

## Applications for Examination Allowances

### (for certain Postgraduate courses)

#### Notes for Guidance for Staff and Students 2020-21

These guidance notes refer to applications for examination allowances from Colleges on behalf of Postgraduate students on taught programmes which includes the MPhil by Advanced Study, MRes or MSt degrees, Diploma in Economics, Postgraduate Diplomas in Legal Studies and in International law, Certificates of Postgraduate Study (CPGS).

These guidance notes are intended to complement the relevant University Ordinances and they relate to applications submitted to the Committee in 2020-21.

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 VI (regulation 12) and Chapter VII (regulation 15) for the Master of Studies Degree (<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 2020, the Board of Graduate Studies was responsible for examination allowances for certain Postgraduate students.

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 Postgraduates on taught programmes which includes the MPhil by Advanced Study, MRes or MSt degrees, Diploma in Economics, Postgraduate Diplomas in Legal Studies and in International law, Certificates of Postgraduate Study (CPGS).

Students on the following courses should see the guidance for [Examination Allowances](#) appropriate for their course; undergraduates and also EMBA; LLM; MAST; MBA; MCL; MEng; M.Fin; MMath; MMus; MSci; PGCE,

Students registered for the PhD, MLitt or MSc or MPhil by thesis degrees are not eligible to receive examination allowances and in case of difficulties in an examination should consult their Supervisor or College Tutor for advice.

### 1.3 Other Postgraduate Applications

For information on how to intermit, extend submission date or other postgraduate matters please see [here](#).

## 2 Forms of Examination Allowance

### 2.1 Types of Examination Allowances

Examination allowances appear in Statutes and Ordinances, Chapter VI and VII 'Allowances for illness, etc'. Further information on each allowance follows.

The EAMC will 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. An allowance for an examination for a postgraduate degree normally comes into effect if a candidate has been, or is likely to be, unable to undertake part or all of their examination, or has failed part or all of it because of illness or other serious and unforeseen cause (such as serious illness of a close family member). Examination allowance applications will not be considered for instances of attending job interviews or participation in sporting events.

An examination may constitute assessed work such as an essay or research report in addition to a formal examination paper. In considering applications, the EAMC will balance the merits of the case with ensuring that no student gains an unfair advantage over others taking the same course.

An examination allowance does not affect the marks received. Its purpose is to allow Candidates a chance to obtain the qualification they have been registered for, if the EAMC accepts that their performance in the examination has been affected by serious mitigating circumstances.

For Postgraduate students there are two examination allowances available;

#### **To be approved for the qualification for which they are registered without further examination.**

This is only possible if the Degree Committee concerned judge the student to have performed with credit in a substantial part of the examination. The student will be awarded the degree and the transcript will show all the marks (including any fail marks) obtained in the examinations.

#### **To be allowed the opportunity to be examined or re-examined.**

The candidate is examined or re-examined under such conditions and at such time as determined following consultation by the EAMC with the relevant Degree Committee. This may include the opportunity for a student to revise and resubmit work, to be re-examined later in the same academic year or to return to study the following year and retake assessments along with the subsequent student cohort. If a student accepts an examination allowance and is re-examined or re-assessed, the mark awarded for the second examination or assessment undertaken is the formal mark achieved, as the allowance supersedes any previous marks awarded. This is the case even if the second mark is lower than the first mark.

### 3. How to make an application – Guide for Colleges

#### 3.1 General information

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

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.

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. 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.

Applications must be submitted no later than three months after the date on which the Faculty Degree Committee communicated formally the outcome of the examination to the candidate. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered. Applications may be made as soon as candidates know that they have been unable to undertake part or all of their examination, or failed part or all of it because of serious urgent cause. There is no need to wait until the marks for the assessment have been confirmed.

Applications may include a statement from the student or other supporting evidence. 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; usually in the form of a letter from the Graduate Tutor
- 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;
- any supervision reports available
- 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](mailto: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.

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 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 Academic Evidence**

The EAMC will consult the relevant Degree Committee regarding the student's academic progress to date and to obtain a profile of their marks for the examination in question (where available) and any other formally assessed work completed throughout the year. However, please supply as much information as possible in the original application.

### **3.5 College Statement**

The student's Senior Tutor or Graduate 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. The Committee pays close attention to the care with which College statements are prepared.

### **3.6 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, Degree Committees 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 is 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; points raised in the college's statement; any statement from the student; and any previous application 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 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 courses can vary considerably.

Only in very exceptional circumstances will more than one examination allowance be granted to a student during their degree.

If the application requests the student be approved for the degree without further examination, the EAMC will consult with the relevant Degree Committee to determine whether the student should be approved for the degree. If the application requests the student to be examined or re-examined and this is upheld by the EAMC, they will consult with the relevant Degree Committee to determine the conditions for the student to be examined or re-examined. The EAMC will not share medical evidence or other confidential material with the Degree Committee.

## **5.2 Return to study (to be examined or re-examined)**

When considering a request to return to study in the next academic year to re-sit the examinations in question, the EAMC is mindful that it should not bestow an advantage on the student. In exceptional circumstances and following consultation with the Faculty Degree Committee, the EAMC may grant permission for a student to repeat the entire year of study. In this case the student is normally required to complete all forms of assessment and examinations again. Exceptional circumstances would involve significant and sustained mitigating circumstances throughout a student's final year or a significant change to the course.

If a student is offered the opportunity to return to the course for all or part of the following academic year, no further University Composition Fee will be charged provided that the student has already met the Fee liability for their course in the current academic year. However, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that they have sufficient finance to cover any living costs and where applicable, to ensure that they obtain a visa in good time for their return to study.

Further information on entry clearance to the UK can be obtained from the International Student Team: <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/internationalstudents/studentvisas/>

The student should liaise with their College and the Course Director regarding the details of their return to Cambridge.

## **5.3 Evidence of fitness to return to study**

When the EAMC grants, on medical grounds, permission to return in the following academic year to re-sit an examination or examinations, it will normally attach a condition of fitness to return to study. Evidence of this condition having been met is required prior to the student returning to the course. A student with this condition may not resume residence without the permission of the College, the EAMC and the Faculty Degree 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 judgment on the student's fitness to return. The student is asked to confirm that the College may contact their Medical Practitioner for further information for instance, to help ensure the continuation of any medical care or other support on their return to Cambridge. The College and the EAMC may reserve the right to seek a further independent assessment.

It is the student's responsibility to obtain this evidence and to submit it to their College Tutor. The College is asked to submit a copy of the medical evidence together with the Application Form for students wishing to resume study directly to the Secretary of the EAMC at least eight weeks prior to their return to study (although please note it may take longer than eight weeks to obtain entry

clearance to the UK) and not normally more than twelve weeks prior to their return to study. The request will be considered by the EAMC and its medical advisers. The Faculty Degree Committee will be consulted but medical evidence and any other confidential material will not be shared. The EAMC will confirm to the College Tutor and the Department that the student has permission to return to study.

In cases where continued medical treatment is required, the EAMC needs to be satisfied that such treatment can satisfactorily be delivered in Cambridge and that the student's condition will not have an adverse effect on their performance in the examinations.

#### **5.4 Communication throughout the process**

The EAMC will email the College Tutor to communicate the Committee's decision and the details of the form of allowance, if applicable. The tutor will be asked to forward the offer to the student who is given a period of **14 days** to confirm to the EAMC whether they wish to accept the offer.

It is not appropriate for the Degree Committee and the Student to communicate directly regarding the form of allowance unless this has been explicitly permitted by the EAMC. All communications between the College/Student and the Degree Committee should be via the EAMC to ensure parity of treatment and for approval of any offers made. Agreements made outside of the EAMC process, and therefore not approved by the EAMC, may not constitute a formal allowance.

Once the Committee has made a decision, this will be communicated to the student by letter via the College. Arrangements will be decided between the Degree Committee and the EAMC and then this will be communicated to the student via the College. The student must then confirm acknowledgment to their tutor, who will notify the EAMC.

The student may request an alternative time or location for re-examination or re-submission of work, however the decision of the EAMC and the allowance awarded are final and review is only available via the Review Procedure – see section 6 of this document.

## 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.

If the student is approved to be awarded the Degree: the student will be awarded the degree and the transcript will show all the marks (including any fail marks) obtained in the examinations. On request, the EAMC will provide a letter to complement the transcript detailing the exam allowance.

If a student accepts an examination allowance and is re-examined or re-assessed: the mark awarded for the second examination or assessment undertaken is the formal mark achieved, as the allowance supersedes any previous marks awarded. This is the case even if the second mark is lower than the first mark.

## 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	<a href="mailto:Jenny.green@admin.cam.ac.uk">Jenny.green@admin.cam.ac.uk</a>
General / preliminary queries	<a href="mailto:eamc@admin.cam.ac.uk">eamc@admin.cam.ac.uk</a>
Making an application to the Committee	<a href="mailto:eamc@admin.cam.ac.uk">eamc@admin.cam.ac.uk</a>