

Applications for Disregarding terms

Notes for Guidance for Staff and Students 2019-20

These guidance notes are intended to complement the relevant University Ordinances and they relate to applications submitted to the Committee in 2019-20.

They do not themselves constitute a set of regulations, nor should they be taken to imply that, given a particular set of circumstances, the Committee will automatically reach a particular decision.

The relevant Ordinances can be found online in Chapter III (Examinations) of Statutes and Ordinances. (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/>)

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Examination Access and Mitigation Committee

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 allowances and 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.

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.

It **does not consider** applications for those graduate students for which the [Board of Graduate Studies](#) is responsible, nor does it consider applications for students being examined for courses leading to the M.B, B.Chir or the Vet.M.B.

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 alternative 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 Disregarding terms

2.1 General information

Disregarding terms is primarily for two reasons:

- i. to allow students to intermit their studies and be away from Cambridge for a period of time for reasons of medical or grave cause, *or*
- ii. to put a student in standing for examinations.

Where disregarding terms has been awarded to allow the student to be in standing for an examination, this does not negate fact, i.e. that a student was in residence, kept terms and paid fees.

The Committee will not normally approve applications for disregarded terms which are based on employment opportunities, internships and the like. Applications made on grounds other than medical, family or financial factors will generally only be considered if the opportunity presented to a student is unique and cannot be deferred until completion of the student's course of study.

Where an application for disregarding terms has been approved, this is not considered an examination allowance.

Permission to disregard terms is normally granted for an academical year, however, in certain circumstances, it may be granted for a calendar year or for another period. In these cases, the college must check with the relevant Faculty / Department that a mid-year return is academically feasible.

A period of disregarded terms will not normally exceed three terms or one year.

When an application is made for a student to disregard terms after the start of the academic year, the College should consider whether any work already assessed should be carried forward. This request should be included within the application and is not automatically approved.

A student who has disregarded terms may not resume without the permission of the Committee and their College.

Depending on the case, it may be necessary to apply for an examination allowance of 'Allowed to Progress' or 'Reconsideration of original result' alongside a period of disregarding terms. Separate applications are not required and full details on examination allowances can be found in separate guidance notes available [here](#).

2.2 Disregarding terms in the Easter term

Applications to disregard terms for an academical year which are made during the Easter Term of that year are not likely to be granted; the award of an examination allowance is more likely.

However, when disregard terms for an Easter term is approved, the Committee will normally require the student to resume study in a Lent term, rather than resume in an Easter term. This allows the student to refresh and embed their knowledge as well as reacclimatize to the academic environment. Additionally, if a student has been away for reasons of ill health, a Lent term return allows them to access any medical and / or support mechanisms available in Cambridge, rather than return straight into an examination term.

3. How to make an application

3.1 General information

The Committee only considers applications made through the college on the student's behalf, except in the most exceptional circumstances.

Any student seeking a review of a decision of the Committee should apply via the mechanism available online [here](#).

Applications must be complete, i.e. they must include all the required documentation, a tutorial signature and explicit confirmation as to whether or not it has the College's support, and if it does not, to confirm it has told the student so. Applications that have not had this information completed may be returned, and this could delay the Committee's consideration. The application may also include any additional information which the college wishes to submit.

The student may, if they wish, seek to have their own statement or other supporting evidence included. It is in all parties' interests that any such statement is clear and concise. The Committee regards it as good practice that the student should be fully aware of all the documentation being submitted by the College. In any case, the student will be able to access this information through a Subject Access Request or request to review the decision of the EAMC. To not fully share the application with the student, may lead to the student successfully reviewing the EAMC decision and the decision-making process having to be repeated.

An application must include all of the following:

- a completed and signed [application form](#);
- a statement from the college;
- a completed [declaration form](#) from the student giving permission for medical evidence to be disclosed to medical members of the Committee;
- evidence of medical circumstances or other grave cause;
- all supervision reports available for the academical year(s) to which a period of disregarding terms would apply. Where an application concerns an undivided two year Part I, reports for both years should be provided. For courses where supervision reports are not routinely available (e.g. the LL.M.), the College should supply whatever testimony of the student's industry and ability it can. Supervision reports should be provided in chronological order, **most recent first**;

Completed applications should be sent to the Secretary of the EAMC at eamc@admin.cam.ac.uk. Please note that in fairness to all students and to allow members sufficient time to read the papers, the submission deadline for each meeting of the Committee is strictly observed. Details of meetings and submission deadlines can be found [here](#).

3.2 Medical Evidence

If the reason for the application is for medical reasons, evidence must be included with the application. The following should be noted;

- Medical evidence to apply only for disregarding terms should be obtained during the period of illness or as soon as possible after. **Where a student's referral to a specialist medical advisor has been delayed for reasons outside the student's control, this should be made clear.**
- Evidence must be submitted by the deadline of the Committee meeting at which the college would like the application to be considered. The Committee expects to receive evidence from a medically qualified practitioner, for example a doctor's report, preferably from a doctor based in Cambridge.

Where appropriate, it will additionally consider evidence from an accredited counsellor.

If there is a disability element to the application, the Committee would normally expect to see reference to consultation with the DRC.

In the case of short term debilitation, the Committee will consider evidence from a college nurse. **Statements by college nurses will generally suffice in instances of 'routine' illness and acute medical problems with measurable and visible symptoms**

- Evidence is required, as opposed to merely a declaration that the student was debilitated. Supporting letters from relatives or friends, irrespective of whether they are medically qualified, or anecdotal sources of information do not constitute medical evidence and are not acceptable to the Committee.
- The medical evidence should be a clear diagnosis which includes the nature and severity of the illness; it should state how the condition is likely to have affected the student's examination preparation and / or performance or academic progress. The evidence should be precise and self-explanatory.
- The amount of evidence required will vary from case to case. For example, hospital admission will need a shorter explanation than will a less obvious or less serious condition where background information and details of the candidate's medical history may be required.

Strict confidentiality is observed regarding medical evidence. Medical evidence is disclosed only to the medical members of the Committee (although it is accepted that it will also be seen by the Secretary and Assistant Secretary to the Committee and by College staff collating the application). Other members of the Committee do not see this part of the application unless the student explicitly asks that they should do so. The student is required to submit a form giving permission for their medical evidence to be disclosed to the medical members of the Committee.

3.3 Evidence of other grave cause

Mitigating circumstances which are not medical may be considered. A grave cause may have a variety of characteristics but will include being (i) unanticipated and (ii) entirely beyond the student's control. In cases relating to grave cause, the Committee would expect to receive evidence from an appropriate professional; the evidence should be independent and should corroborate the college's application. The Committee is not able to consider evidence from a relative, friend or anyone with a close personal connection to the student or family.

3.4 College Statement

The student's Senior Tutor or Tutor should submit a statement about the application. The college may wish to draw attention to any matters which it would like the Committee to take into consideration. **There may be instances in which an additional statement by a DoS is helpful.** The Committee pays close attention to the care with which College statements prepared.

3.5 Deadlines

Applications for retrospective disregard of terms where a student is already on intermission, are subject to a deadline of two terms after resumption of study has passed. Where an application has not been made by this deadline, students will be withdrawn from their programme of study.

4 How the EAMC considers applications

4.1 General overview

Members of the Committee normally receive applications seven days before the scheduled meeting. Where necessary a second circulation of applications will be issued: but only in the most exceptional circumstances will the Committee feel able to consider tabled applications. Medical evidence is only sent to medical members of the Committee.

In considering the college's application the Committee takes into account the evidence submitted, the student's academic performance throughout the year and where applicable during the examination in question, and points raised in the college's statement, and any statement from the student.

Where the medical evidence is considered by the medical members to be weak or unconvincing, the Committee may defer a decision until further appropriate evidence is obtained, or it may propose an allowance other than the one requested, or it may decline the application.

4.2 Applications dealt with by delegated authority

Some applications may be dealt with by authority delegated to the Chair and / or Secretary. Typically this includes straightforward applications to disregard or return.

In very exceptional circumstances i.e. where a decision cannot reasonably wait until the next scheduled meeting of the Committee and where the case is not straightforward, the Committee may be prepared to consider an application by circulation. If, however, in such circumstances any member of the Committee wishes the application to be considered at a scheduled meeting, then the application will need to await that meeting.

5. Fitness to Study

5.1 University Fitness to Study process

Details on the University Fitness to Study process can be found online [here](#).

Under regulation 6(c) for the [Procedure for determining fitness to study](#), the EAMC can refer a case to the Fitness to Study Panel.

Before any referral is made, the Committee will expect all local resolution to have been exhausted, unless there are exceptional circumstances where it would not be appropriate for the College's processes to have been pursued first.

5.2 College Fitness to Study process

The EAMC recognizes College Fitness to Study processes (or other similarly titled support processes).

Noting that College Fitness to Study processes are subject to internal College appeal routes and external scrutiny by the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#), the role of the EAMC in these cases is only to ensure that the student remains in standing for future examinations.

Therefore, applications for intermission following the completion of a College Fitness to Study process that has resulted in a student's temporary removal from study will be approved without need to supply medical or other evidence from that College process.

A short letter from the Senior Tutor is all that is required with the application form when submitting such an application. It remains good practice that any application made under these circumstances should be shared with the student.

6. Return to study

6.1 General

When considering a request to disregard terms, the Committee is mindful that it should not bestow an advantage or a disadvantage on the student. Returning to repeat a year, or a part of a year, which the student has successfully completed, or repeating an examination which the student has already attempted, is normally declined. [Examination allowances](#) are intended to accommodate these circumstances.

Where a student has been granted leave to disregard terms, the student does not have access to University facilities, libraries, lectures etc. In the intervening period, it is the College's responsibility to monitor any course changes and to keep in close contact with the Faculty/Department responsible for arranging student supervisions regarding the feasibility of what is being proposed.

When the period of disregarding terms is drawing to a close and the student is ready to resume their studies, the college is required to apply to the Committee for permission for the student to return. A student may not resume without obtaining this permission. At this point, the college should also submit any required evidence of fitness to return.

When a student returns, they may find that the content of the course and / or examination has changed. No special provision is made for this and the student is expected to comply with the course content and examination as required for that year.

If the Committee approve a student to return at a time that requires them to repeat a term that they have already studied, fees for that repeated term are still due. Any application for fee remission is unlikely to be approved as repeating a term is not a reason for fee remission. Further details on fee remission can be found [here](#).

Occasionally, in exceptional circumstances, this permission to disregard terms may be extended beyond three terms. The circumstances would have to be very exceptional indeed for an extension beyond two years. A further application should be made by the college to the Committee for the extended period.

Where an overseas student disregards terms, there may be implications for the University and for the individual student for visa requirements. In the first instance the college should contact the [International Student Office](#).

6.2 Evidence of fitness to return to study

When the Committee grants a student permission to have terms disregarded, it normally attaches conditions of fitness to return. Evidence of these conditions having been met is required before the point when the student intends to return. A student may not resume without the permission of the Committee.

Wherever possible, medical evidence confirming fitness to return should be provided by the same person who made the original diagnosis. Where this is not possible, the student should arrange for the current practitioner, for example GP or consultant, to see the medical evidence from the time of the original diagnosis to inform their judgement on the student's fitness to return.

The Committee and or the College may set other, non-medical, conditions before resumption. For example, students may need to satisfy the requirements of a college examination or some other form of academic assessment as a condition of returning from a period of disregarded terms. These should be made clear to the student when permission to disregard terms is given.

The student should be in no doubt as to the nature of these conditions, what is required of him/her and the deadline for satisfaction of such conditions. A clear statement of what facilities (if any) and support will be made available to the student to meet any such conditions should be given.

It is the student's responsibility to obtain this evidence in time for the college to submit it by the Committee's deadline. If the evidence is delayed for reasons outside the student's or the College's control, this should be made clear. The deadline for a college to apply for a student to return for the academic year is 24 August; for the calendar year is 24 November; and for return in the Easter term is 24 March. The college and student(s) should ensure that all the documentation is ready for submission by that date. Any applications received after this date may be delayed with an outcome not known before the start of the term, putting the student's return to study in jeopardy.

In cases where continued medical treatment, including psychiatric treatment, is required, the Committee needs to be satisfied that such treatment can satisfactorily be delivered in Cambridge.

In the cases of disabled students returning from a period of disregarded terms, the Committee would expect an indication that the DRC had been informed in order for any necessary support to be ready from the resumption of the student's studies.

If the student is seeking permission to go out of residence on medical grounds, the medical evidence should also indicate when the student is likely to be able to resume study and where appropriate, include a clear medical plan identifying any necessary treatment to be undertaken during the period out of residence.

7. 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.

8. Key contacts

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