take weeks or months to resolve, and until the point of approval, the student should continue their study without any changes.

Requests or evidence submitted later than the end of full 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.

Approved AMA's do not roll over to future years and a new application is required for each part of assessment. This is due to the changes in the types of assessment between each year of study.

3 The Adjusted Mode of Assessment process – Case conference

3.1 Case conference process

Once a completed application has been received, it is passed to the Medical Advisers of the EAMC for consideration. The Advisers will consider the application and the medical evidence provided, and if content, approve the application to move to case conference.

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

Until the medical advisers approve the application, no further action is taken.

If a medical adviser declines an application, then the student can request a review of a decision of a University Body under the procedure [here](#).

Once an application has been approved to move to the next stage, administrators will circulate proposed dates to hold the case conference to discuss the application.

3.2 Case conference process

Stakeholders¹ will be invited to a case conference to discuss the AMA application made.

This is an opportunity for the Chair² to request further information from the student and / or College and to discuss what other modes may also be possible. The department may also wish a Course director or similar to attend to gather further information or explain competency standards for specific parts of the course.

If the student intends to sit papers borrowed from other subjects, the department may also wish to consult with that department prior to the case conference.

It is important to note that the purpose of the case conference is fact finding only. No decision is made at the case conference.

After the case conference, meeting notes will be circulated to attendees.

There may be some circumstances where it may not be necessary to hold a case conference. This may include where a student has had an AMA previously and there is no change to their condition or their request, and that request maps onto the next year's modules. It may also not be necessary to hold a case conference if a student is looking to extend their period of study, with no further adjustments.

¹ A list of stakeholders and their role can be found in Appendix A

² Of Examiners or of Degree Committee. Assistant Chair or Senior Examiner may replace Chair

3.3 Post case conference

After the case conference, it is expected that the Chair will consult colleagues on their Exam or Faculty Board on the request made, and what, if any, AMA would be recommended for each module being requested.

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 the 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 the Chair has concluded their consultation, they will inform the Secretary whether they recommend an adjusted mode of assessment. Any recommendation will list in detail, the AMA for each module for which the student is enrolled.

4 The Adjusted Mode of Assessment process – Recommendation and Approval

4.1 Recommendation

Once a recommendation has been received, the Secretary performs a check to ensure that each enrolled module is considered. Once complete, this recommendation is consolidated with the original application and prepares a paper for the next meeting of the EAMC.

4.2 EAMC consideration

At the next meeting of the EAMC, the full case with 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.

In some circumstances, it may be possible to approve recommendations outside of a full meeting of the EAMC, via delegated authority. These will be assessed on a case by case basis, looking at the request and the recommendation as well as any historical information on that student's mode of assessment.

4.3 Review procedure

If the student is not content with the outcome then they can request a review of the decision. Further information can be found online [here](#).

4.4 Approved recommendation

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.

5 Types of Adjusted Mode of Assessment

5.1 Types of AMA

Different types of AMA should be considered based on the student's disability and the student's College is expected to have discussed with the student what AMA may be appropriate, prior to an application being made, however there is no guarantee that is what will be approved. This should be based on examples of previous study and arrangements that have previously been awarded to that student, and evidence of where the standard exam access arrangements 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 adjusted mode.

Some examples of AMA are shown in Appendix B.

5.2 Competence Standards

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.

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.

6. Review procedure

Details of the [Review Procedure](#) and form can be found online and requests for review should be submitted on the Review Request form within 14 days of the formal decision being issued. It is particularly important for this purpose that the College keep records of when it communicates the Committee's decisions to the students. In instances where the Committee has declined an application or offers an alternative to the allowance sought, it is essential that the decision is conveyed to the student as soon as possible.

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.

7. Key contacts

Complex queries	Jenny.green@admin.cam.ac.uk
General / preliminary queries	exam.arrangements@admin.cam.ac.uk
Making an application to the Committee	exam.arrangements@admin.cam.ac.uk

Key stakeholders and their role

<p>Chair of Examiners or Chair of Degree Committee (depending on programme of study)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required at case conference • Responsible for reporting competency standards being assessed through current mode of assessment • Responsible for ensuring programme competency standards are met by any adjusted mode of assessment proposed • Responsible for making recommendation to Secretary • Responsible for actioning, or delegating to others, the operational delivery of any adjusted mode of assessment approved.
<p>College rep (usually tutor but can include DoS, Senior Tutor and tutorial staff for operational detail)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required at case conference • Responsible for discussing application with student and submitting application for consideration • Responsible for obtaining any further information needed after the case conference • Responsible for informing student of outcome • Responsible for working with the SR on operational requirements
<p>Department representative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome at case conference • Responsible for presenting any further information specific to course. This may be the Course Director / Chair of Teaching or equivalent within the department.
<p>Disability adviser or Head of DRC*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome to attend case conference if appropriate and / or student is known to them. • Responsible for advising on nature of disability and potential impact on student
<p>Secretary**</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving recommendation from Chair • Responsible for presenting case to relevant Committee or delegated authority and reporting outcome
<p>Student</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraged to attend the start of the case conference. However, the outcome isn't affected if the student doesn't feel able to attend. • Responsible for alerting College Tutor to examination access requirements early in the Michaelmas term. • Responsible for ensuring specialist evidence is available to those parties involved in the process • 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
<p>Student Registry (SR)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required at case conference • Responsible for the administration of the process including writing and distribution of minutes • Responsible for the liaison between all parties • Responsible for ensuring that the operational processes for assessment are considered and managed between the SR, College and Chair of Examiners (or delegate)

Head of DRC* - in more complex cases, the Secretary may explicitly request that the Head of the DRC is in attendance

Secretary** - to the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee

AMA	To consider
<p>To replace a written examination with an essay or a portfolio of essays</p>	<p>Essays should have a word limit set that is equivalent to any word limit outlined in that subjects 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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>Bespoke paper to be written and broken up into smaller chunks</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 exam access arrangements may also be applied for the examination, such as extra time (written or rest).</p>
<p>To reduce the number of questions to be answered and submit an essay</p>	<p>To reduce the number of questions to be answered (with time scaled), 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>
<p>Long Extension of Dissertation / coursework / submitted essays</p>	<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>

Extended period of study	<p>Most commonly, to split one year over two, however may also be exams as scheduled then a long extension on Dissertation.</p> <p>Same issues as listed above apply.</p> <p>To also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- University regulations indicate that fees are due for each year of study.- Students are expected to be working full time, just on a reduced workload. This is not part-time study.- 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.- Results will only be released at the end of the second year of study, at the Classing stage. Whilst it is unlikely that an exam board would change marks awarded the previous years, it must still retain the right to do so and it is genuinely the case that no individual marks can be confirmed until all of those marks for that Part of the Tripos have been completed by the candidate.
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