

This bulletin focusses on:

1. Fitness to Study
2. Faith-provision for University examinations
3. Review of examinations
4. Graduate student matters
5. University examinations
6. Audits
7. Cambridge Bursary Scheme
8. Forum dates

1. Fitness to Study

New procedures

New procedures to consider and deal with questions of a student's fitness to study were approved over the summer (see [Reporter](#)). The procedures are designed to deal with the small number of serious and difficult cases that arise each year. The procedure is not for addressing academic performance issues or matters of discipline, and will only be invoked after informal College pastoral support has failed to resolve problems.

Faculties and Departments which have concerns about a student's fitness to study should raise the matter in the first instance, and as soon as possible, with the student's College.

Duncan McCallum (Duncan.mccallum@admin.cam.ac.uk) can advise about the formal procedures.

Reporter: www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2014-15/weekly/6390/section5.shtml#heading2-16

Web: www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/policy-guides

2. Faith-provision for University examinations

New policy

In October 2015, the General Board Education Committee approved a new policy on faith-provision for candidates for all examinations except those assessed by thesis and oral only. The procedures are designed to allow such candidates to apply to the Student Registry for reasonable alternative examination arrangements to be made where the scheduled examination period coincides with a student's religious observance.

Students must submit a completed self-declaration form to the Student Registry, by published deadlines, countersigned by the College. The Student Registry will consider the application and either seek to amend the timetable or, where this is not possible, discuss alternative arrangements with the College. Where faculties and departments prepare their own timetable, we shall pass the information on for them to consider in accordance with the policy.

Contact: Catherine Fage (Head of Student Registry, Secretary of the Board of Examinations)

Queries: email catherine.fage@admin.cam.ac.uk

Web: www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/policy-guides (for staff),
www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/examinations (for students)

The [Reporter](#) (29 July 2015) advised that the General Board's Education Committee and the Board of Examinations have established a working group to conduct a review of examination processes and strategies. Under the Chair of Professor Graham Virgo (Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education), the review will include all examinations, except oral examination and examinations by thesis, and will deliver a long-term plan that will set the future direction on examination policy and operations for the collegiate university.

In the academic year 2015-16, the working group will focus on how we assess and alternative examination arrangements and adjustments (such as alternative modes of assessment and extension to the duration of the examination) and will consider the questions identified below.

To inform its work, the working group would welcome views on the questions asked below, which are a repeat of those given in the Reporter. Responses should be sent to the Secretary (Catherine Fage) by email, examreview@admin.cam.ac.uk, before 1 November 2015. The responses will be circulated to the working group and to its sub-committees and will inform future direction and delivery of examinations.

Contact: Catherine Fage (Head of Student Registry, Secretary of the Board of Examinations)

Queries: email catherine.fage@admin.cam.ac.uk

Reporter: www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2014-15/weekly/6395/section3.shtml#heading2-10

Copy of questions presented in the Reporter

(a) Assessment:

The General Board's general policy is that the three hour written paper should be the main basis of summative assessment of Tripos performance.

- i. **Written examinations:** Should a three hour written examination remain the primary mode of assessment for the Tripos?
- ii. **Assessment:** What other modes of assessment should be used? Current examples include, but are not restricted to: dissertation, reports, long essays, multiple choice questions.
- iii. **Examination load:** Are we over-examining our students?
- iv. **Ratio of modes of assessment:** Should there be a preferred ratio between written examination and other types of assessment, and what should it be? The General Board's general policy is that normally no more than c.30-35% of an examination should be by other forms of assessment.
- v. **Formative and summative feedback:** Should departments and faculties be encouraged to provide written formative feedback on all modes of assessments, including summative examinations?
- vi. **Resits:** Should the University reconsider its policies on resits and resubmissions?
- vii. **Use of technology:** Should the University investigate the replacement of written examinations with examinations taken on computers?

(b) Alternative examination arrangements and reasonable adjustments:

The University is committed to ensuring that disabled students are assessed appropriately “to ensure that they have the same opportunity as their peers to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes” (QAA Code of Practice for Disabled Students). This is captured in the General Board’s [Code of Practice: reasonable adjustments for disabled students](#). The [Guides for Colleges](#) outline some of the procedures.

- i. **Policies:** What are the strengths and weaknesses in the University’s current policies to ensure that alternative examination arrangements and adjustments are fair and reasonable and meet its legislative obligations?
- ii. **Procedures:** What are the strengths and weaknesses in our current procedures for alternative examination arrangements and reasonable adjustments? Should Colleges be expected to accommodate alternative examination arrangements?
- iii. **Use of technology:** What should be the requirements and processes for using technology in examinations for those who require alternative examination arrangements? Are the existing arrangements considered to be fair or to give students who are allowed such arrangements an unfair advantage?

4. University Examinations

Updates & deadlines

Staff changes

Lyn Whittock left the University in August after 35+ years of service managing examination arrangements and supporting many committees.

Please address any emails previously sent to Lyn, to exam.arrangements@admin.cam.ac.uk

Examination timetables

The examination timetable for the Michaelmas term is now available online and can be viewed here - www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/examinations/all-students-timetable

The examination timetables for the rest of the academic year will be published as follows;

- Examinations in the Lent term – published in November
- Examinations in the ‘Early’ period (April and May) – published in February
- Examinations in the ‘Main’ period (May and June) – published in April

Contact: Jessica Barrick or Craig Belcher

Queries: email jessica.barrick@admin.cam.ac.uk or craig.belcher@admin.cam.ac.uk

Schedule of Activity

Tripos and Prelim enrolments

The window for students to make examination enrolments opened on 1 October and will close to students on 3 November. The window for Directors of Studies to approve the enrolments will remain open longer, and close at midnight on 9 November. Students should be encouraged to make

their enrolment options as soon as practicable, and Directors of Studies should be urged to approve them soon after.

Various guides are available to colleges and have been circulated to tutorial offices. Please use the contacts listed below in case of any query.

MPhil enrolments

Course administrators will be able to enter enrolment information for MPhil examinations from 1 November. For Lent term 2016 examinations, the deadline is 13 November 2015, for Easter term 2016 examinations, enrolments must be entered by 18 December 2015.

In the Lent term, certain MPhil courses add further enrolment data into CamSIS after liaison with the Registry.

Details on procedure have been circulated and any queries should be addressed to the contacts below.

Contact: Jessica Barrick or Craig Belcher

Queries: email jessica.barrick@admin.cam.ac.uk or craig.belcher@admin.cam.ac.uk

5. Graduate Student Matters

Updates

Staff changes

Kerri Gardiner was appointed Head of Graduate Student Administration and Secretary of the Board of Graduate Studies in July 2015. All matters relating to the Board of Graduate Studies should be sent to Kerri at kerri.gardiner@admin.cam.ac.uk.

Sarah Pickard remains the Student Registry's Graduate student lead and the main contact for individual student matters. Sarah can be contacted at Sarah.Pickard@admin.cam.ac.uk.

Beverley Barlow will leave the Student Registry at the end of October 2015. Please address any emails normally sent to Beverley to Student.Registry@admin.cam.ac.uk.

Graduate Funding consultation

Colleagues in Schools and Colleges will shortly be invited to participate in a consultation about graduate funding. The aim of the consultation is to capture views on how as a collegiate University we might enhance the experience of graduate applicants and students by offering a more coordinated approach to funding. It will also seek views on a proposal to merge the two University funding competitions. The consultation will be via an online questionnaire a link to which will be circulated later in October.

We encourage all interested parties to submit their views via the online questionnaire.

Contact: Kerri Gardiner (Head of Graduate Student Administration)

Queries: email kerri.gardiner@admin.cam.ac.uk

Viva voce examinations

We would encourage all Faculties to adopt the procedure for allowing students to notify examiners or request adjustments on the grounds of disability. The Board of Graduate Studies in consultation with the Disability Resource Centre and Legal Services Office has approved this.

Further information and a link to the disclosure form can be found at www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/examinations/graduate-exam-information/submitted-and-examination/phd-msc-mlitt/oral

Contact: Kerri Gardiner (Head of Graduate Student Administration)

Queries: email Student.Registry@admin.cam.ac.uk

Activity review

In 2015/16, we will undertake a review of many graduate student activities in order to improve information provided to students and colleagues and to streamline processes where possible. The review has started looking at the process for students to apply to work away and will continue this year with other activities including intermission; allowance/exemption of research terms; examination allowances (Masters students); and progression of students on 1+3 programmes which may involve students moving Departments at the end of their first year.

For applications to work away we plan to introduce a checklist as part of the application which will require students to tick to confirm that they have required documentation such as insurance and risk assessments, etc. We hope that this will reduce the time required for processing the applications when often missing documentation has to be chased. We will also provide clearer guidance on our website and as part of the online application.

Contact: Kerri Gardiner (Head of Graduate Student Administration)

Queries: email kerri.gardiner@admin.cam.ac.uk

Council tax

The University has signed an agreement with Cambridge City Council to allow the transfer of data for council tax exemption purposes. Student Registry will send data on all students, except undergraduates, to the City Council in October each year. We believe that separate arrangements are being prepared between Colleges and the City Council relating to undergraduate students.

Contact: Kerri Gardiner (Head of Graduate Student Administration)

Queries: email Student.Registry@admin.cam.ac.uk

6. Audits

Updates & deadlines

US Federal Student Loans Audit

The Student Registry will host the annual audit in November for students with US Federal Student Loans. Colleges may also receive a visit from auditors to inspect supervision rooms etc. and Jane will contact Colleges in advance, as per recent audits.

Contact: Jane Armitage

Queries: email jane.armitage@admin.cam.ac.uk

Research Councils UK Audit (Funding Assurance Programme)

The Research Operations Office will host an audit of RC funded programmes, including studentship schemes. Student Registry are preparing files and expenditure statements for those grants it administers (e.g. AHRC and ESRC). Departments are asked to keep their records in order also in case of a potential visit from the auditors.

It is especially important this year that Departments update JeS with New Starters ('Student Details'), and existing student funding information by the annual deadline of 30 October.

Contact: Sally-Ann Gannon

Queries: email graduate.funding@admin.cam.ac.uk

7. Cambridge Bursary Scheme

Updates

The Cambridge Bursary scheme 2015/6 is now underway with over 2000 bursaries already approved by Colleges on HEBSS (Higher Education Bursary and Scholarships Scheme) and waiting to be paid to (undergraduate) students towards the end of October. This is significantly earlier than in previous years. The Student Registry is now co-ordinating the Scheme instead of the Isaac Newton Trust in collaboration with Colleges.

We have just advertised a 2 year fixed term post as Cambridge Bursary Scheme Administrator on the University 'Job Opportunities' website (closing date: 2 November 2015)

Contact: Sally-Ann Gannon or Elana McNaught (Temporary administrator)

Queries: email cambridge.bursary@admin.cam.ac.uk

8. Forums

Diary dates

For those who normally attend, please note the following dates and venues. Further details will follow, as usual.

Graduate Secretaries Forum, 4 November, from 1000 at St Edmund's College

Undergraduate Tutorial Forum, 10 November, from 1000 at Corpus Christi College

Degree Committee Forum, 19 November, 11 February, 14 April, all from 0930 in the Syndicate Room, The Old Schools