# Applications for Examination Allowances

## Notes for Guidance for Staff and Students 2021-22

These guidance notes are intended to complement the relevant University Ordinances and they relate to applications submitted to the Committee in 2021-22.
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/)

This version was updated in October 2021. Guidance notes remain under review and will be republished in the Lent term 2022. Any changes will be communicated.

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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 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.

## 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 Forms of Examination Allowance

### 2.1 Types of Examination allowances and what they mean

Examination allowances appear in Statutes and Ordinances, Chapter 3 'Examinations'. The Committee may also require conditions when awarding an allowance, such as providing medical evidence of fitness to resume and sustain study. Further information on each allowance follows;

**Allowed to Progress** (allowance 3a)

This allowance is available to students who are on courses which are more than one year in length, and the student is not in their final year. This allowance gives the student permission to proceed to the next examination even though they have not met all the normal requirements to do so.

This may be used as follows (*note, list is not exhaustive*)

- Where a student has not attained honours in the year previous, preventing progression to the next stage;
- Where a student is moving between Tripos, which regulations do not allow

The Committee **cannot** put a student in standing for a Part III course 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.

**Declared to have deserved honours (DDH)** (allowances 3b(i) and 3c(i))

Since October 2018, DDH is only available to the following students;

- Candidates for the B.A. Degree where they have kept the required number of terms to qualify for the B.A. (i.e. 9 terms).
- Candidates for a qualification other than the B.A. degree which is an honours degree (for example, the Master of Law).

  A DDH can be awarded when;
- The student was not classed by the Board of Examiners *or*
- Having been classed by the Board of Examiners, that class is agreed to be unrepresentative of their abilities.

DDH is not a classed award and may not be acceptable for some professional requirements.

Students should be aware of the long-term effect of removing a Class and replacing it with a DDH, something that the student will need to continually explain, for example to prospective employers, and Colleges might consider if the student's performance might be better served by explaining the circumstances in a reference.

**Ordinary BA degree** (allowance 3b(ii))

The Ordinary degree is only available to students who are candidates for the B.A. degree and have kept the required number of terms for the B.A.

An Ordinary may be awarded to a student who has previously achieved Honours, 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.

**Allowed the examination** (allowance 3c(ii))

This credits the student with the examination even though they have not met all of the normal requirements. '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). This allowance uses the term "examination" to refer to the qualification for which they are registered as a whole, not individual papers.

Award of this allowance approves a candidate for the degree and when considering applications for this allowance, the Committee requires academic evidence that the candidate was working at that degree standard. Such academic evidence is required alongside the evidence of mitigating circumstances.

The allowance will not normally be awarded where there is underperformance across the examination, or where such academic evidence is not provided.

**Reconsideration of an original result.** (allowance 3d)

This allowance is only available where a student has been Classed (awarded a First, Upper Second, Lower Second, or Third Class). It 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 has an existing medical condition for which examination access arrangements would have alleviated any disadvantage, *or*
- who is legitimately just below a borderline.

Applications for this allowance will only be considered by the Committee where the student has performed at the higher class in the rest of the examination. Applications that are purely based on the recalculation of marks, to move the student over a class boundary will not be approved.

Requests will be considered in exceptional cases for finalists, where progression depends on attainment of a specified average. If the Class would not change by awarding this allowance, the application will be declined.

The Committee consider a ‘small part’ to be normally up to around 25% of the whole examination but will consider all applications. The Committee also take into account the weighting of individual modules when making a decision.

Applications for Reconsideration of a result are usually only considered after the examination has finished and the outcome is known. So that a student’s case can be considered in its entirety, and in case further consideration is needed for the remaining assessments, applications received before the examinations are finished will not be considered and will be returned to the College by the Secretary with instruction to submit a new application once the outcome is known.

Candidates who receive provisional marks cannot apply for this allowance until their final agreed Class is awarded. This includes students who are studying under an adjusted mode of assessment who extend their period of study. Any reconsideration of results will only be possible once all marks are finally agreed by an Exam Board and the student has been Classed.

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, the College should include the student’s examination timetable in the application.

If the Committee approve the request, the Chair of the Board is then invited to class the student by disregarding the affected paper(s) after consultation with at least two other Examiners.

The Regulations for this allowance are ‘to move the candidate’s name to a higher class’.

For programmes that are not classed (MBA, MEng, MMath), it is not possible to move the candidate’s name to a higher class and therefore the Committee are unable to act where the mark obtained is a pass mark and would not prevent the student completing the course successfully. The Committee would consider an application if the student might qualify for a higher award where available, for instance a Merit or Distinction.

If the student is seeking a clerical mark check, this should be requested by approaching the relevant Faculty or Department directly.

**Re-sit[1] opportunity**

Only in very exceptional circumstances will students be allowed to re-sit an examination. The process of disregarding terms exists to allow students who have been affected by illness or grave cause to intermit their study and in some cases, repeat terms prior to assessment in the following year.

'Allowed the exam' (allowing the student to progress) enables students to move on to the next level of study without further examination and where exceptional circumstances are shown to have specifically affected a small number of papers, the student may apply to have these disregarded, so that classing proceeds on the basis of the rest of their performance, and no re-sit is necessary or possible.

As a result, applications for an assessment re-sit will only be considered where disregarding terms, 'allowed the exam' or 'disregarding a paper' would not be possible.

Applications received must include academic evidence that the examination outcome would have been different but for the exceptional circumstances and where that evidence suggests:

- That an alternative allowance, such as 'Allowed the Exam' (allowing the student to progress), being classed by 'disregarding papers' or by 'disregarding terms' is not suitable and the student would be academically disadvantaged by continuing without the re-sit; *or*
- For final year students, where an alternative allowance, such as 'Declared to have deserved honours' is not acceptable for external accreditation to professional, statutory and regulatory bodies for that Tripos.

Applications with the goal of improving marks through a re-sit exam will not be considered where the student has been Classed or appears on a list of successful candidates, except under the circumstances outlined above or where the application concerns circumstances of a student's disability which changed or worsened over the examination in a way that was not predicted, such that any reasonable adjustments made in advance were insufficient.

**2.2 Allowances that the Committee cannot apply**

The Committee can only apply the examination allowances that appear in Statutes and Ordinances, Chapter 3 'Examinations'. The Committee cannot work outside of this remit, including:

- Change the mark for a paper by either adding extra marks or removing marks.
- Award or instruct a Chair of Examiners to change an overall Class based on how a student might have performed.
- Change or move grade boundaries for an individual student or cohort.

[1] These guidance notes do not override professional examinations where re-sits are already available, such as Medicine and Veterinary Medicine.

## 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, and a tutorial signature. If applications are incomplete, they may be returned, which 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;
- student support document (SSD), where appropriate
- 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 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;

- 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.
- Medical evidence for existing and long term conditions should ideally be obtained **prior** to completion of the examination.
- If a student has an existing or long term condition but has no medical history available, the Committee are unlikely to give the same weight to any 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.
- If a student is afflicted with a short term or unexpected illness, then evidence should be obtained as soon as possible after the incident. It is expected that the student would see their College nurse and their tutor, and ideally, their GP where practicable. Evidence would then be expected from those sources. Evidence dated and received several weeks after an incident is unlikely to be given the same weight by the Committee and a full explanation as to why it could not be obtained at the time, or immediately after, should be included in the application.
- Evidence supplied should be complete and relevant.
- 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 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.
- Medical evidence should be provided in English. Where a translation has been provided, this should be carried out by an independent third party and not the student.

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.

All evidence submitted should be complete, relevant and contemporaneous.

### 3.4 College Statement

It is expected that the student's Senior Tutor or Tutor would normally provide 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 are prepared.

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. Full details on disregarding terms can be found in separate guidance notes available here.

### 3.5 Deadlines

Applications for allowances should be made as soon as possible, and no later than three months from the date of publication of the outcome of the examination. Applications received after this date will not normally be considered.

## 4. Warning letters

Please see the Guidance Notes on Warnings here.

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 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.

Examination Boards only consider the academic work presented and mark and class on that basis. 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 EAMC 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, any statement from the student and any previous applications that have been made to the EAMC on behalf of 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.

For all students, study should be the primary focus of attendance. 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.

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.

Where a student who has already been granted one examination allowance applies for a second or further allowance, each application will be considered on its own merits. In awarding multiple allowances, the EAMC will have particular regard for maintaining equality of educational outcomes between students in different circumstances.

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 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.

## 6. Academic Transcripts

Allowances made to students do not negate academic achievement. Students should be made aware of the following when applying for an allowance.

- For the allowance of '**Allowed to Progress'**, this appears on the student's academic transcript as the result for that examination. The papers sat and marks attained are retained and displayed.
- For the allowance of '**Declared to have deserved honours'**, this appears on the student's academic transcript as the result for that examination. The papers sat and marks attained are retained and displayed. Finally, the following statement explaining the DDH is added to the transcript;

  *This candidate has been awarded an allowance in accordance with the University's regulations. The authorities concerned are of the opinion that, for good reason, it would be unfair to classify the candidate since they believe that this would not adequately represent the candidate's attainment. They have accordingly agreed to declare the candidate to have deserved honours in this examination.*
- For the allowance of '**Ordinary BA Degree'**, this appears on the student's academic transcript as the result for that examination. All papers and marks are retained and displayed and the degree awarded on a transcript is titled 'BA Degree (Ordinary)
- For the allowance of '**Allowed the Examination'**, this appears on the student's academic transcript as the result for that examination. The papers sat and marks attained are retained and displayed.
- For the allowance of '**Reconsideration of an original result**', the original marks will remain on the student's record and appear on their transcript. This allowance does not remove the papers and the academic mark awarded from the students record. It will also not change the students total mark.

  Students should be aware of this and that further explanation may be needed, for example, to prospective employers.

## 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

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| 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 |