

Applications for Examination Allowances

Notes for Guidance for Staff and Students 2017-18

These guidance notes are intended to complement the relevant University Ordinances and they relate to applications submitted to the Committee in 2017-18.

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/2016/chapter03-section2.html>)

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Applications Committee

The Standing Committee on Applications is a committee of the Council 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.

The Applications Committee 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 Applications Committee considers applications for examination allowances 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 an examination allowance

The primary purpose of the Application Committee is to consider the cases of students who, due to medical or other grave cause, have been prevented from taking examinations, have missed part of an examination or have failed or underperformed in an examination. Colleges may apply for examination allowances on behalf of eligible students.

2 Forms of Examination Allowance

2.1 Types of Examination allowances and what they mean

- **DDH** - the candidate is '**declared to have deserved honours**'.

This means that the evidence indicates that the student would normally have achieved Honours in the examination or that, having been initially classed, the student's class is agreed, on the basis of evidence (e.g. supervision reports) to be unrepresentative of their abilities.

DDH replaces any class initially awarded and appears against the overall result field on the student's transcript along with a statement from the regulations for allowances (reg 8) found [here](#). The papers that the student was enrolled for, and their marks where they exist, will also appear on the student transcript.

DDH may not be awarded in an examination which is not for Honours (for example, the MAST degree or an Erasmus student). DDH is not a classed award and may not be acceptable for some professional requirements.

- **Allowed the examination.**

This credits the student with the examination even though they have not met all of the normal requirements. On the student's transcript the words "Allowed the examination" appear against the field for the overall result. All individual examination paper results also show on the transcript, including any failures. "Allowed the examination" is not a class and may not be acceptable for some professional requirements. This allowance may be offered in cases where the examination is not an Honours examination (eg the MBA or the MAST degree).

- **Put in standing.**

This gives the student permission to proceed to the next examination even though they have not met all the normal requirements to do so. On the student's transcript the record for that academical year is blank. In cases where the student has completed less than three terms in the year in question or has not completed the course for that year, the Committee may decide to offer this allowance rather than DDH or allow the examination.

The Committee **cannot** put a student in standing for a Part III as entry to these requires particular levels of previous academic performance. All it can do is to offer, if the Committee so agrees, the relevant University academic authority an opinion on whether there are mitigating circumstances which would warrant reconsideration of the case by that authority.

- **Ordinary BA degree** (for Part II students only).

This is awarded to a student who has achieved Honours in a Part I but has failed at Part II, IIA or IIB. Whilst each case is considered on its merits, an Ordinary BA may be the appropriate outcome in instances where the student has, in the Committee's opinion, made a reasonable attempt at a Part II examination and has received reasonable supervision reports but, in both aspects, below the standard that would justify a DDH.

- **Leave to disregard terms for a specified period.**

Disregard terms is primarily for two reasons:

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

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.

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.

Where a student is granted a period of disregarded terms, the College should indicate on the application, for any of the candidate's formally assessed work to be carried forward.

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

- **Invite the Board of Examiners to reconsider its original result.**

This is intended for a student who has performed at the standard of a higher class in all but a relatively small part of the examination, where that small part of the examination was affected by mitigating circumstances and where this is apparent in the student's profile of results.

It is not intended for a student;

- who has generally underperformed for whatever reason, *or*
- whose medical circumstances affected the overall examination, *or*
- who is legitimately just below a borderline.

If the Committee approve the request, the Chair of the Board is invited to class the student by disregarding the affected paper(s). Evidence is required of the mitigating circumstances and that they affected those paper(s) to which the application is made, and not the whole examination. Evidence is also required that the student's academic performance was not as expected in the affected part of the examination, so supervision reports should be submitted. Additionally, for these applications, it is helpful if the College include the student's examination timetable.

2.2 Which allowance to apply for

The following table demonstrates which circumstances allow for which type of allowance;

	Is an Exam allowance?	Can a warning letter be sent?	Declared to have Deserved Honours	Disregard terms	Allow the examination	Put in standing	Award Ordinary Degree	Invite the Board of Examiners to reconsider its original result	Resume studies
Student is absent for whole exam	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES*	NO	NO
Student is absent for part of the exam and not classed	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES*	YES	NO
Student attended whole of the exam and failed	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES*	YES	NO
Student attended all or part of the exam and has obtained honours	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO

YES* If student is Part II

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. Students can apply directly to the Committee where they are seeking a review of a decision by the Committee.

The application must be complete, i.e. it 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.

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 an allowance 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;
- the profile of marks obtained in any examination attended and in any other formal component of assessment completed throughout the year. It will assist the Committee if the examination timetable and relevant marking and classing criteria are included.

Completed applications should be sent to the Secretary of the Applications Committee at applications.committee@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 at <http://www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us/applications-committee>.

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 should be obtained **prior** to the completion of the examination. Post hoc medical evidence will be regarded as such by the Committee and is unlikely to be given the same weight as evidence which pre-dates an examination. **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.

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.

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 causes

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.

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.

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.

4 Warning letters

During the examination period, a college may wish to alert the Committee that a student has experienced a problem. This is called a “warning” and is submitted by the College via the Student Information System, CamSIS. No action is taken at the submission stage.

If the college subsequently makes an application to the Committee on behalf of the student, the fact that there was a warning will be disclosed to the Committee. If the college does not make an application, no action is taken on the warning.

Warnings are not disclosed to Chairs of Examiners nor their Examination Boards. This is to ensure that warnings, and the circumstances they describe, are considered consistently by one Committee which has an overview of custom and practice across the University. An Examination Board is asked to consider a student on the basis of the academic work presented. If a college then considers that the outcome is not representative of the student’s proved ability, the normal procedures for applying to the Committee should be followed.

5 How the Applications Committee considers applications

5.1 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. If a college has previously submitted a warning about a student during the examination this fact is now disclosed to Committee members.

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.

Where the academic evidence, primarily from supervision reports, is considered to be insufficient to support the allowance requested, the Committee may propose an allowance other than the one requested or it may decline the application.

Where the Ordinances refer to "small" or "substantial" parts of an examination, the Committee does not have formulaic definitions of these terms. This reflects the fact that the number of papers required in the various Parts of Tripos can vary considerably.

Only in really exceptional circumstances will more than one examination allowance be granted to a student during their undergraduate career. Where the Committee gives a student permission to disregard terms, this is not considered an examination allowance in this particular context.

5.2 Matters dealt with by delegated authority

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

In very exceptional circumstances i.e. where a decision cannot reasonable 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.

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 (DDH, put in standing, allowance of the examination) 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.

Where a student wishes to return, 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.

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 Team](#).

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.

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.

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	applications.committee@admin.cam.ac.uk
Making an application to the Committee	applications.committee@admin.cam.ac.uk